

THIRD
CANADIAN
EDITION



GLOBAL BUSINESS:
DIVERSITY AND
INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION



TEAMWORK:
STRATEGIES FOR
GROUP SUCCESS



FINDLAY | LOCKER

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION NOW



LEADERSHIP IN
A CHANGING
BUSINESS WORLD



REACH YOUR
AUDIENCE:
CONNECTING
THROUGH
SOCIAL MEDIA



BUSINESS COMMUNICATION NOW

Third Canadian Edition

Isobel M. Findlay

University of Saskatchewan

Kitty O. Locker



McGraw-Hill
Ryerson



McGraw-Hill
Ryerson

Business Communication NOW
Third Canadian Edition

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PREFACE

I am delighted to share with you the third Canadian edition of *Business Communication NOW*—an edition carefully revised to meet the needs of my favourite audience: my fellow Canadian teachers and learners, colleagues and students.

Based on extensive faculty and student feedback and my own research and experience in business communications, this edition teaches students to think critically, to manage technological, cultural, and other change, and to improve written and oral business communication skills. These skills will prepare students to grasp opportunities and meet challenges in their academic and professional careers.

This edition explains why communications have moved to the heart of business practice and why communications are the number-one skill expected of job candidates. Students will see the communication tasks they will be likely to encounter in a wide array of occupations, and the strategies most likely to succeed.

Business Communication NOW demonstrates the importance—and ethics—of tailoring business communications to audiences representing different personality types and ethnicities, as well as organizational, political, and economic cultures in a global business environment.

Particular attention has also been paid to new and changing technologies—including blogging, texting, instant messaging, and social media—and the impact these technologies have on the business communication landscape. If students can benefit from speedy access to information, they also face heightened expectations of the accuracy and currency of their own communications. This focus on technology better equips students for the opportunities and challenges of digital media and makes the text more readily accessible and relevant to a student audience.

Balancing theory and practice, expanding understanding of diversity within and beyond Canadian borders, and condensing and clarifying, this third Canadian edition aims to help your students build confidence, invest in their own credibility and authority, and achieve success in your classroom and beyond.

FEATURES

COMMUNICATING IN A DIGITAL WORKPLACE Findlay has a strong focus on contemporary technologies and their impact on business communications—from writing for the Web and Web site design to viral marketing and social media—and heightened expectations of transparency and accountability.

COMMUNICATING IN A DIVERSE WORKPLACE *Business Communication NOW* emphasizes skills and strategies for success in a diverse workplace, including information on working in teams, effective listening, conflict resolution, and collaborative writing.

COMMUNICATING IN A GLOBAL WORKPLACE Findlay focuses on both intercultural and international communications with a discussion of avoiding stereotyping and ethnocentrism, adapting writing for various audiences, and respecting cultural differences.

MAGAZINE LAYOUT AND DESIGN The unique and popular magazine-style design returns in this edition and continues to engage students with its visual appeal and approachable writing style.

FOCUS ON ETHICS Ethics in business and business communications is stressed throughout the text with newsworthy and relevant Canadian examples.

RELEVANT TO ALL STUDENTS The text motivates students in a variety of programs by referring to a wide array of occupations through examples and model documents and showcases a range of businesses from large to small, corporate and co-operative, for-profit and not-for-profit, and Crown corporations.

CHAPTER CHANGES

- Updated coverage and increased focus throughout the textbook on electronic technology and social media.
- Pedagogical boxes have been updated for currency and relevancy to chapter content.

Chapter 1 focuses on motivating students to invest in business communication by linking the communication process to an evolving business environment that increasingly values communication skills. Chapter 1 also underlines a renewed interest in etiquette, demonstrating the costs and benefits of strong communications and reinforcing the power of rhetorical and generic competencies.

Chapter 2 is comprehensive and current and takes the mystery out of audience analysis, channel choice, and goodwill.

Chapter 3 has current and concise advice on the writing process and how to improve writing for online and offline situations.

Chapter 4 offers a broad range of Canadian and other examples showing the importance of visual and verbal rhetoric to the credibility and usability of print

and online resources. It includes updated content on online media, and a clearer sense of the continuities between and differences among print and online media.

Chapter 5 makes clear a complex set of challenges and opportunities at the heart of intercultural business communication. It encourages students to learn from their diverse classrooms to navigate diversity in and beyond the workplace and to avoid the huge social and economic costs of cultural incompetence.

Chapter 6 links together active listening, group dynamics, team formation, conflict resolution, meeting management, and collaborative writing with technological and interpersonal considerations—promoting trust and loyalty, diversity and respect, as the keys to team innovation and success.

Chapter 7 is called Routine Messages to emphasize the coverage of general correspondence such as electronic media, letters, and memos. There is a range of Canadian examples, including a new Inside Perspective, and clear step-by-step advice to maximize opportunities and manage risks.

Chapter 8 includes updated Canadian examples, provides advice on how to flexibly and tactfully handle bad news, and includes new exercises and problems to develop skills in handling negative messages in a crisis or on controversial topics.

Chapter 9 combines persuasive messages and sales, fundraising, and promotional messages in a more succinct discussion. There is also an increased focus on the ethics of persuasion.

Chapter 10 covers planning, researching, and documenting proposals and reports and encourages students to see the importance of consistent and credible research, evaluation, and documentation.

Chapter 11 provides clear and careful guidance through the principles of proposal and report writing supported by a range of professional and student examples.

Chapter 12 contains a balance between updated technological advice and reminders about the social aspects of presenting/building relationships with audiences.

Chapter 13 balances coverage of employee and employer perspectives in a changing job market and offers practical advice on how to think about and prepare for each stage of the job search process.

WALKTHROUGH

Opening Vignette An Inside Perspective introduces readers to business professionals who share on-the-job insight that is relevant to the chapter's content and goals.

AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Maintaining effective communications is at the heart of negotiating change in the internal and external business environment today. Taking over in December 2007 as CEO of Vancouver-based Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC), David Labistour drew on a long experience of change. The first CEO to be promoted from within MEC, Labistour began his professional career as a windsurfer in his native South Africa. From product management to brand management and from retail to consultancy, he built a career bringing him to Canada in 1999 before joining his passion for sports and business at MEC.

With Labistour at the helm, MEC is constantly reinventing itself to keep pace with business trends, demographic and technological shifts, and lifestyle changes among MEC's 3.9 million members. Keeping relevant means looking "at things through our members' lives, not our eyes," says Labistour.

MEC has been successful in working its social and environmental goals into its business goals "because we don't have a social and environmental team that sits as an adjunct to the mainstream business. Our social and environmental goals are embedded into all the mainstream functional jobs." As a result of team efforts "pushing for a more sustainable organization, financially, socially and environmentally, there are advantages and efficiencies to be gained."


Working closely with suppliers is an important part of sustaining ethical sourcing and safe and healthy workplaces: "If our factories don't meet our requirements out of the gate, we don't cut and run, we work with them to develop these things."

"It's not that you are necessarily a wonderful organization that does magic things." What matters is communicating transparently about progress toward goals. "We want people who share our passion . . . who want to learn and grow. And without a doubt, they have to be great communicators. Business is so complex today, and so collaborative, that great team members have to excel in communication at every level." As the winner of many awards—for governance excellence, top green companies, 50 Best Corporate Citizens, Canada's Top 100 Employers—MEC continues the co-op way: leading by example."



David Labistour, CEO of Mountain Equipment Co-op, balances a love of sports and business goals, social and corporate responsibility.

Figure 2.5 A Memo Revised to Improve You-Attitude



450 INDUSTRIAL PARK
HALIFAX, NS B3L 2Z4
(902) 555-4670
FAX: (902) 555-4672

To: All Simmons Staff
From: A. Barnstone, President
Date: January 15, 2014
Subject: Please Follow New Office Policy

To enhance your comfort and ensure a warm welcome for your visitors, we are announcing a new policy. To protect your safety as well as the confidentiality of our clients and the security of company records, please follow these procedures to handle visits to the main office:

1. Employees advise visitors to report to the receptionist on the floor on which they work.
2. The receptionist informs the employee when the visitor arrives.
3. The employee escorts the visitor to and from the reception and meeting area.

Thank you for your cooperation in maintaining the high level of professionalism in our office. If you have any questions, please contact me at Extension 5405.

✓ Focuses on what reader gets

✓ Ends with positive emphasis and goodwill

✓ Extension number makes it easy for reader to phone.

✓ Starts with main point from the reader's point of view

✓ List makes it easy to follow three steps in process

✗ Negative: Your balance of \$835 is **delinquent**.
 ✓ Better: Your balance of \$835 is **past due**.

Beware of **hidden negatives**: words that are not negative in themselves but become negative in context. *But* and *however* indicate a shift, so, after a positive statement, they are

negative. Even positives may backfire if they suggest that in the past the service or product was bad.

✗ Negative: **I hope** this is the information you wanted. [Implication: I'm not sure.]
 ✓ Better: Enclosed is a brochure **about road repairs scheduled for 2014–16**.

Figure 2.6 Negative Words to Avoid

afraid	fail	not	Some dis- words:	Some mis- words:
anxious	fault	objection	disapprove	misfortune

Document Examples Annotated visual examples such as letters, memos, reports, and e-mails explain communication miscues and offer suggestions for improvement.

Positive and Negative Examples Effective and ineffective communication examples appear side by side so that students can pinpoint problematic constructions and improve their skills. Annotations indicate weaker and stronger messages for easy comparison.

Figure 3.12 Questions to Ask Readers Checklist

<p>OUTLINE OR PLANNING DRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the plan seem on the right track? • What topics should be added? Should any be cut? • Do you have any other general suggestions?
<p>REVISING DRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the message satisfy all its purposes? • Is the message adapted to the audience(s)? • Is the organization effective? • What parts aren't clear? • What ideas need further development? • Do you have any other suggestions?
<p>POLISHING DRAFT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any problems with word choice or sentence structure? • Did you find any inconsistencies? • Did you find any typos? • Is the document's design effective?

Checklists serve as a handy reference guide when composing and editing messages.

Summary of Key Points provides an overview of the important points students have learned in the chapter.

✗ Lacks you-attitude: I have negotiated an agreement with Apex Rent-a-Car that **gives you** a discount on rental cars.

✓ You-attitude: As a Sunstrand employee, **you can now get** a 20% discount when you rent a car from Apex.

The first sentence focuses on what the writer does, not on what the reader receives. Any sentence that focuses on the writer's work or generosity lacks you-attitude, even if the sentence contains the word *you*. Instead of focusing on what we are giving the reader, focus on what the reader can now do.

✗ Lacks you-attitude: We are shipping **your order** of September 21 this afternoon.

✓ You-attitude: **The two dozen CorningWare starter sets you ordered** will be shipped this afternoon and should reach you by **September 28**.

The reader is less interested in when we shipped the order than in when it will arrive. Note that the phrase "should reach you by" leaves room for variations in delivery schedules. Give the reader the name of the carrier, so the reader knows whom to contact if the order doesn't arrive promptly.

2. Refer to the Reader's Request or Order Specifically

When you write about the reader's request, order, or policy, refer to it specifically, not as a generic *your order* or *your policy*. If your reader is an individual or a small business, it's friendly to specify the content of the order; if you are writing to a company with which you do a great deal of business, give the invoice or purchase order number.

✗ Lacks you-attitude: **Your order . . .**

✓ You-attitude (to individual): **The desk chair you ordered . . .**

✓ You-attitude (to a large store): **Your invoice #783329 . . .**

The form letter printed in Figure 2.3 is stuffy and selfish. The comments in blue identify where the letter lacks you-attitude, loses credibility, and generates ill will.

1. **The language is stiff and legalistic.** Note the obsolete (and sexist) "Gentlemen;" "Please be advised," "herein," and "expedite."
2. **The tone is selfish.** The letter is written from the writer's point of view; there are no benefits for the reader. (The writer says there are, but without evidence the claim isn't convincing.)
3. **The main point is buried** in the middle of the long first paragraph. The middle is the least emphatic part of a paragraph.
4. **The request is vague.** How many references does the supplier want? Would credit references, like banks, rather than vendor references work too? Is the name of the reference enough, or is it necessary also to specify the line of credit and/or the years credit has been established? What "additional financial information" does the supplier want? Bank balance? The request sounds like an invasion of privacy, not a reasonable business practice.
5. **Words are misused** (*herein for therein*), suggesting either an ignorant writer or one who doesn't care enough about the subject and the reader to use the right word.

3. Don't Talk about Feelings Except to Congratulate or Offer Sympathy

In most business situations, your feelings are irrelevant and should be omitted.

✗ Lacks you-attitude: **We are happy** to extend you a credit line of \$5,000.

✓ You-attitude: **You can now charge** up to \$5,000 on your Visa card.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Writing processes can include eight activities: planning, gathering, writing, evaluating, getting feedback, revising, editing, and proofreading. *Revising* means changing the document to make it better satisfy the writer's purposes and the audience. *Editing* means making local changes that make the document grammatically correct. *Proofreading* means checking to be sure the document is free from typographical errors. The activities do not have to come in any set order.
- Good style in business writing is less formal, more friendly, and more personal than the style usually used for term papers.
- To improve your style,
 1. Start a clean page or screen so that you aren't locked into old sentence structures.
 2. Try WIRMI: *What I Really Mean Is*. Then write the words.
 3. Try reading your draft out loud to someone sitting about one metre away. If the words sound stiff, they'll seem stiff to a reader, too.
 4. Ask someone else to read your draft out loud. The places where that person stumbles are places where your writing can be better.
 5. Read widely and write a lot.
- To make your writing easier to read,

As you write and revise paragraphs,

 1. Begin paragraphs with topic sentences.
 2. Use transitions to link ideas.

As you write and revise sentences,

 3. Use active verbs most of the time.
 4. Use verbs—not nouns—to carry the weight of your sentence.
 5. Tighten your writing.
 6. Vary sentence length and sentence structure.
 7. Use parallel structure.
 8. Put your readers in your sentences.

As you choose words,

 9. Use words that are accurate, appropriate, ethical, and familiar.
 10. Use technical jargon only when it is essential and known to the reader. Replace business jargon.
- Writing and editing for the Web requires short paragraphs and sentences, 50% less text than in a paper document, good use of transitions, headings, and subheadings, highlighted key words, lists, and links.
- You can improve the quality of the feedback you give and get by focusing on aspects of a draft needing comment. If a reader criticizes something, fix the problem. If you think the reader misunderstood you, revise the draft so that the reader can see what you meant.

Exercises and Problems End of chapter exercises include a range of individual, pair, and group work activities for use in class or as assignments. These exercises encourage students to assume a role or perform a task in a variety of realistic business scenarios and to see the connections between the cultures and activities of the classroom and the workplace.

EXERCISES AND PROBLEMS

GETTING STARTED

3.1 INTERVIEWING WRITERS ABOUT THEIR WRITING PROCESSES

Interview someone about the writing process(es) he or she uses for on-the-job writing. Questions you could ask include the following:

- What kind of planning do you do before you write? Do you make lists? Formal or informal outlines?
- When you need more information, where do you get it?
- How do you compose your drafts? Do you draft with pen and paper? Compose on screen? Use a wiki? How do you find uninterrupted time to compose?
- When you want advice about style, grammar, and spelling, what source(s) do you consult?
- Does your superior ever read your drafts and make suggestions?
- Do you ever work with other writers to produce a single document? Describe the process you use.
- Describe the process of creating a document where you felt the final document reflected your best work. Describe the process of creating a document you found difficult or frustrating. What sorts of things make writing easier or harder for you?

As Your Professor Directs,

- Share your results orally with a small group of students.
- Present your results in an oral presentation to the class.
- Present your results in an e-mail to your professor.
- Share your results with a small group of students and write a joint blog reporting the similarities and differences you found.

3.2 ANALYZING YOUR OWN WRITING PROCESSES

Save your notes and drafts from several assignments so that you can answer the following questions:

- Which practices of good writers do you follow?
- Which of the eight writing activities discussed in this chapter do you use?
- How much time do you spend on each of the eight activities?
- What kinds of revisions do you make most often?
- Do you use different processes for different documents, or do you have one process that you use most of the time?
- What parts of your process seem most successful? Are there any places in the process that could be improved? How?
- What relation do you see between the process(es) you use and the quality of the final document?



International Winning Olympic Bid*


When the final two bid cities for the 2012 Olympics went head-to-head, it was London that won—by 54 votes to 50. How did London do it? Good you-attitude and strong audience benefits.

The favourite throughout the campaign, Paris concluded its final presentation: "Paris needs the Games, Paris wants the Games, Paris loves the Games." Along the way President Chirac "laid into British and Finnish food," but Chirac "was left eating his words."

Lord Coe, an Olympic champion himself, focused on a "magical experience" for youth—and 30 young people from London—

vision . . . to reach people, young people, all and connect them with the power of the Games. He spoke of inspiring youth to choose sports and of a multicultural London representing 21 world's diversity. "Choose London and you will save to the youth of the world that the Olympic He spoke of listening and learning from practices and of serving the ambition of the world with a lasting legacy and an environment

*Based on other page/46




Ethics and Legal R-E-S-P-E-C-T*

Outraged by the movie *Tropic Thunder*, people with intellectual disabilities rallied for respect. They complained that the movie fostered hate and discrimination and that in its attempts at edgy humour it had "crossed the line."

What the movie makers failed to see was that "the parody of a person with an intellectual disability and use of words such as 'retard' and 'imbecile' perpetuates negative stereotypes and encourages a culture of denigration and intolerance against people with disabilities."

*Based on Sue Zeidler, "Advocates for disabled to protest 'Tropic Thunder'." Reuters, August 11, 2008, retrieved February 9, 2011, from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/08/11/us-boycott-disability-idUSN029346220080811>; Derrick J. Lang, "Mental disability groups picket 'Tropic Thunder' Premiere." *Huffington Post*, August 12, 2008, retrieved February 9, 2011, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/08/12/mental-disability-groups_n_118347.html; Celine R. Fortin, "'Tropic Thunder' leads people with disabilities to rally for respect." *The Arc of New Jersey*, August 12, 2008, retrieved August 16, 2008, from <http://www.thearcnj.org/>




Technology Tips Straight Talk with Professors?

Writing e-mails to your professor is good practice for writing to supervisors and managers on the job. You are learning about tact and tactics or how to make good rhetorical choices about medium, strategy, tone, timing, and wording in writing to superiors.

If you do not carefully adapt your style but retain the casual informality of text messages and chat rooms, requests can become negative messages. Check before sending, so that you don't repeat the common errors in these examples.

- Hi, I have concerns about my report, presentation, grades, and basically everything in the class. Is there a time we can meet before tomorrow's exam to talk about it?
- Hello, I was just wondering how we can include evidence in the exam answers. Time.
- Hi, Are you marking grammar and spelling me know.
- Hi Mrs. Smith, I am writing at 2:00 today, can let me know what format to use for my final.
- Hi, I missed the last class, I'm unsure how to proceed. How do you propose I deal with this?



On the Job The Audiences for Audited Reports and Financial Statements*

An audit report may be used by at least four different audiences:

- *The client*, who may resent any report that isn't fully favourable.
- *Investors and creditors*, who make decisions based on audit reports and who may hold the company management and board financially responsible for the report.
- *Colleagues*, who use the reports but who may have different ethical or theoretical positions.
- The CPA Canada (Chartered Professional Accountants Canada), the Public Sector Accounting Board, the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, and the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

Good audit reports meet the needs and overcome the possible objections of all of these audiences.

*Based on CPA Canada, *Reporting Implications of New Auditing and Accounting Standards*, Issue 11, January 2014, retrieved February 14, 2014, from <http://www.frscanada.ca/canadian-auditing-standards/resources/reference-material/item50999.pdf>; Financial Reporting and Assurance Standards Canada, "Public Sector Accounting Board," retrieved February 14, 2014, from <http://www.frscanada.ca/public-sector-accounting-board/>; Financial Reporting and Assurance Standards Canada, "Auditing and Assurance Standards Board," retrieved February 14, 2014, from <http://www.frscanada.ca/auditing-and-assurance-standards-board/>; International Federation of Accountants, "International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board," retrieved February 14, 2014, from <http://www.ifac.org/auditing-assurance>.

International, Ethics and Legal, On the Job, and Technology Tips boxes enhance the chapter content and provide current and relevant facts and articles.

SUPPLEMENTS

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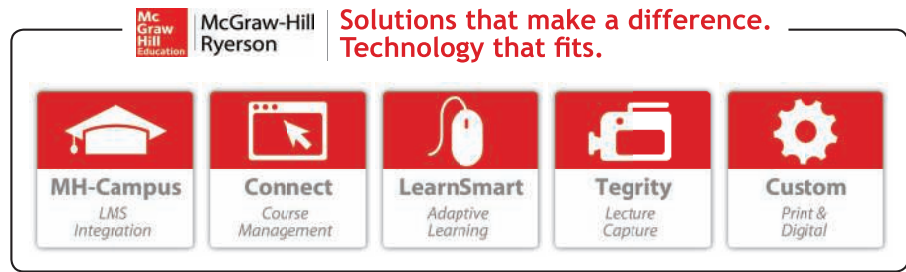
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. ISOBEL M. FINDLAY

Dr. Isobel M. Findlay is a professor in the Department of Management and Marketing; University Co-director, Community-University Institute for Social Research; and Scholar, Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, where she teaches business communications, business and community, co-operative studies, and law and culture.

She has special research interests in communications, cultures, and communities; diversity in the workplace; Aboriginal and associative organizations; and corporate social responsibility, performance indicators, and reporting standards. After six years on a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) research project on Social Enterprises, Knowledgeable Economies, and Sustainable Communities, she is currently completing work on another SSHRC-funded project on Animating Mi'kmaw Humanities in Atlantic Canada and beginning a three-year Canadian Institutes of Health Research project on Workplace Harassment among Caregivers: Fostering Communicative Action and Ethical Practice through Participatory Theatre.

She is also pursuing her research interests in the context of the Sectoral Commission on Culture, Communication and Information of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, where she is completing her second three-year term.

In addition to essays on Aboriginal justice, economic development, and co-operatives, she is editor, co-author, or co-editor of the following:

- Co-editor (with Bonnie Jeffery, Diane Martz, and Louise Clarke), *Journeys in Community-based Research* (2014)
- Co-editor (with Ana Maria Peredo and Fiona Duguid) of a special issue of the *Journal of Co-operative Studies* 47:1 (2014)
- Co-editor (with Warren Weir and Louise Clarke) of a special issue of the *Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 4.1 (2004) on Value(s) Added: Sharing Voices on Aboriginal CED
- Editor, *Introduction to Literature*, 4th and 5th editions (2000, 2004)
- Co-author with James (Sakej) Youngblood Henderson and Marjorie L. Benson, *Aboriginal Tenure in the Constitution of Canada* (2000)
- Co-editor (with L. M. Findlay), *Realizing Community: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (1995)

A member of the Canadian Communication Association and the International Association of Business Communicators, she has operated her own writing and editing business; facilitated workshops and consulted with the public and private sectors, profit and non-profit organizations; and written many successful grant applications and proposals. A proud recipient of a University of Saskatchewan Students' Union Teaching Excellence Award, she is also co-winner of the Saskatchewan Book Awards Scholarly Writing Award, 2000.



TO LEN, ANDREW, AND NICK—ISOBEL M. FINDLAY

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COMMUNICATING IN A CHANGING BUSINESS WORLD

1



Learning Outcomes

- LO1** Explain the importance of effective communications to personal and organizational success
- LO2** List five questions you need to ask in analyzing business communication situations
- LO3** Identify five criteria of good writing
- LO4** Describe the communication process
- LO5** Discuss eight principles that help you improve communications
- LO6** Explain the managerial functions of communication
- LO7** Describe ten trends impacting business communication

AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Maintaining effective communications is at the heart of negotiating change in the internal and external business environment today. Taking over in December 2007 as CEO of Vancouver-based Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC), David Labistour drew on a long experience of change. The first CEO to be promoted from within MEC, Labistour began his professional career as a windsurfer in his native South Africa. From product management to brand management and from retail to consultancy, he built a career bringing him to Canada in 1999 before joining his passion for sports and business at MEC.

With Labistour at the helm, MEC is constantly reinventing itself to keep pace with business trends, demographic and technological shifts, and lifestyle changes among MEC's 3.9 million members. Keeping relevant means looking "at things through our members' lives, not our eyes," says Labistour.

MEC has been successful in working its social and environmental goals into its business goals "because we don't have a social and environmental team that sits as an adjunct to the mainstream business. Our social and environmental goals are embedded into all the mainstream functional jobs." As a result of team efforts "pushing for a more sustainable organization, financially, socially and environmentally, there are advantages and efficiencies to be gained."

Working closely with suppliers is an important part of sustaining ethical sourcing and safe and healthy workplaces: "If our factories don't meet our requirements out of the gate, we don't cut and run, we work with them to develop these things."

"It's not that you are necessarily a wonderful organization that does magic things." What matters is communicating transparently about progress toward goals. "We want people who share our passion . . . who want to learn and grow. And without a doubt, they have to be great communicators. Business is so complex today, and so collaborative, that great team members have to excel in communication at every level." As the winner of many awards—for governance excellence, top green companies, 50 Best Corporate Citizens, Canada's Top 100 Employers—MEC continues the co-op way: leading by example.*

*Based on Beedie Newsroom, "BBA student facilitates debate among Vancouver's top CIOs," December 12, 2013, retrieved from <http://beedie.sfu.ca/blog/2013/10/mec-ceo-talks-about-the-importance-of-corporate-social-responsibility-ceo-series/#more-7341>; David Ebner, "Shaking it up for the ever-evolving outdoors market," *The Globe and Mail*, February 1, 2011, B3; Lauren McKeon, "Q&A with David Labistour," *Canadian Business*, March 18, 2008, 10; Fiona Anderson, "MEC gets award for sustainable business," *Vancouver Sun*, February 14, 2008.



David Labistour, CEO of Mountain Equipment Co-op, balances a love of sports and business goals, social and corporate responsibility.

In diverse situations within the family, in the classroom, at work, or at play, you have been communicating for results throughout your life. Consciously or unconsciously, you have been thinking about your purposes (what action, reaction, result, or reward you want) and your audiences (parents, siblings, teachers, teammates, or colleagues) in choosing what, when, and how to communicate. You have been learning about what works (or not) and have been adapting to change.

You have been learning about the power of argument, your own character and credibility, and audience interests and beliefs—about the art of persuasion or rhetoric (► Chapter 9)—to get the results you want. You have been learning the codes of behaviour or social norms, what is acceptable and what is

not, and developing the judgment and cultural competency to make things happen in your community.¹

Business similarly depends on communication to plan products; hire, train, and motivate workers; coordinate manufacturing and delivery; persuade customers to buy; bill them for the sale; and prepare for and manage change. In fact, for many businesses and non-profit and government organizations, the "product" is information or services created and delivered by communication. In every organization, communication is the way people build working relationships, get their points across, and get work done.

Communication takes many forms: face-to-face, phone, or cell conversations, informal or even virtual meetings, **Skype**,



On the Job Lessons from the Best*

When Watson Wyatt & Co. examined communications of 267 companies and their return to shareholders in a 2003–04 study, co-author Kathryn Yates found, “The bottom line is that employee communications is no longer a ‘soft’ function, but rather a business function that drives performance and contributes to a company’s financial success.”

Studies from 2003 to 2007 confirmed that effective employee communications was a leading predictor of financial performance. Disengaged employees cost the United States alone

between \$250 billion and \$350 billion annually, according to Mark Attridge.

Even in financially challenging times, the 2009–10 Watson Wyatt study of 5 million employees confirms that effective communication is key to engaging employees, promoting safety and productivity, and enhancing financial performance. By 2013–2014, companies with effective communications were “three and a half times more likely to significantly outperform their industry peers than firms that are not effective in these areas.”

*Based on Towers Watson, *How the Fundamentals Have Evolved and the Best Adapt: 2013–2014 Change and Communication ROI Study Report*, retrieved from <http://www.towerswatson.com/en-CA/Insights/IC-Types/Survey-Research-Results/2013/12/2013-2014-change-and-communication-roi-study>; Watson Wyatt, *Capitalizing on Effective Communication: How Courage, Innovation and Discipline Drive Business Results in Challenging Times: 2009–2010 Communication ROI Study Report*, retrieved from <http://www.watsonwyatt.com/research/pdfs/NA-2009-14356.pdf>; Mark Attridge, “Measuring and managing employee work engagement: A review of the research and business literature,” *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 24 (2009): 383–98; “Better communication pays off for companies,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 7, 2003, C1.

e-mail, **blogs, wikis, Twitter, Facebook**, text, instant messages, letters, memos, and reports. All of these methods are forms of **verbal communication**, or communication that uses words. **Nonverbal communication** does not use words. Pictures, computer graphics, and company logos are nonverbal. **Pinterest, Instagram, and Flickr** are sites that host photo and video sharing among online communities. **Vine** is a mobile app that allows users to create and share six-second video clips or embed them in **social media**. Interpersonal nonverbal signals include smiles, who sits where at a meeting, the size of an office, and how long someone keeps a visitor waiting.

This chapter explains why changes in the business environment—see ►► “Trends in Business Communication” in this chapter—require the superior communication skills MEC CEO David Labistour emphasizes (◀◀ An Inside Perspective) and move communication from a secondary to a central role. It also explains how technological change has given voice to diverse stakeholders in conversations in which businesses participate, though never fully control, and raised expectations of the correctness, clarity, currency, and content of communications. This chapter and those that follow guide you through the principles and practice of effective business communication, offering incentives and examples while sharing tools that will help you improve communication skills and meet current standards of professionalism.

you’ll listen to instructions; you’ll ask questions; you may solve problems in teams. As a result, communication ability ranks first among the qualities that employers look for in job and promotion candidates.

For the full text of the Conference Board of Canada’s “Employability Skills 2000+,” see Figure 1.7 later in this chapter. These valuable soft skills have become even more important in an online world—where, author Charles Rubin argues, “you are what you write.”²

According to Darlene Bailey, vice-president human resources and field operations, WCG International Consultants in Victoria: “If you have those [soft] skills, you have a better chance of getting a job and keeping the job . . . Perhaps everyone knows a teacher has to be a good communicator, but it’s a skill that many others have to call on, whether it’s to deal with co-workers, customers, suppliers, or others they encounter even in the most solitary of positions.”³

In a work world where the ability to “analyze, write, persuade, and manage” can “facilitate career change,”⁴ good writers—not surprisingly—earn more. Linguist Stephen Reder has found that among people with two- or four-year degrees, workers in the top 20% of writing ability earn, on average, more than three times as much as workers whose writing falls into the worst 20%.⁵ For Canadian men, the lifetime reward for higher literacy skills is \$585,000; for women, the reward is \$683,000.⁶

LO1 COMMUNICATION ABILITY = PROMOTABILITY

Even “entry-level” jobs require high-level skills in reasoning, mathematics, and communicating. You’ll read information;

“I’LL NEVER HAVE TO WRITE BECAUSE . . .”

Some students think that a secretary will do their writing, that they can use form letters, that only technical skills matter, that they’ll call rather than write, or that rules and etiquette are

things of the past in the world of texting and Twitter. Each of these claims is fundamentally flawed.

Claim 1: Secretaries will do all my writing.

Reality: Downsizing and technology have cut support staffs nationwide. Of the secretaries who remain, 71% are administrative assistants whose duties are managerial.⁷

Claim 2: I'll use form letters or templates when I need to write.

Reality: A **form letter** is a prewritten, fill-in-the-blanks letter designed to fit standard situations. The higher you rise, the more frequently you'll face situations that aren't routine, that demand creative solutions.

Claim 3: I'm being hired as an accountant, not a writer.

Reality: *The Chartered Professional Accountant Competency Map* (2012) identifies five enabling competencies for accountants: professional and ethical behaviour, problem solving and decision making, communication, self-management, teamwork, and leadership. In particular, "CPAs must communicate effectively through listening, understanding, speaking, and writing with clarity, and through the art of persuasion and negotiation. CPAs must be able to clearly communicate complex matters to all levels of an entity."⁸ To be competitive in a global economy, accountants, like engineers, need these so-called soft skills: "communications, team building, report writing and preparing presentations."⁹

Claim 4: I'll just pick up the phone or use my cell.

Reality: Important calls require follow-up letters, memos, or e-mail messages. People in organizations put things in writing to make themselves and their accomplishments visible, create a record, convey complex data, make things convenient for the reader, save money,

and convey their own messages more effectively. "If it isn't in writing," says one manager, "it didn't happen."

Claim 5: Nobody cares about the old rules any more. Anything goes in texts or tweets.

Reality: The shorter the message, the more opportunities for ambiguity and miscommunication. That's why ever more concerns exist in classrooms and workplaces about how and when we text and tweet, what we disclose, and who or what might be impacted. Coming across as spontaneous and sincere takes preparation and planning. Industry Canada, for instance, follows the Treasury Board Standard on Social Media Account Management. A 12-step protocol means that tweets can be planned for weeks, go through dozens of edits and approvals (for policy compliance), and have retweets by other agencies pre-arranged.¹⁰

LO2

UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYZING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION SITUATIONS

In the face of massive technological, cultural, and demographic change impacting business communications, the best communicators remain conscious of the context in which they make their choices; they're aware of options.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- **What's at stake—to whom?** Think not only about your own purpose and needs but also about the concerns your boss and your readers may have. Your message will be most effective if you think of the organizational context—and



Technology Tips No Substitute for Proofreading*

Computer software can make writing easier, but there's still no substitute for careful writing. Before you let your spell checker and grammar checker do your editing, consider these results of a study of graduate students proofreading a business letter. When the students with the highest verbal SAT scores proofread on their own, they made, on average, five errors. Students with lower verbal SATs made an average of 12.3 errors. When students turned on the spell checker, they made more mistakes! The students with the highest verbal SAT scores averaged 16 errors, and those with lower scores averaged 17 errors.

A Prime Minister's Office news release about Prime Minister Harper's itinerary also failed the proofreading test when it listed Iqualuit rather than Iqaluit as Nunavut's capital. The extra "u" changed the meaning from "many fish" to people with an intimate part of their anatomy unwiped!

If that error cost embarrassment, a single proofreading error cost Penguin Group Australia the equivalent of Cdn\$20,000 when 7,000 copies of *The Pasta Bible* cookbook had to be destroyed because a recipe called for "freshly ground black people" instead of pepper.

When typos are a major turnoff to prospective employers and customers, it makes sense to practise your proofreading skills.

*Based on Terry Pedwell, "PMO's spelling mistake gives Iqaluit a bum rap," *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 19, 2009, retrieved February 4, 2011, from <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/canada/pmos-spelling-mistake-gives-iqaluit-a-bum-rap-53673857.html>; Adam Arnold, "Book axed over 'ground black people' typo," *SkyNews*, April 19, 2010; Jay Greene, "Spell-checke nation," *BusinessWeek*, May 5, 2003.

the larger context of stakeholders including shareholders, customers, and regulators. When the stakes are high, you'll need to take into account people's emotional feelings as well as objective facts.

- **Should you send a message?** Sometimes, especially when you're new on the job, silence can be the tactful response. But be alert to opportunities to learn, to influence, to make your case. Your communications can build your career.
- **What channel should you use?** Paper documents and presentations are formal and give you considerable control over the message. E-mail, blogs, text messages, phone and cell calls, and stopping by someone's office are less formal. Oral channels promote group decision making, allow misunderstandings to be cleared up more quickly, and seem more personal. Sometimes you may need more than one message, in more than one channel.
- **What should you say?** Content for a message may not be obvious. How detailed should you be? Should you repeat information that the audience already knows? The answers will depend on the kind of document, your purposes, audiences, and the corporate culture. And you'll have to figure these things out for yourself, without detailed instructions. Your judgment is at stake.
- **How should you say it?** The form of your ideas—what comes first, second, and last—and the words you use shape the audience's response. A well-designed, visually attractive document enhances readability whether you are speaking for your organization or selling your skills to a potential employer.

THE COST OF WRITING

Despite—or because of—proliferating technologies, writing costs time and money. A study of Canadian workers reported that 58% spend two to four hours per day reading text (print or online), 28% miss important information often, and 63% miss key content “once in a while.” Complaints about poor written communications were reported by 71%, with 85% citing “wasted time,” 70% “lost productivity,” and 63% “errors.”¹¹ In reduced productivity alone, low literacy costs Canadian organizations \$2.5 million annually.¹² Improved literacy means increased productivity and bottom-line business performance and improved learning, greater participation, and higher earning power for employees.¹³

In many organizations, all external documents must be approved before they go out. A document may **cycle** from writer to superior to writer to another superior to writer again 3 or 4 or even 11 times before it is finally approved. The cycling process increases the cost of writing while adding to its accuracy and credibility.

Long documents can involve large teams of people and take months to write. Whether in the public or private sector, strong writing skills are therefore at a premium.

Good communication is worth every minute it takes and every penny it costs. In fact, in a survey conducted by the International Association of Business Communicators, CEOs said that communication yielded a 235% return on investment.¹⁴

THE COST OF POOR WRITING

When writing isn't as good as it could be, you and your organization pay a price in wasted time, wasted efforts, and lost goodwill.

Bad writing has these costs:

- **Takes longer to read** (up to 97% of reading time involves trying to understand what we're reading)
- **Needs revision** (involving disproportionate managerial time on explaining how to revise)
- **Obscures ideas** and needlessly protracts discussions and decisions
- **Requires requests for further information** (and further delays)
- **Does not get results**—or gets the wrong results
- **Undermines the image of the organization**
- **Loses goodwill**

Messages can also create a poor image because of poor audience analysis and inappropriate style (see ► Chapter 2).

BENEFITS OF IMPROVING WRITING

Better writing has these benefits:

- **Saves time.** Reduces reading and revision time and the time taken asking writers “What did you mean?”
- **Makes your efforts more effective.** Increases the number of requests that are answered positively and promptly—on the first request. Presents your points more forcefully.
- **Communicates your points more clearly.** Reduces the misunderstandings that occur when the reader has to supply missing or unclear information.
- **Builds goodwill.** Builds a positive image of your organization. Builds an image of yourself as a knowledgeable, intelligent, capable person.

LO3

CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

Good business writing meets five basic criteria:

1. **It's clear.** The meaning the reader gets is the meaning the writer intended. The reader doesn't have to guess.
2. **It's complete.** All of the reader's questions are answered. The reader has enough information to evaluate the message and act on it.

3. **It's correct.** All of the information in the message is accurate. The message is free from errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar, word order, and sentence structure.
4. **It's concise.** It saves the reader's time. The style, organization, and visual impact of the message help the reader to read, understand, and act on the information promptly.
5. **It's courteous.** It builds goodwill. The message presents a positive image of the writer and his or her organization. It treats the reader as a person, not a number. It cements a good relationship between the writer and the reader.

Whether a message meets these five criteria depends on the interactions among the writer, the audience, the purposes of the message, and the situation. No single set of words will work in all possible situations.

LO4

PRINCIPLES THAT CAN HELP IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

Many miscommunications arise not because people genuinely disagree but because they make different assumptions and use symbols to mean different things. **Communication theory** and **semantics** can help us understand how, why, and where communication, perhaps the most complex human activity, can break down, and what we can do to communicate more effectively. Communication theory attempts to explain what happens when we communicate. Semantics is the study of the way our behaviour is influenced by the words and other symbols we use to communicate.

Never merely a matter of transmitting information, communication is a socio-cultural process negotiating differences of power and cultural competency in building the credibility, goodwill, and trust that sustain business relationships. The process is so complex because it is negotiated within contexts from the immediate situation to the broader culture and legal, ethical, ecological, political, and economic environment.

Speakers negotiate meanings in particular contexts that are themselves always changing (see ► “Trends in Business Communication” in this chapter). The eight principles of semantics help us understand and take account of the ways that those contexts shape and are shaped by communications.

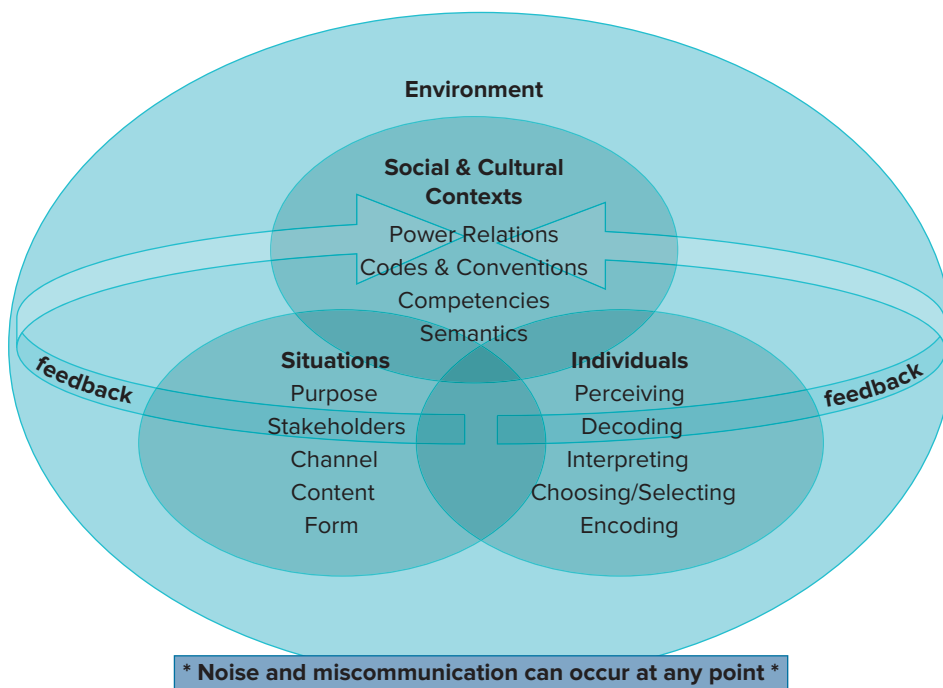
Communication theory is likewise useful in helping us understand where and why miscommunication occurs at each stage from stimulus and **perception** to **encoding** the message to **transmission** through channels to **decoding**, interpreting, choosing and selecting, and **feedback**.

Feedback may be direct and immediate or indirect and delayed; it may be verbal or nonverbal. Each person in the process is responsible for feedback that clarifies and confirms understanding.

Noise can interfere with every aspect of the communication process. Noise may be physical, psychological, or socio-cultural. Physical noise could be a phone line with static, or handwriting that is hard to read. Psychological noise could include not liking a speaker, being preoccupied, or having one's mind already made up on an issue. Socio-cultural noise may include failures to follow etiquette or to adopt appropriate levels of formality (see Figure 1.1).

Channels—formal and informal—vary in speed, accuracy of transmission, cost, number of messages carried, number

Figure 1.1 A Model of the Communication Process





In creating the right impression, channel choice plays an important role. E-mail may not be the most tactful choice when ending a professional or personal relationship. An e-mail sent in haste can return to haunt the sender.

When artist Sophie Calle received a breakup e-mail from her partner concluding with the wish that she take care of herself, she did just that by asking 107 female experts for their opinion of the e-mail. Their responses became the basis of her exhibition *Take Care of Yourself* shown at the Venice Biennale in summer 2007 and on a world tour in 2008.

Before going public, Calle showed the sender the work. Although she has never revealed his identity, he “wasn’t very

happy.” Still, in the end “he had respect for the project” and did not resist.

When Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Industry Minister Tony Clement chose Twitter to disclose government intentions on the CRTC’s 2011 Internet user-based billing decision, their channel choice was widely criticized.

By contrast, Mayor Naheed Nenshi of Calgary has been widely praised for his use of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to engage voters. Nenshi won 40% of the ballots in a vote that increased participation from 32.9% in 2007 to 53.24% in October 2010. His win, he argues, “proves voters care deeply about big ideas”: “We called it politics in full sentences.”

*Based on Iain Marlow and Susan Krashinsky, “Telecoms faced with new uncertainty,” *Report on Business*, February 4, 2011, B1; Craig Wong, “Harper tweets promise of Internet billing review,” *TheStar.com*, February 1, 2011, retrieved February 4, 2011, from <http://www.thestar.com/business/article/931674-harper-tweets-promise-of-internet-billing-review>; “CRTC must reverse Internet usage ruling: Clement,” retrieved June 19, 2011, from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2011/02/03/crtc-internet-clement.html>; “Calgary chooses Nenshi as new mayor,” retrieved June 24, 2011, from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/story/2010/10/19/calgary-election-mayor.html>; Chrystia Freeland, “Calgary mayor gives his own Twitter revolution lesson,” *Report on Business*, April 1, 2011, B2; Sarah Milroy, “Romantic revenge, served in multimedia,” *The Globe and Mail*, August 2, 2008, R4.

of people reached, efficiency, and ability to promote goodwill. Depending on your purpose, audience, and situation, one channel may be better than another (►► Chapter 2).

Oral channels are better for group decision making, allow misunderstandings to be cleared up more quickly, and seem more personal. Shorter communication channels are more accurate than longer chains of communications that increase the potential for error. For important messages when the cost of miscommunication is high, managers usually use two different channels—for example, talking to someone about a written memo.

Channel choice may also be influenced by organizational culture. Waterloo-based BlackBerry gives its employees a device, inviting them to join a business without borders or boundaries and renew inventiveness and opportunity.

Channel overload occurs when the channel cannot handle all the messages. Websites can crash when subjected to unusually high traffic. **Information overload** occurs when more messages are transmitted than the human receiver can handle. Some receivers process information “first come, first served.” Some may try to select the most important messages and ignore others. A third way is to depend on abstracts or summaries. None of these ways is completely satisfactory.

At every stage, people may misperceive, misinterpret, choose badly, encode poorly, and choose inappropriate channels. Miscommunication can also occur because different people have different frames of reference. We always interpret messages in light of our personal experiences, our cultures (►► Chapter 5) and subcultures, and even the point in history at which we live.

Semantic principles offer eight practical tools for negotiating barriers and improving communication. They help us

recognize bias, monitor assumptions, and moderate claims so that messages can be more effectively relayed, received, and understood. They help us analyze and recognize logical flaws in our own and others’ arguments.

LO5

1. Perception Involves the Perceiver as Well as the Perceived

What we perceive is conditioned by what we are able to see, what we have seen, what we are prepared to see, and what we want to see—all of which are affected by our cultural and other experience. For example, some Canadians see an exploitable commodity when they look at the land, while many Aboriginal people see Mother Earth. Such differences can cause serious miscommunications in discussions about resource exploitation.

Most people have a tendency to attribute their own feelings or perceptions to other people as well. We may tune out messages we think will challenge our own positions; we seek messages that support our positions.

Use these correctives to check the accuracy of your perceptions:

1. Recognize that everyone’s perception will in some measure be biased.
2. Recognize that different positions cause us to view reality differently and to draw different conclusions from what we observe.
3. If a new idea does not fit neatly into your worldview, recognize that your worldview, not the idea, may need rethinking.

2. Observations, Inferences, and Judgments Are Not the Same

Ten minutes before lunchtime, Jan is talking on the phone. Her manager thinks, “She’s talking again. Doesn’t she ever work?” Jan is talking to a potential customer; she sees the call as essential, since it may eventually lead to a sale. She can’t understand why her manager doesn’t think she’s serious about her career.

Jan’s manager has jumped to the wrong conclusion. He is confusing observations and inferences.

An **observation** is a statement that you yourself have verified. An **inference** is a statement that you have not personally verified, but whose truth or falsity could be established. A **judgment** or an **opinion** is a statement that can never be verified, since it includes terms that cannot be measured objectively.

Usually, we call statements facts if nearly everyone in our culture accepts them as true. But remember that before Columbus’s arrival in North America, nearly everyone believed that the world was flat. Almost everything we know we take on someone else’s authority.

In everyday life and in business, you have to make decisions based on inferences (“The sales figures I’ve been given are accurate”) and even on judgments (“We have too much money tied up in long-term investments”). What should you as a reader or writer do?

1. Check to see whether a statement is an observation, an inference, or a judgment.
2. Estimate the accuracy of the inference by comparing it to your experiences with the source and with this kind of situation. If the cost of making a mistake is high, try to get more information.
3. Distinguish between what you know to be the case and what you think, assume, or judge to be true. In the following example, the italicized words remind readers that the statements are inferences.

He predicts that the stock market could move up an additional 10% to 20% during the next 12 to 18 months.

3. No Two Things Are Exactly Alike

We make sense of the world by grouping things into categories. Once we have categories, we often simply assign each new experience to a category and then make the response we think appropriate to that category.

Unfortunately, this convenient lumping can lead to **stereotyping** (► Chapter 5): putting similar people or events into a single category, even though significant differences exist.

To guard against stereotyping, do the following:

1. Recognize differences as well as similarities. The members of any one group are not identical.
2. Be sure that any analogy you use to make your point clear is accurate at the point of comparison.

4. Things Change Significantly with Time

If you keep up with the stock market, with commodity prices, or with interest rates, you know that things (as well as people) change significantly with time.

Someone who does not recognize that prices, situations, and people change is guilty of making a **frozen evaluation**. The following corrections help us remember not to freeze evaluations:

1. Date statements. The price of Research In Motion (RIM) stock on October 20, 2001 is not the price of BlackBerry stock on June 24, 2014.
2. Provide a frame of reference so that your reader can compare profits or percentages.
3. Periodically retest assumptions about people, businesses, products, and services to ensure that your evaluations still apply.



International The Word Is Not Connected to the Object

- In Germany, Oktoberfest is held in September.
- The Big Ten athletic conference has 12 teams.
- The principal ingredient in sweetbread is neither sugar nor bread but the cooked pancreas or thymus of a young animal, usually a calf.
- Wild rice isn’t necessarily wild. Nearly all the wild rice on grocery-store shelves is commercially cultivated in rice

paddies and turned and watered by machines. For centuries before Europeans came to North America, the Algonquin and Siouan peoples harvested wild rice, a seed from an aquatic grass rather than a member of the rice family. Canadian “Lake Wild Rice” is harvested from natural bodies of water rather than cultivated or paddy-grown as in the United States.*

*Adapted from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, “Canada’s wild rice industry,” retrieved March 3, 2005, from <http://www.agr.gc.ca>.

5. Most *Either–Or* Classifications Are Not Legitimate

A common logical fallacy (or error in reasoning) is **polarization**: trying to force the reader into a position by arguing that there are only two possible positions, one of which is clearly unacceptable:

Either the supervisor runs this department with a firm hand, or anarchy will take over and work will never get done.

Running a department “with a firm hand” is only one leadership style; sharing authority with or even transferring it entirely to subordinates need not result in anarchy.

Even people who admit that there are more than two possible positions may still limit the options unnecessarily. Such **blinding**, after the blinders that horses wear, can lead to polarization.

Sometimes blinding is responsible for bad questions in surveys:

Do you own _____, rent _____, or live with your parents _____?

What about someone who lives with a friend or with relatives other than parents?

Polarization unnecessarily sharpens divisions between people and obscures the common ground; blinding prevents our seeing creative solutions to the problems we face. Here are some correctives:

1. Recognize the complexities of a situation. Resist the temptation to oversimplify.
2. Whenever you see only two alternatives, consciously search for a third or more before making your decision.
3. Redefine the question or problem to get at the real issue.
 - ✗ Don't ask: How can I as a team leader show that I'm in control?
 - ✓ Ask: How can we improve the effectiveness of our report?

6. A Statement Is Never the Whole Story

It is impossible to know everything; it is impossible to tell someone everything. When we assume that a statement contains all the important information, or when the context is omitted (deliberately or inadvertently), meanings are inevitably twisted.

For example, media widely reported that Canada “fizzled” in the swimming pool at the 2008 Olympics. When a CBC reporter asked Canadian 4x200 relay swimmers how they might get to the “world stage,” swimmers responded that they were on the world stage, having just finished fifth and broken the Canadian record in an Olympic final!¹⁵

What can we do to avoid misstatements by implication?

1. Recognize that reports are filtered; you are not getting all the facts, and you are almost certainly getting inferences as well as observations.
2. Check the messages you send out to make sure you have provided the background information the reader needs to interpret your message accurately.

7. Words Are Not Identical to the Objects They Represent

People, who name things and use words, provide the only connection between the thing and the word.

We often respond to the word or label rather than to reality. Our degree of distress during a bleak economic period is affected by the label: a *slowdown* doesn't sound as bad as a *recession*, and even that is better than a *depression*. Advertisers understand that labelling a book a *best-seller* is sure to increase sales.

Try these correctives:

1. Support **claims** with specific **evidence** or **data**.
2. Check your own responses to make sure your decisions are based not on labels but on valid, logical arguments.
3. If your claims cause a **counterclaim**, **limit** your claim or provide a **rebuttal** to be convincing.

8. Communication Symbols Must Stand for Essentially the Same Thing in the Minds of the Sender and the Receiver

Communication depends on symbols. **Bypassing** occurs when two people use the same symbol to mean different things.

Bypassing creates misunderstandings. When employees hear communication skills described as “soft skills,” they may assume that they are as easy, simple, and natural as the label implies. They may understand communication only as a means of transmitting information and may therefore ignore complex issues of audience, purpose, and context. They may fail to invest the sort of time, planning, and effort that effective communication takes. They may also blame themselves or become frustrated when they discover that communicating is among the most challenging things we do in business.

Here are some measures that will help us avoid bypassing:

1. Be sensitive to contexts.
2. Consider the other person's background and situation. What is he or she likely to mean?
3. Mirror what the other person has said in your own words and check for accuracy. Be sure to use different words for the key ideas.
4. Ask questions.