

Chapter 15

What Would You Do?

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- 4.2 Improving Reception: Hearing What Others Feel and Think

Key Terms

Concept Check

Self-Assessment

Management Decision

Management Team Decision

Develop Your Career Potential

Take Two Video

STUDENT RESOURCES

ThomsonNOW On the Job and Biz Flix video applications, concept tutorial, and concept exercise

Xtra! Eight exhibit worksheets, author FAQs, quiz, Management News, and the video clips from the chapter with exercises

Web (<http://williams.swlearning.com>) Quiz, PowerPoint slides, and glossary terms for this chapter

JetBlue Headquarters, Forest Hills, New York.¹

Since airline deregulation nearly 30 years ago, more than 100 new airlines have been launched, but only two, AirTran and America West, have survived in the long term. Now JetBlue stands a chance to be the third if it can continue to prosper over the next five years. JetBlue, which started flying out of New York City's Kennedy Airport in February 2000, offers direct flights (no hub and spoke system like the major carriers), low fares, wide leather seats, a flat-screen TV with 36 live digital satellite channels for every passenger, one-way tickets (if you want a round trip, buy two), no requirement for Saturday night stayovers to get cheap fares, and great customer service.

To keep costs low, CEO David Neeleman modeled JetBlue after Southwest Airlines (Neeleman founded Morris Air, which was purchased by Southwest in the mid-1990s). Thus, JetBlue flies just one type of airplane (the Airbus A 320), which means that pilots, flight attendants, and mechanics have to be trained and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certified on only one kind of plane. It also flies in and out of smaller airports, like Long Beach (22 miles south of Los Angeles International), Ontario (35 miles east of downtown Los Angeles), and Fort Lauderdale (instead of busy Miami International). Not only are the landing fees that

airports charge airlines cheaper at smaller airports, but, more importantly, there is also less plane traffic, so it is easier to “turn” flights—meaning emptying the planes of arriving passengers, filling them with departing passengers, and getting them back on the runway and into the air as quickly as possible. Since planes make money only when they're in the air, the ability to turn flights quickly is critical. For now, at 6.4 cents per passenger mile, JetBlue has the lowest costs in the industry, even better than Southwest's. But part of those low costs derives from its new planes, which don't need expensive maintenance yet, and its nonunionized work force. In its financial statements, the company warns investors that its maintenance costs “will increase significantly” as its planes age. And, to keep its pilots, flight attendants, and mechanics happy, at the company, and nonunionized, JetBlue will have to

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pay them significantly more money (JetBlue's wages are much lower than those at established airlines).

Another potential problem is the company's plan to grow to 290 planes and 25,000 employees within five years from its current level of 73 planes and 6,500 employees! By contrast, it took Southwest 27 years, more than five times as long, to profitably grow to 280 aircraft. Hyper growth like this is likely to create a number of serious issues, not the least of which will be maintaining JetBlue's innovative, service-oriented culture. (Treat your people right. Communicate with your team. Inspire greatness in others. Encourage initiative and innovation. Do the right thing.) With the addition of nearly 20,000 new employees in five years, how can JetBlue's managers continue to communicate and strengthen its culture? How can they keep getting the message out about what makes JetBlue unique? Likewise, a fourfold increase in employees and planes is going to lead to astronomical growth in JetBlue's customer base. As a small airline, JetBlue has a reputation for listening to its customers (and employees). But with four to six times as many customers, how will JetBlue continue to monitor, meet, and satisfy its customers' (and employees') needs? Finally, as a startup company, JetBlue's top managers have close relationships with most employees. After all, they worked together to make the company a success. But how can JetBlue's top managers maintain close ties with its workers as the company grows into a much larger major airline?

If you were in charge at JetBlue, what would you do?

STUDY TIP

Close your book and write a list of the key concepts in this chapter. Or create flashcards for key concepts (concept on one side, explanation and example on the other). Flashcards are great portable study aids that you can use over and over, in a group, with a partner, or on your own.

It's estimated that managers spend over 80 percent of their day communicating with others.² Indeed, much of the basic management process—planning, organizing, leading and controlling—cannot be performed without effective communication. If this weren't reason enough to study communication, consider that effective oral communication, such as listening, following instructions, conversing, and giving feedback, is the most important skill for college graduates who are entering the work force.³ Furthermore, across all industries, poor communication skills rank as the single most important reason that people do not advance in their careers.⁴ Finally, communication is especially important for top managers like JetBlue's CEO. As Mark DeMichele, president of Arizona Public Service Company put it, "Communication is the key to success. CEOs can have good ideas, a vision, and a plan. But they also have to be able to communicate those plans to people who work for them."⁵

This chapter begins by examining the role of perception in communication and how perception can make it difficult for managers to achieve effective communication. Next, you'll read about the communication process and the various kinds of communication found in most organizations. In the last half of the chapter, the focus is on improving communication in organizations. You'll learn about one-on-one communication and then about how to communicate and listen to others effectively organization-wide.

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Whenever Kristy Keith's boss would say, "Today is a good day for change," she knew that bad news, such as layoffs or a lost client, was sure to follow. Keith says, "It was comforting to some people who didn't know better," but the experienced employees went "back to their offices and huddled" to discuss what her boss's announcement really meant (and it usually wasn't good).⁶ Many bosses try to make bad news sound good with phrases like "rightsizing" for layoffs, "merger of equals" for another company has acquired ours, "pursuing other interests" for employees who were fired, and "cost efficiencies" for your job is being outsourced to India. Why do managers sugarcoat bad news when communicating? Because, says management professor Paul Argenti, they think, "they'll get less flak."

communication
The process of transmitting information from one person or place to another.

Communication is the process of transmitting information from one person or place to another. While some bosses sugarcoat bad news, smart managers understand that in the end effective, straightforward communication between managers and employees is essential for success.

After reading the next two sections, you should be able to

- 1** explain the role that perception plays in communication and communication problems.
- 2** describe the communication process and the various kinds of communication in organizations.

1 PERCEPTION AND COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

One study found that when *employees* were asked whether their supervisor gave recognition for good work, only 13 percent said their supervisor gave a pat on the back, and a mere 14 percent said their supervisor gave sincere and thorough praise. But, when the *supervisors* of these employees were asked if they gave recognition for good work, 82 percent said they gave pats on the back, while 80 percent said that they gave sincere and thorough praise.⁷ Given that these managers and employees worked closely together, how could they have had such different perceptions of something as simple as praise?

Let's learn more about perception and communication problems by examining **1.1 the basic perception process**, **1.2 perception problems**, **1.3 how we perceive others**, and **1.4 how we perceive ourselves**. We'll also consider how all of these factors make it difficult for managers to achieve effective communication.

1.1 Basic Perception Process

As shown in Exhibit 15.1, **perception** is the process by which individuals attend to, organize, interpret, and retain information from their environments. And since communication is the process of transmitting information from one person or place to another, perception is obviously a key part of communication. Yet, perception can also be a key obstacle to communication.

As people perform their jobs, they are exposed to a wide variety of informational stimuli, such as emails, direct conversations with the boss or coworkers, rumors heard over lunch, stories about the company in the press, or a video broadcast of a speech from the CEO to all employees. Just being exposed to an informational stimulus, however, is no guarantee that an individual will pay attention or attend to that stimulus. People experience stimuli through their own **perceptual filters**—the personality-, psychology-, or experience-based differences that influence them to ignore or pay attention to particular stimuli. Because of filtering, people exposed to the same information will often disagree about what they saw or heard. For example, every major stadium in the National Football League has a huge TV monitor on which fans can watch replays. As the slow motion video is replayed on the monitor, you can often hear cheers *and* boos, as fans of both teams perceive the same replay in completely different ways. This happens because the fans' perceptual filters predispose them to attend to stimuli that support their team and not their opponents.

And the same perceptual filters that affect whether we believe our favorite team was “robbed” by the referees also affect communication, that is, the transmitting of information from one person or place to another. As shown in Exhibit 15.1, perceptual filters affect each part of the *perception process*: attention, organization, interpretation, and retention.

Attention is the process of noticing or becoming aware of particular stimuli. Because of perceptual filters, we attend to some stimuli and not others. *Organization* is the process of incorporating new information (from the stimuli that you notice) into your existing knowledge. Because of perceptual filters, we are more likely to incorporate new knowledge that is consistent with what we already know or believe. *Interpretation* is the process of attaching meaning to new knowledge. Because of perceptual filters, our preferences and beliefs strongly influence the meaning we attach to new information (e.g., “This must mean that top management supports our project.”). Finally, *retention* is the process of remembering interpreted information. In other words, retention is what we recall and commit to memory after we have perceived something. Of course, perceptual filters also affect retention, that is, what we're likely to remember in the end.

For instance, imagine that you miss the first 10 minutes of a TV show and turn on your TV to see two people talking to each other in a living room. As they talk, they walk around the room, picking up and putting down various items; some items, such as a ring, watch, and credit card, appear to be valuable, and others appear to be drug related, such as a water pipe for smoking marijuana. In fact, this situation was depicted on videotape in a well-known study that manipulated people's perceptual filters.⁸ One-third of the study participants were told that the people were there to rob the apartment. Another

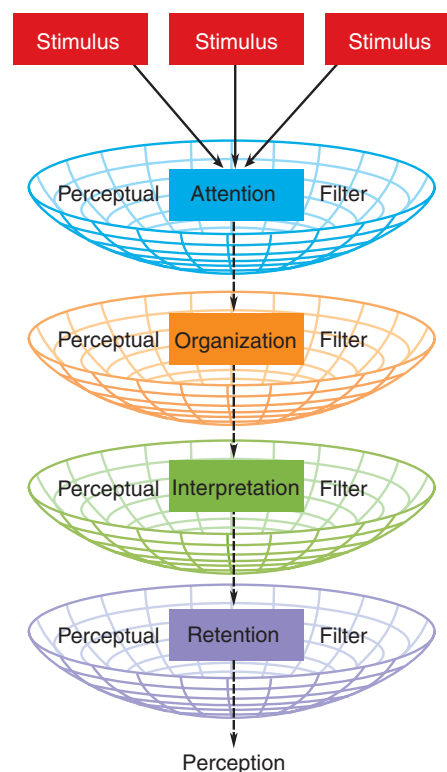


Exhibit 15.1
Basic Perception Process

perception

The process by which individuals attend to, organize, interpret, and retain information from their environments.

perceptual filters

The personality-, psychology-, or experience-based differences that influence people to ignore or pay attention to particular stimuli.

third of the participants were told that police were on their way to conduct a drug raid and that the people in the apartment were getting rid of incriminating evidence. The remaining third of the participants were told that the people were simply waiting for a friend.

After watching the video, participants were asked to list all of the objects from the video that they could remember. Not surprisingly, the different perceptual filters (theft, drug raid, and waiting for a friend) affected what the participants attended to, how they organized the information, how they interpreted it, and ultimately which objects they remembered. Participants who thought a theft was in progress were more likely to remember the valuable objects in the video. Those who thought a drug raid was imminent were more likely to remember the drug-related objects. There was no discernible pattern to the items remembered by those who thought that the people in the video were simply waiting for a friend.

In short, because of perception and perceptual filters, people are likely to pay attention to different things, organize and interpret what they pay attention to differently, and, finally, remember things differently. Consequently, even when people are exposed to the same communications (e.g., organizational memos, discussions with managers or customers), they can end up with very different perceptions and understandings. This is why communication can be so difficult and frustrating for managers. Let's review some of the communication problems created by perception and perceptual filters.

1.2 Perception Problems

Perception creates communication problems for organizations because people exposed to the same communication and information can end up with completely different ideas and understandings. Two of the most common perception problems in organizations are selective perception and closure.

At work, we are constantly bombarded with sensory stimuli—phones ringing, people talking in the background, computers dinging as new email arrives, people calling our names, and so forth. As limited processors of information, we cannot possibly notice, receive, and interpret all of this information. As a result, we attend to and accept some stimuli but screen out and reject others. This isn't a random process, however. **Selective perception** is the tendency to notice and accept objects and information consistent with our values, beliefs, and expectations, while ignoring or screening out inconsistent information. For example, when Jack Smith, the CEO of General Motors, was a junior level executive, he traveled to Japan to learn why Toyota's cars were so reliable and why Toyota was so productive. When he learned that Toyota could build a car with half as many people as GM, he wrote a report and shared his findings with GM's all-powerful executive committee. But no one on the committee believed what he told them. The executives just couldn't accept that a Japanese company was so much more effective than GM. Says Smith, "Never in my life have I been so quickly and unceremoniously blown out of the water."⁹

Once we have initial information about a person, event, or process, **closure** is the tendency to fill in the gaps where information is missing, that is, to assume that what we don't know is consistent with what we already know. If employees are told that budgets must be cut by 10 percent, they may automatically assume that 10 percent of employees will lose their jobs, too, even if that isn't the case. Not surprisingly, when closure occurs, people sometimes "fill in the gaps" with inaccurate information, and this can create problems for organizations.

For example, one of the first decisions faced by a new CEO was whether to approve a marketing campaign to launch a new product. Promotional materials, advertising, and a sales and distribution plan had all been completed. The only thing missing was the CEO's approval. Though he liked the campaign, he

selective perception

The tendency to notice and accept objects and information consistent with our values, beliefs, and expectations, while ignoring or screening out or not accepting inconsistent information.

closure

The tendency to fill in gaps of missing information by assuming that what we don't know is consistent with what we already know.

wanted to send a strong message that the company needed to change. So he killed the campaign, which demoralized the marketing manager and team that had spent a year developing it. Because they didn't know why the CEO canceled the marketing campaign, his top managers assumed (i.e., closure) that the CEO didn't have confidence in any of them either. Fearing that their decisions would be overturned, too, they began seeking the CEO's approval on everything from capital expenditures to personnel decisions to lower-level issues such as where, when, and whether to hold a conference for customers. After the marketing manager quit to take a job at another company, the CEO called his top managers together, assured them they had his confidence, told them he probably should have approved the marketing campaign, and said that he wouldn't repeat his mistake by doing anything to undermine their confidence or their authority.¹⁰

1.3 Perceptions of Others

Attribution theory says that we all have a basic need to understand and explain the causes of other people's behavior.¹¹ In other words, we need to know why people do what they do. According to attribution theory, we use two general reasons or attributions to explain people's behavior: an *internal attribution*, in which behavior is thought to be voluntary or under the control of the individual, and an *external attribution*, in which behavior is thought to be involuntary and outside of the control of the individual.

For example, have you ever seen someone changing a flat tire on the side of the road and thought to yourself, "What rotten luck—somebody's having a bad day"? If you did, you perceived the person through an external attribution known as the defensive bias. The **defensive bias** is the tendency for people to perceive themselves as personally and situationally similar to someone who is having difficulty or trouble.¹² And, when we identify with the person in a situation, we tend to use external attributions (i.e., the situation) to explain the person's behavior. For instance, since flat tires are common, it's easy to perceive ourselves in that same situation and put the blame on external causes, such as running over a nail.

Now, let's assume a different situation, this time in the workplace:

*A utility company worker puts a ladder on a utility pole and then climbs up to do his work. As he's doing his work, he falls from the ladder and seriously injures himself.*¹³

Answer this question: Who or what caused the accident? If you thought, "It's not the worker's fault. Anybody could fall from a tall ladder," then you're still operating from a defensive bias in which you see yourself as personally and situationally similar to someone who is having difficulty or trouble. In other words, you made an external attribution by attributing the accident to an external cause, meaning the situation.

In reality, however, most accident investigations initially blame the worker (i.e., an internal attribution) and not the situation (i.e., an external attribution). Typically, 60 to 80 percent of workplace accidents each year are blamed on "operator error," that is, the employees themselves. More complete investigations, however, usually show that workers are responsible for only 30 to 40 percent of all workplace accidents.¹⁴ Why are accident investigators so quick to blame workers? The reason is that they are committing the **fundamental attribution error**, which is the tendency to ignore external causes of behavior and to attribute other people's actions to internal causes.¹⁵ In other words, when investigators examine the possible causes of an accident, they're much more likely to assume that the accident is a function of the person and not the situation.

Which attribution, the defensive bias or the fundamental attribution error, are workers likely to make when something goes wrong? In general, as shown in Exhibit 15.2, employees and coworkers are more likely to perceive events and explain behavior from a defensive bias. Because they do the work themselves and

attribution theory

A theory that states that we all have a basic need to understand and explain the causes of other people's behavior.

defensive bias

The tendency for people to perceive themselves as personally and situationally similar to someone who is having difficulty or trouble.

fundamental attribution error

The tendency to ignore external causes of behavior and to attribute other people's actions to internal causes.

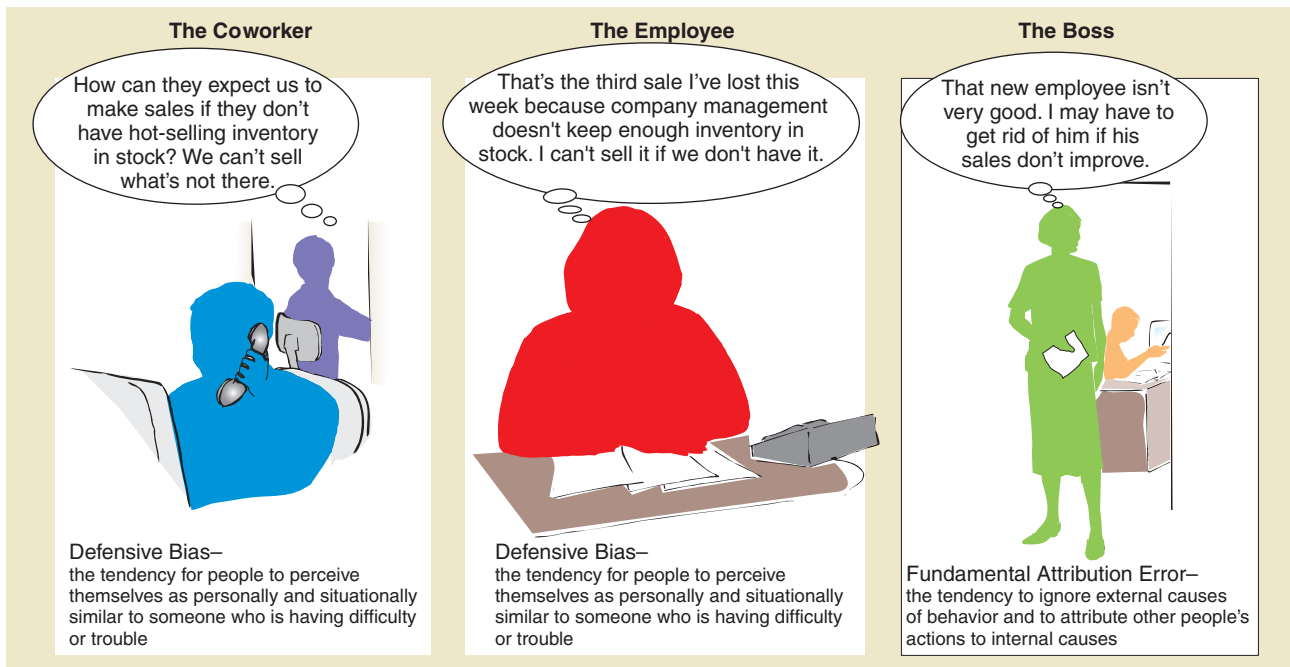


Exhibit 15.2
Defensive Bias and Fundamental
Attribution Error

see themselves as similar to others who make mistakes, have accidents, or are otherwise held responsible for things that go wrong at work, employees and coworkers are likely to attribute problems to external causes, such as failed machinery, poor support, or inadequate training. By contrast, because they are typically observers (who don't do the work themselves) and see themselves as situationally and personally different from workers, managers (i.e., the boss) tend to commit the fundamental attribution error and blame mistakes, accidents, and other things that go wrong on workers (i.e., an internal attribution).

Consequently, in most workplaces, when things go wrong, workers and managers can be expected to take opposite views. Therefore, together, the defensive bias, which is typically used by workers, and the fundamental attribution error, which is typically made by managers, present a significant challenge to effective communication and understanding in organizations.

1.4 Self-Perception

A manager at ExxonMobil Corporation decided that he wanted to find a way to help his poor-performing employees improve their performance. So he sat down with each of them and, in a positive, nonconfrontational way, explained, "I'm here to help you improve." Most of his employees took his offer in the spirit intended and accepted his help. However, one employee burst into tears because no one had ever told her that her performance needed improvement. In fact, her hour-long outburst was so emotional that her manager decided that he would never "criticize" her again.¹⁶

self-serving bias

The tendency to overestimate our value by attributing successes to ourselves (internal causes) and attributing failures to others or the environment (external causes).

The **self-serving bias** is the tendency to overestimate our value by attributing successes to ourselves (internal causes) and attributing failures to others or the environment (external causes).¹⁷ As the example with the upset ExxonMobil employee illustrates, the self-serving bias can make it especially difficult for managers to talk to employees about performance problems. In general, people have a need to maintain a positive self-image. This need is so strong that when people seek feedback at work, they typically want verification of their worth (rather than information about performance deficiencies) or assurance that mistakes or problems weren't their fault.¹⁸ And, when managerial communication threatens people's positive self-image, they can become defensive and emotional. They quit listening, and communication becomes ineffective. In the

second half of the chapter, which focuses on improving communication, we'll explain ways in which managers can minimize this self-serving bias and improve effective one-on-one communication with employees.

Review 1: Perception and Communication Problems

Perception is the process by which people attend to, organize, interpret, and retain information from their environments. Perception is not a straightforward process, however. Because of perceptual filters, such as selective perception and closure, people exposed to the same information stimuli often end up with very different perceptions and understandings. Perception-based differences can also lead to differences in the attributions (internal or external) that managers and workers make when explaining workplace behavior. In general, workers are more likely to explain behavior from a defensive bias, in which they attribute problems to external causes (i.e., the situation). Managers, on the other hand, tend to commit the fundamental attribution error, attributing problems to internal causes (i.e., the worker associated with a mistake or error). Consequently, when things go wrong, it's common for managers to blame workers and for workers to blame the situation or context in which they do their jobs. Finally, this problem is compounded by a self-serving bias that leads people to attribute successes to internal causes and failures to external causes. So, when workers receive negative feedback from managers, they may become defensive and emotional and not hear what their managers have to say. In short, perceptions and attributions represent a significant challenge to effective communication and understanding in organizations.

2 KINDS OF COMMUNICATION

Each year, on the anniversary of your hiring date, you receive a written assessment of your performance from your boss. This year, after receiving your performance appraisal, you gripe about it to your best friend, a coworker in a cubicle down the hall. Despite your griping, however, you appreciate that your boss cut you some slack, allowing you extra days off when you went through a divorce earlier this year. How did your boss know you were having personal problems? He knew something was wrong from your nonverbal communication—your rounded shoulders, the bags under your eyes, and your overall lack of energy. There are many kinds of communication—formal, informal, coaching/counseling, and nonverbal—but they all follow the same fundamental process.

Let's learn more about the different kinds of communication by examining **2.1 the communication process**, **2.2 formal communication channels**, **2.3 informal communication channels**, **2.4 coaching and counseling**, or **one-on-one communication**, and **2.5 nonverbal communication**.

2.1 The Communication Process

Earlier in the chapter, we defined *communication* as the process of transmitting information from one person or place to another. Exhibit 15.3 displays a model of the communication process and its major components: the sender (message to be conveyed, encoding the message, transmitting the message); the receiver (receiving message, decoding message, and the message that was understood); and noise, which interferes with the communication process.

The communication process begins when a *sender* thinks of a message he or she wants to convey to another person. For example, a few years ago, the CEO of a phone company turned a corner near his house, saw a pay phone booth sitting there, and thought, "That's an odd location for a phone booth. I wonder how much money it earns us."¹⁹ The next step is to encode the message. **Encoding** means putting a message into a written, verbal, or symbolic form that can be recognized and understood by the receiver. The sender then *transmits the message* via *communication channels*. In the case of the CEO and the phone

encoding

Putting a message into a written, verbal, or symbolic form that can be recognized and understood by the receiver.

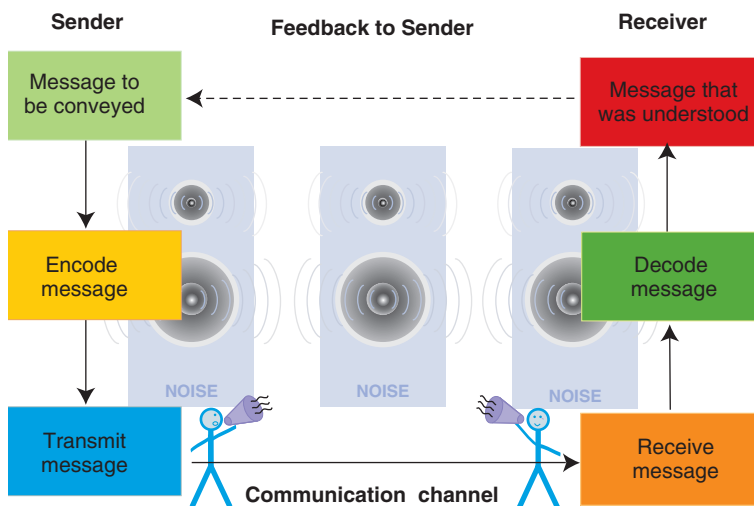


Exhibit 15.3

The Interpersonal Communication Process

decoding

The process by which the receiver translates the written, verbal, or symbolic form of a message into an understood message.

feedback to sender

In the communication process, a return message to the sender that indicates the receiver's understanding of the message.

noise

Anything that interferes with the transmission of the intended message.

booth, the CEO ran into a midlevel employee the next day and said, “I’m curious. How much do we make on that phone booth near my house? It’s not a big deal. Don’t spend a lot of time on it. Just send me a note.”²⁰ With some communication channels such as the telephone and face-to-face communication, the sender receives immediate feedback, whereas with others such as email (text messages and file attachments), fax, beepers, voice mail, memos, and letters, the sender must wait for the receiver to respond.

Unfortunately, because of technical difficulties (e.g., fax down, dead battery on the mobile phone, inability to read email attachments) or people-based transmission problems (e.g., forgetting to pass on the message), messages aren’t always transmitted. If the message is transmitted

and received, however, the next step is for the receiver to decode it. **Decoding** is the process by which the receiver translates the written, verbal, or symbolic form of the message into an understood message. However, the message, as understood by the receiver, isn’t always the same message that was intended by the sender. Because of different experiences or perceptual filters, receivers may attach a completely different meaning to a message than was intended. With respect to the phone booth, the midlevel employee was writing that quick note that the CEO wanted when his manager walked up and asked, “What are you doing?” The employee explained, “Oh, this is for the CEO. He stopped by and wanted to know how much we make on that phone booth near his house.” At this point the manager said—and this is where the message is improperly decoded—“You can’t send him a little note. There’s no comparison between that phone booth and other booths in the area.”

The last step of the communication process occurs when the receiver gives the sender feedback. **Feedback to sender** is a return message to the sender that indicates the receiver’s understanding of the message (of what the receiver was supposed to know, to do, or to not do). Feedback makes senders aware of possible miscommunications and enables them to continue communicating until the receiver understands the intended message. Unfortunately, feedback doesn’t always occur in the communication process. In the case of the CEO and the phone booth, two months after his inquiry about the phone booth near his house, the midlevel employee to whom he posed the question and that employee’s executive vice president walked into his office. When they presented the CEO with a three ring binder containing a report and detailed analysis and charts regarding the phone booth near his house, he looked at them and said, “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”²¹

Complacency and overconfidence about the ease and simplicity of communication can lead senders and receivers to simply assume that they share a common understanding of the message and to not use feedback to improve the effectiveness of their communication. This is a serious mistake, especially since messages and feedback are always transmitted with and against a background of noise. **Noise** is anything that interferes with the transmission of the intended message. Noise can occur in any of the following situations:

1. The sender isn’t sure what message to communicate.
2. The message is not clearly encoded.
3. The wrong communication channel is chosen.
4. The message is not received or decoded properly.
5. The receiver doesn’t have the experience or time to understand the message.

When managers wrongly assume that communication is easy, they reduce communication to something called the “conduit metaphor.”²² Strictly speaking, a conduit is a pipe or tube that protects electrical wire. The **conduit metaphor** refers to the mistaken assumption that senders can pipe their intended messages directly into the heads of receivers with perfect clarity and without noise or perceptual filters interfering with the receivers’ understanding of the message. However, this just isn’t possible. Even if managers could telepathically direct their thoughts straight into receivers’ heads, misunderstandings and communication problems would still occur because words and symbols typically have multiple meanings, depending on how they’re used. For example, Exhibit 15.4 shows several meanings of an extremely common word, *fine*. Depending on how you use it, *fine* can mean a penalty; a good job; that something is delicate, small, pure, or flimsy; or that something is okay.

1. If you exceed the 55 mph speed limit, you may have to pay a *fine* (meaning a penalty).
2. During the playoffs, Shaquille O’Neal turned in a *fine* performance (meaning excellent).
3. The machine has to run at a slow speed because the tolerance is extremely *fine* (meaning tight).
4. Putting this puzzle together is difficult because many of the pieces are so *fine* (meaning small).
5. Recently, experiments have been conducted on manufacturing certain drugs in space. It is hoped that these drugs, as compared to those manufactured on earth, will be extremely *fine* (meaning pure).
6. Be careful when you handle that antique book. Its pages are extremely *fine* (meaning flimsy).
7. That’s *fine* with me (meaning okay).

In summary, the conduit metaphor causes problems in communication by making managers too complacent and confident in their ability to easily and accurately transfer messages to receivers. Managers who want to be effective communicators need to carefully choose words and symbols that will help receivers derive the intended meaning of a message. Furthermore, they need to be aware of all steps of the communication process, beginning with the sender (message to be conveyed, encoding the message, transmitting the message) and ending with the receiver (receiving message, decoding message, understanding the message, and using feedback to communicate what was understood).

2.2 Formal Communication Channels

An organization’s **formal communication channel** is the system of official channels that carry organizationally approved messages and information. Organizational objectives, rules, policies, procedures, instructions, commands, and requests for information are all transmitted via the formal communication system or “channel.” There are three formal communication channels: downward communication, upward communication, and horizontal communication.²³

Downward communication flows from higher to lower levels in an organization. Downward communication is used to issue orders down the organizational hierarchy, to give organizational members job-related information, to give managers and workers performance reviews from upper managers, and to clarify organizational objectives and goals.²⁴ When an economic downturn quickly caused a significant drop in sales at Agilent, a technology company, CEO Ned Barnholt summoned his top managers. Together, they decided that their first strategy would be to freeze hiring, cut expenses, and cut temporary workers. Then, through

conduit metaphor

The mistaken assumption that senders can pipe their intended messages directly into the heads of receivers with perfect clarity and without noise or perceptual filters interfering with the receivers’ understanding of the message.

Exhibit 15.4

Meanings of the Word *Fine*

formal communication channel

The system of official channels that carry organizationally approved messages and information.

downward communication

Communication that flows from higher to lower levels in an organization.

emails, the twice-weekly company newsletter, and a speech played over the public-address system at all Agilent facilities, Barnholt explained why the cuts were necessary and how they would help the company; then he encouraged the troops to cut costs any way they could. Agilent managers reinforced the message at “coffee talks,” the regular brainstorming meetings that they hold with their employees. Employees responded by using Web sites to house data electronically (to avoid printing costs), staying with friends and family when on company travel (to avoid hotel charges), and bringing bags of potato chips to company recruiting events (to avoid costly catering charges). Within months, thanks to effective downward communicating, Agilent’s travel expenses had dropped by 50 percent, and the company’s purchases of personal computers had dropped by 70 percent.²⁵

upward communication

Communication that flows from lower to higher levels in an organization.




Upward communication flows from lower levels to higher levels in an organization. Upward communication is used to give higher-level managers feedback about operations, issues, and problems; to help higher-level managers assess organizational performance and effectiveness; to encourage lower-level managers and employees to participate in organizational decision making; and to give those at lower levels the chance to share their concerns with higher-level authorities. Citibank Malaysia started a program called “pulse lunches,” in which the top managers in each Citibank market would take employees’ “pulses” by listening to their concerns at lunch and then address those concerns soon after. At first, Citibank’s Malaysian employees were suspicious, fearing that their comments would not be kept confidential or that management would punish people for being critical or speaking out. Mohd Rahmat, who attended one of the first lunches, said, “No one could believe that the [local] CEO wanted to come and talk to employees.” Perceptions changed, however, as Citibank managers worked hard to address employees’ problems.²⁶ Now, as a result of the pulse lunches, Citibank Malaysia’s employees formally appraise their boss’s performance and are given time off after they’ve worked especially long hours on important projects. And, to encourage more feedback and prove that they were listening, the top managers who host pulse lunches typically send out post-lunch newsletters that summarize employees’ concerns without naming names.²⁷ Today, Citibank uses pulse lunches in 102 different countries.

horizontal communication

Communication that flows among managers and workers who are at the same organizational level.

Horizontal communication flows among managers and workers who are at the same organizational level. For instance, horizontal communication occurs when the day shift supervisor comes in at 7:30 A.M. for a half-hour discussion with the midnight shift supervisor who leaves at 8:00 A.M., or when the regional marketing director meets with the regional accounting director to discuss costs and plans for a new marketing campaign. Horizontal communication helps facilitate coordination and cooperation between different parts of a company and allows coworkers to share relevant information. It also helps people at the same level resolve conflicts and solve problems without involving high levels of management. For example, just by taking the time to share scheduling information across divisions, the California highway construction department saved millions of dollars; the divisions were able to coordinate their efforts and thereby avoid ripping up and resurfacing the same roads several times over the course of different projects. Likewise, Siemens and Osram Sylvania have instituted formal communication at factory shift changes; supervisors from the departing work shift meet with the supervisors from the incoming shift to discuss problems and issues (e.g., parts that are needed, machines that are malfunctioning) that arose during the shift.²⁸

In general, what can managers do to improve formal communication? First, decrease reliance on downward communication. Second, increase chances for upward communication by increasing personal contact with lower-level managers and workers. Third, as at Siemens and Osram Sylvania, encourage much greater use of horizontal communication. Finally, be aware of the problems associated with downward, upward, and horizontal communication, some of which are listed in Exhibit 15.5.

 DOWNWARD COMMUNICATION	 UPWARD COMMUNICATION	 HORIZONTAL COMMUNICATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Overusing downward communication by sending too many messages ⊙ Issuing contradictory messages ⊙ Hurriedly communicating vague, unclear messages ⊙ Issuing messages that indicate management's low regard for lower-level workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ The risk involved with telling upper management about problems (i.e., fear of retribution) ⊙ Managers reacting angrily and defensively when workers report problems ⊙ Not enough opportunities or channels for lower-level workers to contact upper levels of management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊙ Management discouraging or punishing horizontal communication, viewing it as small talk ⊙ Not giving managers and workers the time or opportunity for horizontal communication ⊙ Not enough opportunities or channels for lower-level workers to engage in horizontal communication

Source: G. L. Kreps, *Organizational Communication: Theory and Practice* (New York: Longman, 1990).

2.3 Informal Communication Channels

An organization's **informal communication channel**, sometimes called the “**grapevine**,” is the transmission of messages from employee to employee outside of formal communication channels. The grapevine arises out of curiosity, that is, the need to know what is going on in an organization and how it might affect you or others. To satisfy this curiosity, employees need a consistent supply of relevant, accurate, in-depth information about “who is doing what and what changes are occurring within the organization.”²⁹ Employee Paul Haze agrees, saying, “If employees don’t have a definite explanation from management, they tend to interpret for themselves.”³⁰

For example, at the University of Texas Medical Branch (part of the UT system), any of the 13,000 employees wanting to know the truth about rumors working their way through the campus grapevine can log on to the school’s Web site and click on “Rumors or Trumors.” Campus administrators comment on each posted rumor and rate it using the “kernel of truth” system. As shown in Exhibit 15.6, one kernel of corn indicates a little bit of truth. Two kernels indicate that more of the rumor is accurate, but it’s still not entirely true. Three kernels indicate that the rumor is accurate. Wildly inaccurate rumors, such as the one in Exhibit 15.6 about new ID tags being able to track employees’ location, are rated with a spaceship, indicating that they’re too far out to be believed. Reaction thus far has been positive. Lecturer Sheryl Prather says, “It looks sincere. I’ve found that everything thus far has been pretty factual. It at least shows that somebody’s listening to some of the talk that goes on around here and [is] putting it down on the computer where we can all see it.”³¹

Grapevines arise out of informal communication networks, such as the gossip or cluster chains shown in Exhibit 15.7. In a *gossip chain*, one “highly connected” individual shares information with many other managers and workers. By contrast, in a *cluster chain*, numerous people simply tell a few of their friends. The result in both cases is that information flows freely and quickly through the organization. Some believe that grapevines are a waste of employees’ time, that they promote gossip and rumors that fuel political speculation, and that they are sources of highly unreliable, inaccurate information. Yet studies clearly show that grapevines are highly accurate sources of information for a number of reasons.³² First, because grapevines typically carry “juicy” information that is interesting and

Exhibit 15.5

Common Problems with Downward, Upward, and Horizontal Communication


informal communication channel (“grapevine”)

The transmission of messages from employee to employee outside of formal communication channels.


Exhibit 15.6


“Rumors or Trumors” at the University of Texas Medical Branch


Rumor: I heard that the new “smart” ID badges will store all kinds of my private information, and worse, they can be used to track where I am at UTMB. True?


Rating: 

TRUTH-O-METER

 = Want to buy some swampland?

 = A “kernel” of truth

 = Maybe, but...

 = The whole truth

Response: No, the cards will not contain anything but the most basic information, much as ID cards do today. No personal data, no employment history, no critical financial info or medical records. The cards will primarily verify identity (your photo and name help do that) and access, the same way magnetic strips and keys do now. In the future, they will also enable a user, at his/her discretion, to use them as a debit card for campus purchases, like a pre-paid phone card, and will help manage access to computer resources.

The cards can’t track your location. The proximity readers are designed with a narrow sensitivity field (you wouldn’t want doors unexpectedly unlocking because someone with access is walking in a nearby hallway). However, the system does register when you are in or out of a restricted area. This is no different than is currently the case with the magnetic key cards, and is an important aspect of maintaining security in sensitive research, clinical, and business areas.

Source: “UTMB’s Rumors or Trumors,” *The University of Texas Medical Branch*, [Online] available at <http://www.utmb.edu/rumor/rumors%5Farchive%5F15.htm>, 12 June 2005.

timely, information spreads rapidly. At Meghan De Goyler Hauser’s former company, the word on the grapevine was that her boss drank on the job, the company accountant was stealing the company blind, and that one of her coworkers was a nude model. She says, “The rumors all turned out to be true.”³³ Second, since information is typically spread by face-to-face conversation, receivers can send feedback to make sure they understand the message that is being communicated. This reduces misunderstandings and increases accuracy. Third, since most of the information in a company moves along the grapevine, as opposed to formal communication channels, people can usually verify the accuracy of information by “checking it out” with others.

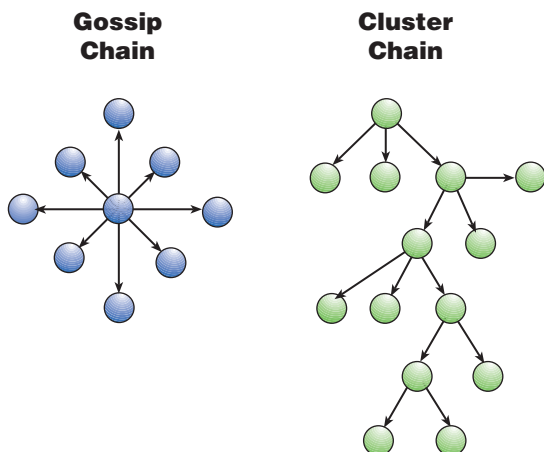
What can managers do to “manage” organizational grapevines? The very worst thing managers can do is withhold information or try to punish those who share information with others. The grapevine abhors a vacuum, and in the absence of information from company management, rumors and anxiety will flourish. For example, employee Tim Weidman says that when the software services company he was working for announced it was considering layoffs, “People tried to get work done, but they were posting their résumés and checking Monster.com every day. Everyone had their résumés on the street.”³⁴ According to management professor Allan Kimmel, if managers “don’t come through with their promises, or they communicate the full store [of information] ineffectively, they have themselves to blame.”³⁵

A better strategy is to embrace the grapevine and keep employees informed about possible changes and strategies. Management consultant Arnold Brown says that managers should “identify the key people in [their] company’s grapevine and, instead of punishing them, feed them information. When a company issues a press release it knows what newspapers to contact, so why not know your internal media?”³⁶

Finally, in addition to using the grapevine to communicate with others, managers should not overlook the grapevine as a tremendous source of valuable information and feedback. In fact, information flowing through organizational grapevines is estimated to be 75 to 95 percent accurate.³⁷ For this reason,

Exhibit 15.7

Grapevine Communication Networks



Source: K. Davis & J. W. Newstrom, *Human Behavior at Work: Organizational Behavior*, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989).

managers should gather their courage and be willing to read the anonymous comments that angry, frustrated employees post on Internet “gripe sites” like *untied.com* (about United Airlines), *stainedapron.com* (for griping restaurant workers), or *vault.com*, where employees post gripes about hundreds of different companies. Bob Rosner, who runs a gripe site called *working-wounded.com*, suggests managers look for themes rather than responding to any particular message. Mark Oldman, cofounder of *vault.com*, says, “Most companies are delighted that we provide a forum to talk candidly for better or worse about a company. It [*vault.com*] basically just digitizes what already happens offline at the water cooler.”³⁸ And Jeff Jarvis, author of *The Blog BuzzMachine*, says, “There should be someone at every company whose job is to put into Google and blog search engines the name of the company or the brand, followed by the word ‘sucks,’ just to see what customers [and employees] are saying.”³⁹

Exhibit 15.8 lists other strategies that today’s managers can use in dealing with gripe sites and blogs, the newest forms of the traditional organizational grapevine. See Section 4.2 for more on how managers can use blogs to do a better job of hearing what employees and customers feel and think about their companies.

1. Correct misinformation. Put an end to false rumors and set the record straight. Don’t be defensive.
2. Don’t take angry comments personally.
3. Give your name and contact number to show employees that you’re concerned and that they can contact you directly.
4. Hold a town meeting to discuss the issues raised on the gripe site.
5. Set up anonymous internal discussion forums on the company server. Then encourage employees to gripe anonymously on the company intranet, rather than on the Web.

Source: J. Simons, “Stop Moaning about Gripe Sites and Log On,” *Fortune*, 2 April 2001, 181.

Exhibit 15.8
Organizational Grapevines: Dealing with Internet Gripe Sites

2.4 Coaching and Counseling: One-on-One Communication

When the Wyatt Company surveyed 531 U.S. companies undergoing major changes and restructuring, it asked their CEOs, “If you could go back and change one thing, what would it be?” The answer? “The way we communicated with our employees.” The CEOs said that instead of flashy videos, printed materials, or formal meetings, they would make greater use of one-on-one communication, especially with employees’ immediate supervisors instead of with higher-level executives that employees didn’t know.⁴⁰

Coaching and counseling are two kinds of one-on-one communication. **Coaching** is communicating with someone for the direct purpose of improving the person’s on-the-job performance or behavior.⁴¹ Managers tend to make several mistakes when coaching employees, however. First, they wait for a problem before coaching. Jim Concelman, who is manager for leadership development at Development Dimensions International, says, “Of course, a boss has to coach an employee if a mistake has been made, but they shouldn’t be waiting for the error. While it is a lot easier to see a mistake and correct it, people learn more through success than through failure, so bosses should ensure that employees are experiencing as many successes as possible. Successful employees lead to a more successful organization.”⁴² Second, when mistakes *are* made, managers wait much too long before talking to the employee about the problem. Management professor Ray Hilgert says, “A manager must respond as soon as possible after an incident of poor performance. Don’t bury your head. . . . When employees are told nothing, they assume everything is okay.”⁴³ Third, when managers finally work up the courage to confront the employee, they sometimes get angry. Michael Markovitz, CEO of Argosy Education Group, says, “Managers are angry, and they yell and criticize the employee. That almost never works. It’s demeaning to the employee, and the positive message gets lost. You feel mad because an employee isn’t doing his or her job? Go to the gym or walk around the block—exercise is a great cure for anger. Your anger is understandable, but you still must not abuse your employees.”⁴⁴ In Section 3, you’ll learn a number of specific steps for effective one-on-one communication and coaching.

coaching

Communicating with someone for the direct purpose of improving the person’s on-the-job performance or behavior.

PROBLEM OR NEED	SERVICE PROVIDED
Stress, depression, relationships, substance abuse	Counseling
Pregnancy, adoption, day care, nutrition, fertility	Child care
Health and nutrition, care options, Alzheimer's disease	Senior care
Wills, leases, estate plans, adoptions	Legal services
Referrals and discounts on chiropractic care, acupuncture, massage therapy, vitamins	Health/lifestyle assistance
Pet-sitting resources, obedience training, veterinarians	Pet care
Retirement planning, debt consolidation, budgeting	Financial services

Source: "You Can Do It. We Can Help," CIGNA Behavioral Health, [Online] available at <http://www.hr.tcu.edu/eappages/core/html/default.html>, 30 March 2002.

Exhibit 15.9
Services Provided by Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

family members address personal issues. Exhibit 15.9 lists the standard services provided by EAPs.

counseling

Communicating with someone about non-job-related issues that may be affecting or interfering with the person's performance.

nonverbal communication

Any communication that doesn't involve words.

kinesics

Movements of the body and face.

2.5 Nonverbal Communication

When people talk, they send both verbal and nonverbal messages. Verbal messages are sent and received through the words we speak. "That was a great presentation." By contrast, nonverbal messages are sent through body language, facial expressions, or tone of voice. For instance, hearing "THAT was a GREAT presentation!" is very different from hearing "ahem [clearing throat], that was, ahem, ahem, a great presentation."

More specifically, **nonverbal communication** is any communication that doesn't involve words. Nonverbal communication and messages almost always accompany verbal communication and may support and reinforce the verbal message or contradict it. The importance of nonverbal communication is well established. Researchers have estimated that as much as 93 percent of any message is transmitted nonverbally, with 55 percent coming from body language and facial expressions and 38 percent coming from the tone and pitch of the voice.⁴⁶ Since many nonverbal cues are unintentional, receivers often consider nonverbal communication to be a more accurate representation of what senders are thinking and feeling than the words they use. If you have ever asked someone out on a date and been told "yes," but realized that the real answer was "no," then you understand the importance of paying attention to nonverbal communication.

Kinesics and paralanguage are two kinds of nonverbal communication.⁴⁷ **Kinesics** (from the Greek word *kinesis*, meaning "movement") are movements of the body and face.⁴⁸ These movements include arm and hand gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, folding arms, crossing legs, and leaning toward or away from another person. For example, people tend to avoid eye contact when they are embarrassed or unsure of the message they are sending. Crossed arms and/or legs usually indicate defensiveness or that the person is not receptive to the message or the sender. Also, people tend to smile frequently when they are seeking someone's approval.

It turns out that kinesics play an incredibly important role in communication. Studies of married couples' kinesic interactions can predict whether they will stay married with 93 percent accuracy.⁴⁹ The key is the ratio of positive to negative kinesic interactions that husbands and wives make as they communicate.

By contrast, **counseling** is communicating with someone about non-job-related issues that may be affecting or interfering with the person's performance. However, counseling does not mean that managers should try to be clinicians, even though an estimated 20 percent of employees are dealing with personal problems at any one time. Dana Kiel, who works for CIGNA Behavioral Health, says, "We call it the quicksand. If you're a good supervisor, you do care about your employees, but it's not your job to be a therapist."⁴⁵ Instead, managers should discuss specific performance problems, listen if the employee chooses to share personal issues, and then recommend that the employee call the company's *Employee Assistance Program (EAP)*. EAPs are typically free when provided as part of a company's benefit package. In emergencies or times of crisis, EAPs can offer immediate counseling and support; they can also provide referrals to organizations and professionals that can help employees and their

Negative kinesic expressions such as eye rolling suggest contempt, whereas positive kinetic expressions such as maintaining eye contact and nodding suggest listening and caring. When the ratio of positive to negative interactions drops below 5 to 1, the chances for divorce quickly increase. Kinesics operate similarly in the workplace, providing clues about people's true feelings, over and beyond what they say (or don't say). For instance, Louis Giuliano, CEO of ITT, which makes heavy use of teams, says, "When you get a team together and say to them we're going to change a process, you always have people who say, 'No, we're not.'" They usually don't say it out loud, but "the body language is there," making it clear that their real answer is "no."⁵⁰

Paralanguage includes the pitch, rate, tone, volume, and speaking pattern (i.e., use of silences, pauses, or hesitations) of one's voice. For example, when people are unsure what to say, they tend to decrease their communication effectiveness by speaking softly. When people are nervous, they tend to talk faster and louder. These characteristics have a tremendous influence on whether listeners are receptive to what speakers are saying. For example, Vinya Lynch believes that her "timid and sing songy" voice is why others don't take her seriously and cut her off when she makes presentations. Lynch says, "When I listen to myself, it doesn't sound intelligent." She began working with a speech coach (\$2,250 for 10 sessions) because, as she says, "I want my voice to be charismatic and confident all at the same time."⁵¹

In short, because nonverbal communication is so informative, especially when it contradicts verbal communication, managers need to learn how to monitor and control their nonverbal behavior.

Review 2: Kinds of Communication

Organizational communication depends on the communication process, formal and informal communication channels, one-on-one communication, and nonverbal communication. The major components of the communication process are the sender, the receiver, noise, and feedback. The conduit metaphor refers to the mistaken assumption that senders can pipe their intended messages directly into receivers' heads with perfect clarity. With noise, perceptual filters, and little feedback, however, this just isn't possible. Formal communication channels, such as downward, upward, and horizontal communication, carry organizationally approved messages and information. By contrast, the informal communication channel, called the "grapevine," arises out of curiosity and is carried out through gossip or cluster chains. Managers should use the grapevine to keep employees informed and to obtain better, clearer information for themselves. There are two kinds of one-on-one communication. Coaching is used to improve on-the-job performance while counseling is used to communicate about non-job-related issues affecting job performance. Nonverbal communication, such as kinesics and paralanguage, accounts for as much as 93 percent of a message's content and understanding. Since nonverbal communication is so informative, managers need to learn how to monitor and control their nonverbal behavior.



Nonverbal communication is equally, if not more, important than the words being spoken. In this photo, the gentleman with his arms crossed could be considered unreceptive to his co-worker's message.

PROTECT PERSONAL, CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

By virtue of their jobs, managers are privy to information that others aren't. Although much of that information will be about the company, some of it will be personal and confidential information about employees. As a manager, you have a moral and legal obligation to protect employees' privacy. Moreover, sharing others' personal, confidential information may dissuade employees from confiding in managers or seeking help from a company's employee assistance program. Does this mean that if employees confide in you that you can't tell anyone else? No, if you're a manager, sometimes you may have to inform your boss or human resources about a situation. But only inform those who have a need to know and who are also obligated to protect employee privacy. Furthermore, not all information that employees disclose to you should be protected. Information about discrimination, sexual harassment, potential workplace violence, or conflicts of interest between employees and the company may need to be shared with upper management to protect the rights and well-being of others. So, when employees disclose personal, confidential information, do the right thing. Don't discuss it with others unless it falls into one of the exceptions discussed here.⁵²

DOING THE RIGHT THING

paralanguage

The pitch, rate, tone, volume, and speaking pattern (i.e., use of silences, pauses, or hesitations) of one's voice.

How to Improve Communication

An employee comes in late every day, takes long lunches, and leaves early. His coworkers resent his tardiness and having to do his share of the work. Another employee makes as many as 10 personal phone calls a day on company time. Still another employee's job performance has dropped significantly in the last three months. How do you communicate with these employees to begin solving these problems? Or suppose that you supervise a division of 50, 100, or even 1,000 people. How can you communicate effectively with everyone in that division? Moreover, how can top managers communicate effectively with everyone in the company when employees work in different offices, states, countries, and time zones? Turning that around, how can managers make themselves accessible so that they can hear what employees feel and think throughout the organization?

When it comes to improving communication, managers face two primary tasks, managing one-on-one communication and managing organization-wide communication.

After reading the next two sections, you should be able to

- 3** explain how managers can manage effective one-on-one communication.
- 4** describe how managers can manage effective organization-wide communication.

3 MANAGING ONE-ON-ONE COMMUNICATION

In Chapter 1, you learned that, on average, first-line managers spend 57 percent of their time with people, middle managers spend 63 percent of their time directly with people, and top managers spend as much as 78 percent of their time dealing with people.⁵³ These numbers make it clear that managers spend a great deal of time in one-on-one communication with others.

Learn more about managing one-on-one communication by reading how to **3.1 choose the right communication medium**, **3.2 be a good listener**, **3.3 give effective feedback**, and **3.4 improve cross-cultural communication**.

3.1 Choosing the Right Communication Medium

Sometimes messages are poorly communicated simply because they are delivered using the wrong **communication medium**, which is the method used to deliver a message. For example, the wrong communication medium is being used when an employee returns from lunch, picks up the note left on her office chair, and learns she has been fired. The wrong communication medium is also being used when an employee pops into your office every 10 minutes with a simple request. (An email would be better.)

There are two general kinds of communication media: oral and written communication. *Oral communication* includes face-to-face and group meetings through telephone calls, videoconferencing, or any other means of sending and receiving spoken messages. Studies show that managers generally prefer oral communication over written because it provides the opportunity to ask questions about parts of the message that they don't understand. Oral communication is also a rich communication medium because it allows managers to receive and assess the nonverbal communication that accompanies spoken messages (i.e., body language, facial expressions, and the voice characteristics associated with paralanguage). Furthermore, you don't need a personal computer and an Internet connection to conduct oral communication.

Simply schedule an appointment, track someone down in the hall, or catch someone on the phone. In fact, management consultant Tom Durel worries that

communication medium

The method used to deliver an oral or written message.

with voice mail and email, managers are not as willing to engage in meaningful, face-to-face oral communication as they once were. In fact, 67 percent of managers admit to using email as a substitute for face-to-face conversations.⁵⁴ Durel says, “Why is it that the first thing people do in the morning is turn on their computer and send email to a colleague in the office next door? What’s wrong with getting up, walking over there, and actually *talking* to that person?”⁵⁵ Oral communication should not be used for all communication, however. In general, when the message is simple, such as a quick request or a presentation of straightforward information, a memo or email is often the better communication medium.

Written communication includes letters, email, and memos. Although most managers still like and use oral communication, email in particular is changing how they communicate with workers, customers, and each other. Email is the fastest-growing form of communication in organizations primarily because of its convenience and speed. For instance, because people read six times faster than they can listen, they usually can read 30 email messages in 10 to 15 minutes.⁵⁶ By contrast, dealing with voice messages can take a considerable amount of time. Fred DeLuca, founder of the Subway sandwich shop franchise, says, “I get about 60 messages a day from employees and franchisees, and I listen to all of them. For my sanity, I set a time limit of 75 seconds, because people can be long-winded when they’re excited. When I hear, ‘You have 30 messages,’ I know right away that I’ll spend 60 minutes on voice mail. I take two minutes per message, listening and returning or forwarding.”⁵⁷

Written communication, such as email, is well suited for delivering straightforward messages and information. Furthermore, with email accessible at the office, at home, and on the road (by laptop computer, cell phone, or Web-based email), managers can use email to stay in touch from anywhere at almost any time. And, since email and other written communications don’t have to be sent and received simultaneously, messages can be sent and stored for reading at any time. Consequently, managers can send and receive many more messages using email than using oral communication, which requires people to get together in person or by phone or videoconference. But, warns management consultant Tom Durel, “Don’t assume that you did your part just because you sent out a bunch of memos. If you really want to communicate, you need to take the time to get real-time feedback.”⁵⁸

Although written communication is well suited for delivering straightforward messages and information, it is not well suited to complex, ambiguous, or emotionally laden messages, which are better delivered through oral communication. Neal Patterson, CEO of Cerner Corporation, which develops health-care software, learned this lesson when he sent the following email to 400 company managers:

We are getting less than 40 hours of work from a large number of our KC-based EMPLOYEES. . . . The parking lot is sparsely used at 8 A.M., likewise at 5 P.M. As managers—you either do not know what your EMPLOYEES are doing or YOU do not CARE. You have created expectations on the work effort which allowed this to happen inside Cerner, creating a very unhealthy environment. In either case, you have a problem and you will fix it or I will replace you.

*NEVER in my career have I allowed a team which worked for me to think they had a 40-hour job. I have allowed YOU to create a culture which is permitting this. NO LONGER.*⁵⁹

Patterson continued: “We passed a Stock Purchase Program, allowing for the EMPLOYEE to purchase Cerner stock at a 15 percent discount, at Friday’s BOD [board of directors] meeting. Hell will freeze over before this CEO implements ANOTHER EMPLOYEE benefit in this Culture.”⁶⁰ He concluded

by saying, “I will hold you accountable. You have allowed this to get to this state. You have two weeks. Tick, tock.”⁶¹

Reaction to the message was so strong that, in just over a week, the email had been leaked to the entire company. And then someone, nobody knows who, posted the email on a Yahoo.com discussion board about Cerner. As word spread about the negative email, Cerner’s stock price dropped from \$44 to \$31 per share in just three days. By the end of the week, Patterson issued another email, offering an apology. Not surprisingly, that email began, “Please treat this memo with the utmost confidentiality. It is for internal dissemination only. Do not copy or email to anyone else.”⁶²

3.2 Listening

Are you a good listener? You probably think so. But, in fact, most people, including managers, are terrible listeners, retaining only about 25 percent of what they hear.⁶³ You qualify as a poor listener if you frequently interrupt others, jump to conclusions about what people will say before they’ve said it, hurry the speaker to finish his or her point, are a passive listener (not actively working at your listening), or simply don’t pay attention to what people are saying.⁶⁴ On this last point, attentiveness, college students were periodically asked to record their thoughts during a psychology course. On average, 20 percent of the students were paying attention (only 12 percent were actively working at being good listeners), 20 percent were thinking about sex, 20 percent were thinking about things they had done before, and the remaining 40 percent were thinking about other things unrelated to the class (e.g., worries, religion, lunch, daydreaming).⁶⁵

How important is it to be a good listener? In general, about 45 percent of the total time you spend communicating with others is spent listening. Furthermore, listening is important for managerial and business success, even for those at the top of an organization. According to *Fortune* magazine, listening is one of the reasons that CEO A. G. Lafley has been able to turn around Procter & Gamble so quickly: “He’s a listener, not a storyteller. He’s likable but not awe inspiring. He’s the type of guy who gets excited in the mop aisle of a grocery store. His plan to fix P&G isn’t anything groundbreaking, but rather a straightforward, back-to-basics tack. And so far it’s worked. He has rallied his troops not with big speeches and dazzling promises, but by *hearing them out* (practically) one at a time.”⁶⁶

As Feargal Quinn, CEO of Irish grocery chain Superquinn’s, points out, “Listening is not an activity you can delegate—no matter who you are.”⁶⁷ In fact, managers with better listening skills are rated as better managers by their employees and are much more likely to be promoted.⁶⁸

So, what can you do to improve your listening ability? First, understand the difference between hearing and listening. According to *Webster’s New World Dictionary*, **hearing** is the “act or process of perceiving sounds,” whereas **listening** is “making a conscious effort to hear.” In other words, we react to sounds, such as bottles breaking or music being played too loud, because hearing is an involuntary physiological process. By contrast, listening is a voluntary behavior. So, if you want to be a good listener, you have to choose to be a good listener. Typically, that means choosing to be an active, empathetic listener.⁶⁹

Active listening means assuming half the responsibility for successful communication by actively giving the speaker nonjudgmental feedback that shows you’ve accurately heard what he or she said. Active listeners make it clear from their behavior that they are listening carefully to what the speaker has to say. Active listeners put the speaker at ease, maintain eye contact, and show the speaker that they are attentively listening by nodding and making short statements.

hearing

The act or process of perceiving sounds.

listening

Making a conscious effort to hear.

active listening

Assuming half the responsibility for successful communication by actively giving the speaker nonjudgmental feedback that shows you’ve accurately heard what he or she said.

CLARIFYING RESPONSES	PARAPHRASING RESPONSES	SUMMARIZING RESPONSES
Could you explain that again?	What you're really saying is	Let me summarize
I don't understand what you mean.	If I understand you correctly	Okay, your main concerns are
I'm not sure how	In other words	To recap what you've said
I'm confused. Would you run through that again?	So your perspective is that	Thus far, you've discussed
	Tell me if I'm wrong, but what you're saying is	

Source: E. Atwater, *I Hear You*, revised ed. (New York: Walker, 1992).

Exhibit 15.10
Clarifying, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing Responses for Active Listeners

Several specific strategies can help you be a better active listener. First, *clarify responses* by asking the speaker to explain confusing or ambiguous statements. Second, when there are natural breaks in the speaker's delivery, use this time to paraphrase or summarize what has been said. *Paraphrasing* is restating what has been said in your own words. *Summarizing* is reviewing the speaker's main points or emotions. Paraphrasing and summarizing give the speaker the chance to correct the message if the active listener has attached the wrong meaning to it. Paraphrasing and summarizing also show the speaker that the active listener is interested in the speaker's message. Exhibit 15.10 lists specific statements that listeners can use to clarify responses, paraphrase, or summarize what has been said.

Active listeners also avoid evaluating the message or being critical until the message is complete. They recognize that their only responsibility during the transmission of a message is to receive it accurately and derive the intended meaning from it. Evaluation and criticism can take place after the message is accurately received. Finally, active listeners also recognize that a large portion of any message is transmitted nonverbally and thus pay very careful attention to the nonverbal cues transmitted by the speaker.

Empathetic listening means understanding the speaker's perspective and personal frame of reference and giving feedback that conveys that understanding to the speaker. Empathetic listening goes beyond active listening because it depends on our ability to set aside our own attitudes or relationships to be able to see and understand things through someone else's eyes. Empathetic listening is just as important as active listening, especially for managers, because it helps build rapport and trust with others.

empathetic listening
Understanding the speaker's perspective and personal frame of reference and giving feedback that conveys that understanding to the speaker.

The key to being a more empathetic listener is to show your desire to understand and to reflect people's feelings. You can *show your desire to understand* by listening, that is, asking people to talk about what's most important to them and then by giving them sufficient time to talk before responding or interrupting. Management consultant Neil Grammer tells this story about being an empathetic listener:

One of the best sales meetings I've ever had taught me a valuable lesson about the importance of listening. The meeting was with an investment bank's managing director. The appointment lasted 30 minutes—28 of those minutes were spent by the director telling me everything about his business and personnel. I told him nothing more about my company and its services than I had in our initial phone conversation. As the meeting concluded, he enthusiastically shook my hand and proclaimed how much he was looking forward to working with me—someone who understood his business.⁷⁰

Reflecting feelings is also an important part of empathetic listening because it demonstrates that you understand the speaker's emotions. Unlike active listening, in which you restate or summarize the informational content of what

has been said, the focus is on the affective part of the message. As an empathetic listener, you can use the following statements to reflect the speaker's emotions:

- So, right now it sounds like you're feeling
- You seem as if you're
- Do you feel a bit . . . ?
- I could be wrong, but I'm sensing that you're feeling

In the end, says management consultant Terry Pearce, empathetic listening can be boiled down to these three steps. First, wait 10 seconds before you answer or respond. It will seem an eternity, but waiting prevents you from interrupting others and rushing your response. Second, to be sure you understand what the speaker wants, ask questions to clarify the speaker's intent. Third, only then should you respond first with feelings and then facts (notice that facts *follow* feelings).⁷¹

3.3 Giving Feedback

In Chapter 11, you learned that performance appraisal feedback (i.e., judging) should be separated from developmental feedback (i.e., coaching).⁷² At this point, we now focus on the steps needed to communicate feedback one-on-one to employees.

destructive feedback

Feedback that disapproves without any intention of being helpful and almost always causes a negative or defensive reaction in the recipient.

To start, managers need to recognize that feedback can be constructive or destructive. **Destructive feedback** is disapproving without any intention of being helpful and almost always causes a negative or defensive reaction in the recipient. In fact, one study found that 98 percent of employees responded to destructive feedback from their bosses with either verbal aggression (two-thirds) or physical aggression (one-third).⁷³ Surprisingly, some managers don't realize that they're giving people destructive feedback. One employee said:

*A project that my team was working on had a number of delays, and one of them involved something that I was responsible for. The pressure was on, and we were all putting in long hours to catch up. But in the middle of that, my boss called me into his office, and with the door wide open, he started yelling about the delay, about how much it was costing, and about how it was making him look bad. Anyone in that whole corner of the building could easily hear. It was so ridiculous. I was doing everything I could, and yet he lost his temper and acted as if I was doing something to personally offend him.*⁷⁴

constructive feedback

Feedback intended to be helpful, corrective, and/or encouraging.

By contrast, **constructive feedback** is intended to be helpful, corrective, and/or encouraging. It is aimed at correcting performance deficiencies and motivating employees. When providing constructive feedback, Jenet Noriega Schwind, vice president and chief people officer of Zantaz.com, an e-business archiving company, tells employees, "What I'm going to tell you may be upsetting to you—but it's important to your success." She says, "When you are telling people things they don't necessarily want to hear, you have to deliver your message in a way that gets their attention and acceptance."⁷⁵

For feedback to be constructive rather than destructive, it must be immediate, focused on specific behaviors, and problem oriented. *Immediate feedback* is much more effective than delayed feedback because manager and worker can recall the mistake or incident more accurately and discuss it in detail. For example, if a worker is rude to a customer and the customer immediately reports the incident to management, and the manager, in turn, immediately discusses the incident with the employee, there should be little disagreement over what was said or done. By contrast, if the manager waits several weeks to discuss the incident, it's unlikely that either the manager or the worker will be able to accurately remember the specifics of what occurred. When that happens, it's usually too late to have a meaningful conversation.

Specific feedback focuses on particular acts or incidents that are clearly under the control of the employee. For instance, instead of telling an employee that he or she is “always late for work,” it’s much more constructive to say, “In the last three weeks, you have been 30 minutes late on four occasions and more than an hour late on two others.” Furthermore, specific feedback isn’t very helpful unless employees have control over the problems that the feedback addresses. Indeed, giving negative feedback about behaviors beyond someone’s control is likely to be seen as unfair. Similarly, giving positive feedback about behaviors beyond someone’s control may be viewed as insincere.

Last, *problem-oriented feedback* focuses on the problems or incidents associated with the poor performance rather than on the worker or the worker’s personality. Giving feedback does not give managers the right to personally attack workers. Though managers may be frustrated by a worker’s poor performance, the point of problem-oriented feedback is to draw attention to the problem in a nonjudgmental way so that the employee has enough information to correct it. For example, if an employee has body odor, a surprisingly common workplace problem, don’t leave deodorant, soap, or shampoo on the person’s desk (for all to see) or say, “you stink.” *HR Magazine* advises handling the problem this way: “Because this is a sensitive issue and the employee will likely be uncomfortable and embarrassed in discussing it, keep the meeting private and confidential. Be compassionate but direct. Treat it as you would handle any other job-related performance issue. Explain the problem and the need to correct it. Be specific about expectations. . . . If the employer has a dress and grooming policy, refer to the policy and provide the employee with a copy.”⁷⁶

3.4 Improving Cross-Cultural Communication

As you know by now, effective communication is very difficult to accomplish. **Cross-cultural communication**, which involves transmitting information from a person in one country or culture to a person from another country or culture, is even more difficult. For example, when a French company bought a U.S. company, it found that the American managers would not implement the new strategy that it recommended. As tensions grew worse, the American managers challenged their new French boss’s strategy and explained why they hadn’t followed it. Meanwhile, the French, who now owned the company, couldn’t understand why the American managers, who, after all, worked for them, didn’t just do as they were told.⁷⁷ Exhibit 15.11, which shows the rather different views that French and American workers have about work, gives us some insight into the difficulty of cross-cultural communication in this situation. Overall, the French are much more likely to believe that managers need to have precise answers to subordinates’ questions (53 percent versus 18 percent), that organizations would be better off without conflict (24 percent versus 5 percent), and that managers are more motivated by power than by achieving objectives (56 percent versus 36 percent).⁷⁸ With such different views on these basic topics, no wonder there were communication difficulties.

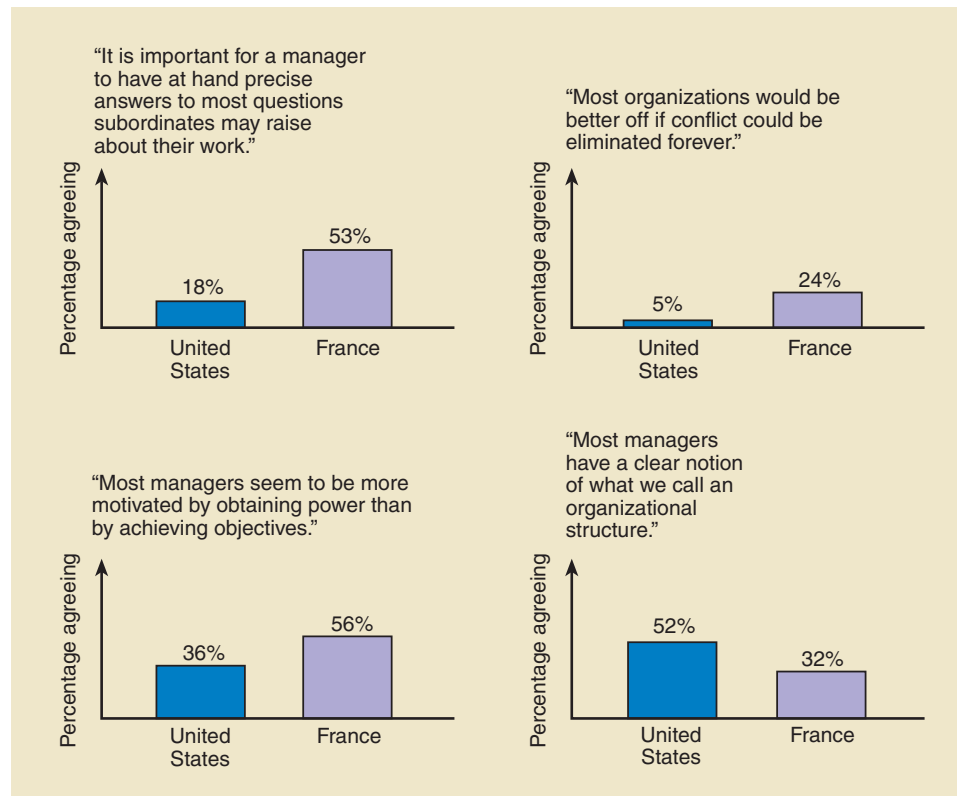
You can do a number of things to increase your chances for successful cross-cultural communication: familiarize yourself with a culture’s general work norms; determine whether a culture is emotionally affective or neutral; develop respect for other cultures; and understand how address terms and attitudes toward time (polychronic versus monochronic time, and appointment, schedule, discussion, and acquaintance time) differ from culture to culture.

In Chapter 8, you learned that expatriates who receive predeparture language and cross-cultural training make faster adjustments to foreign cultures and perform better on their international assignments.⁷⁹ Therefore, the first step for successful cross-cultural communication is *familiarizing yourself with a culture’s general work norms*, that is, the shared values, beliefs, and perceptions

cross-cultural communication

Transmitting information from a person in one country or culture to a person from another country or culture.

Exhibit 15.11
A Comparison of French and
American Views of Work



Source: From N. J. Adler, *From Boston to Beijing: Managing with a World View* (Cincinnati, OH: South-Western, 2002), based on A. Laurent, "The Cultural Diversity of Western Conceptions of Management," in *International Studies of Management and Organization*, vol. 13, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1983): 75-96.

toward work and how it should be done. (See Chapter 8 for a more complete discussion of international cultures.) And don't assume that it will be easy. British engineer Mike Cantelo says, "In Europe, people are neighbors and they kind of look the same and it's not far to travel and 'I have been there on vacation and so it's no big deal.' But working in a culture is a hugely different thing."⁸⁰ Yet, no matter how difficult, you should work hard to learn different cultures and languages. When New Yorker Donald Dowling was working in his law firm's Paris office, his boss came up to him at a Christmas party hugged him, and declared, "I love this guy because he speaks French." Dowling says, "It took me a minute to figure out he wasn't making fun of me. I think he just appreciated that I tried, unlike one American stationed in that office for two years who managed to pick up a total of three words."⁸¹

Fortunately, books such as *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: How to Do Business in 60 Countries* (by Terri Morrison, Wayne Conaway, George Borden, and Hans Koehler), *Do's and Taboos Around the World* (by Roger E. Axtell), and *Dun & Bradstreet's Guide to Doing Business Around the World* (by Terri Morrison, Wayne Conaway, and Joseph Douress) and Web sites such as Businessculture.com and Executiveplanet.com provide a wealth of information about countries, their cultures, and their work and communication norms.

Determining whether a culture is emotionally affective or neutral is also important to cross-cultural communication. People in **affective cultures** tend to display their emotions and feelings openly when communicating, whereas people in **neutral cultures** do not.⁸² For example, while Italians are prone to strong bursts of emotion (positive and negative), Chinese don't show strong emotions because doing so is thought to disrupt harmony and lead to conflict. Likewise, a smiling American is displaying happiness, but a smiling Japanese may be trying to hide another emotion or avoid answering a question.⁸³ The mistake most managers make is misunderstanding the differences between affective and neutral cultures.

affective cultures

Cultures in which people display emotions and feelings when communicating.

neutral cultures

Cultures in which people do not display emotions and feelings when communicating.

IN AFFECTIVE CULTURES, PEOPLE	IN NEUTRAL CULTURES, PEOPLE
1. reveal thoughts and feelings through verbal and nonverbal communication.	1. don't reveal what they are thinking or feeling.
2. express and show feelings of tension.	2. hide tension and only show it accidentally in face or posture.
3. let their emotions flow easily, intensely, and without inhibition.	3. suppress emotions, leading to occasional "explosions."
4. admire heated, animated, and intense expression of emotion.	4. admire remaining cool, calm, and relaxed.
5. are used to touching, gesturing, and showing strong emotions through facial expressions (all are common).	5. resist touching, gesturing, and showing strong emotions through facial expressions.
6. make statements with emotion.	6. often make statements in an unexpressive manner.

Source: F. Trompenaars, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business* (London: Economist Books, 1994).

People from neutral cultures aren't by definition cold and unfeeling. They just don't show their emotions in the same way or with the same intensity as people from affective cultures. The key is to recognize the differences and then make sure your judgments are not based on the lack or presence of emotional reactions. Exhibit 15.12 provides a more detailed explanation of the differences between affective and neutral cultures.

Respecting other cultures is also an important part of improving cross-cultural communication. Because we use our own culture as the standard of comparison, it's very easy to make the common mistake of assuming that "different" means "inferior."⁸⁴ Take this example:

*A Swiss executive waits more than an hour past the appointed time for his Spanish colleague to arrive and to sign a major supply contract. In his impatience he concludes that the Spaniard must be lazy and totally unconcerned about business.*⁸⁵

According to Professor Nancy J. Adler,

*The Swiss executive has misevaluated his colleague by negatively comparing the colleague's behavior to his own culture's standard for business punctuality. Implicitly, he has labeled his own culture's behavior as good ("The Swiss arrive on time, especially for important meetings, and that is good.") and the other culture's behavior as bad ("The Spanish do not arrive on time and that is bad.")*⁸⁶

According to Adler, "Evaluating others' behavior rarely helps in trying to understand, communicate with, or conduct business with people from another culture."⁸⁷ The key, she says, is taking a step back and realizing that you don't know or understand everything that is going on and that your assumptions and interpretations of others' behavior and motives may be wrong. So, instead of judging or evaluating your international business colleagues, observe what they do. Also, delay your judgments until you have more experience with your colleagues and their culture. Lastly, treat any judgments or conclusions you do make as guesses, and then double-check those judgments or conclusions with others.⁸⁸ The more patient you are in forming opinions and drawing conclusions, the better you'll be at cross-cultural communication.

Next, you can improve cross-cultural communication by *knowing the address terms* that different cultures use to address each other in the workplace.⁸⁹ **Address terms** are the cultural norms that establish whether you address businesspeople by their first names, family names, or titles. When meeting for the first time, Americans and Australians tend to be informal and address each other by first names, even nicknames. Such immediate informality is not accepted in many cultures, however.

Exhibit 15.12

Affective and Neutral Cultures

address terms

Cultural norms that establish whether you should address businesspeople by their first names, family names, or titles.



YURIKO NAKAO/REUTERS/LANDOV

After discovering manipulative sales and lending practices and lax controls against money laundering, the Japanese government ordered Citigroup to close its Japanese private banking business. As is customary in Japan, Citigroup Inc. CEO Charles Prince and Citibank Japan CEO Douglas Peterson bowed deeply in apology at the start of a Tokyo news conference announcing the findings.

monochronic cultures

Cultures in which people tend to do one thing at a time and view time as linear.

polychronic cultures

Cultures in which people tend to do more than one thing at a time and view time as circular.

their orientation toward time.⁹¹ In **monochronic cultures**, people tend to do one thing at a time and view time as linear, meaning that time is the passage of sequential events. You may have heard the saying, “There are three stages in people’s lives: when they believe in Santa Claus, when they don’t believe in Santa Claus, and when they are Santa Claus.” The progression from childhood, to young adulthood, to parenthood (when they are Santa Claus) reflects a linear view of time. Schedules are important in monochronic cultures because you schedule time to get a particular thing done. Professor Fons Trompenaars, a noted researcher on international cultures and business, gives these examples of monochronic cultures:

In London I once saw a long queue of people waiting for a bus when it started pouring rain. They all stood stolidly, getting soaked even though cover was close by, lest they lose their sequential order. They preferred to do things right rather than do the right thing. In the Netherlands, you could be the queen, but if you are in a butcher’s shop with number 46 and you step up for service when number 12 is called, you are still in deep trouble. Nor does it matter if you have an emergency; order is order.⁹²

By contrast, in **polychronic cultures**, people tend to do more than one thing at a time and view time as circular, meaning that time is a combination of the past, present, and future. Consider the following example from a polychronic culture:

In the Bahamas, bus service is managed similarly to many taxi systems. Drivers own their own buses and collect passenger fares for their income. There is no set schedule nor set time when buses will run or arrive at a particular location. Everything depends on the driver.

Bus drivers in the Bahamas are present-oriented; what they feel like doing on a particular day at a particular hour dictates what they will actually do. If the bus driver feels hungry, for example, the driver will go home to eat lunch without waiting for a preset lunch hour. Drivers see no need to repeat yesterday’s actions today, nor to set tomorrow’s schedule according to the needs and patterns of yesterday.⁹³

As you can easily imagine, businesspeople from monochronic cultures are driven to distraction by what they perceive as the laxness of polychronic cultures, while people from polychronic cultures chafe under what they perceive as the strict regimentation of monochronic cultures. Conflicts between these two views of time occur rather easily. Let’s go back to Trompenaars’s butcher shop for an example:

At my local butcher shop in Amsterdam, the butcher calls a number, unwraps, cuts, rewraps each item the customer wants, and then calls the next number.

For instance, an American manager working in one of his company’s British subsidiaries introduced himself as “Chuck” to his British employees and coworkers. Nonetheless, even after six months on the job, his British counterparts still referred to him as “Charles.” And the more he insisted they call him “Chuck,” the more they seemed to dig in their heels and call him “Charles.”⁹⁰ So, to decrease defensiveness, know your address terms before addressing your international business counterparts.

Understanding different cultural attitudes toward time is another major consideration for effective cross-cultural communication. Cultures tend to be either monochronic or polychronic in

PEOPLE IN MONOCHRONIC CULTURES	PEOPLE IN POLYCHRONIC CULTURES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do one thing at a time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do many things at once
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrate on the job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are highly distractible and subject to interruptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet time commitments only if possible without extreme measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are committed to the job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are committed to people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere scrupulously to plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change plans easily and often
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are concerned about not disturbing others (privacy is to be respected) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are more concerned with relationships (family, friends, business associates) than with privacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show respect for private property (rarely lend or borrow things) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently borrow and lend things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize promptness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vary their promptness by the relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are accustomed to short-term relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to build lifetime relationships.

Source: E. T. Hall & M. R. Hall, *Understanding Cultural Differences* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1990).

Once I ventured a suggestion, “While you have the salami out, cut a pound for me, too.” Customers and staff went into shock. The system may be inefficient, but they were not about to let some wise guy change it.

Researchers Edward and Mildred Hall summed up the conflicts between these different views of time by saying, “It is impossible to know how many millions of dollars have been lost in international business because monochronic and polychronic people do not understand each other or even realize that two such different time systems exist.”⁹⁴ Exhibit 15.13 provides a more detailed explanation of the differences between monochronic and polychronic cultures.

Differences in monochronic and polychronic time show up in four important temporal concepts that affect cross-cultural communication: appointment time, schedule time, discussion time, and acquaintance time.⁹⁵ **Appointment time** refers to how punctual you must be when showing up for scheduled appointments or meetings. In the United States, you are considered “late” if you arrive more than five minutes after the appointed time. Swedes don’t even allow five minutes, expecting others to arrive “on the dot.” By contrast, in Latin countries, people can arrive 20 to 30 minutes after a scheduled appointment and still not be considered late.

Schedule time is the time by which scheduled projects or jobs should actually be completed. In the United States and other Anglo cultures, a premium is placed on completing things on time. By contrast, more relaxed attitudes toward schedule time can be found throughout Asia and Latin America.

Discussion time concerns how much time should be spent in discussion with others. In the United States, we carefully manage discussion time to avoid “wasting” time on nonbusiness topics. In Brazil, though, because of the emphasis on building relationships, as much as two hours of general discussion on nonbusiness topics can take place before moving on to business issues.

Finally, **acquaintance time** is how much time you must spend getting to know someone before the person is prepared to do business with you. Again, in the United States, people quickly get down to business and are willing to strike a deal on the same day if the terms are good and initial impressions are positive. In the Middle East, however, it may take two or three weeks of meetings before reaching this comfort level. The French also have a different attitude toward acquaintance time. Polly Platt, author of *French or Foe*, a book that explains French culture and people for travelers and businesspeople, says, “Know that things are going to take longer and don’t resent it. Realize that the time system is different. Time is not a quantity for them. We save time, we spend time, we

Exhibit 15.13
Monochronic versus Polychronic Cultures

appointment time
A cultural norm for how punctual you must be when showing up for scheduled appointments or meetings.

schedule time
A cultural norm for the time by which scheduled projects or jobs should actually be completed.

discussion time
A cultural norm for how much time should be spent in discussion with others.

acquaintance time
A cultural norm for how much time you must spend getting to know someone before the person is prepared to do business with you.

waste time; all this comes from money. The French don't. They pass time. It's a totally different concept.”⁹⁶

Review 3: Managing One-on-One Communication

One-on-one communication can be managed by choosing the right communication medium, being a good listener, giving effective feedback, and understanding cross-cultural communication. Managers generally prefer oral communication because it provides the opportunity to ask questions and assess nonverbal communication. Oral communication is best suited to complex, ambiguous, or emotionally laden topics. Written communication is best suited for delivering straightforward messages and information. Listening is important for managerial success, but most people are terrible listeners. To improve your listening skills, choose to be an active listener (clarify responses, paraphrase, and summarize) and an empathetic listener (show your desire to understand, reflect feelings). Feedback can be constructive or destructive. To be constructive, feedback must be immediate, focused on specific behaviors, and problem oriented. Finally, to increase the chances for successful cross-cultural communication, familiarize yourself with a culture's general work norms, determine whether a culture is emotionally affective or neutral, develop respect for other cultures, and understand how address terms and attitudes toward time (polychronic versus monochronic time, and appointment, schedule, discussion, and acquaintance time) differ from culture to culture.

4 MANAGING ORGANIZATION-WIDE COMMUNICATION

Although managing one-on-one communication is important, managers must also know how to communicate effectively with a larger number of people throughout an organization. When Bill Zollars became CEO of Yellow Corporation, a trucking company, he decided that he needed to communicate directly with all 25,000 of the company's employees, most of whom did not work at company headquarters in Overland Park, Kansas. For a year and a half, he traveled across the country conducting small, “town-hall” meetings. Zollars said, “There were days when I gave the same speech 10 times at 10 different locations. I'd start at 6:30 A.M. with the drivers, then I'd talk to the dockworkers, the people in the office, and the sales staff. At night, I'd meet with customers. I wanted as many employees and customers as possible to hear it from me face-to-face.”⁹⁷ Effective leaders, however, don't just communicate to others; they also make themselves accessible so that they can hear what employees throughout their organizations are feeling and thinking.

Learn more about organization-wide communication by reading the following sections about **4.1 improving transmission by getting the message out**, and **4.2 improving reception by finding ways to hear what others feel and think**.

4.1 Improving Transmission: Getting the Message Out

Several methods of electronic communication—email, online discussion forums, televised/videotaped speeches and conferences, corporate talk shows, and broadcast voice mail—now make it easier for managers to communicate with people throughout the organization and “get the message out.”

Although we normally think of *email*, the transmission of messages via computers, as a means of one-on-one communication, it also plays an important role in organization-wide communication. With the click of a button, managers can send email to everyone in the company via email distribution lists. Many CEOs now use this capability regularly to keep employees up-to-date on changes and developments. Email is one of several ways that Mattel CEO Robert Eckert communicates his vision for the company:

When I first got to Mattel, the company was in transition. In addition to spending major face time with all the senior managers, I spent hours and hours describing to all our employees and other stakeholders where we were going and how we were going to get there. I traveled and met with people, of course, but I also set up a program of regular e-mail updates, invited two-way communication, and responded personally to employee messages. Today, the company is back on track, but I'm still constantly communicating—in the elevator, in the cafeteria, on the street, on the phone, on planes, and through e-mails. And it's always the same basic message, which is our vision for the company.⁹⁸

Many CEOs and top executives make their email addresses public and encourage employees to contact them directly.

Discussion forums are another means of electronically promoting organization-wide communication. **Online discussion forums** are the in-house equivalent of Internet newsgroups; by using Web- or software-based discussion tools that are available across the company, employees can easily ask questions and share knowledge with each other. The point is to share expertise and not duplicate solutions already “discovered” by others in the company. Furthermore, because online discussion forums remain online, they provide a historical database for people who are dealing with particular problems for the first time.

Online discussion forums are typically organized by topic. For example, at Ernst & Young, a major accounting firm, accountants who have questions about multinational tax analysis can simply log on to the E & Y tax forum (or dozens of other forums, too). They can either post new questions and wait for others to respond with answers or read previously posted questions and answers to see if the information they need has already been discussed. If both of these options fail, they will at least learn the names of people in the organization that they can contact for help.⁹⁹

Exhibit 15.14 lists the steps companies need to take to establish successful online discussion forums. First, pinpoint your company's top intellectual assets through a knowledge audit; then spread that knowledge throughout the organization. Second, create an online directory detailing the expertise of individual workers and make it available to all employees. Third, set up discussion groups on the intranet so that managers and workers can collaborate on problem solving. Finally, reward information sharing by making the online sharing of knowledge a key part of performance ratings.

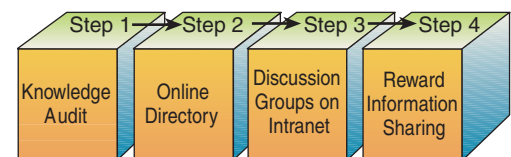
Televised/videotaped speeches and meetings are a third electronic method of organization-wide communication. **Televised/videotaped speeches and meetings** are simply speeches and meetings originally made to a smaller audience that are either simultaneously broadcast to other locations in the company or videotaped for subsequent distribution and viewing. After leaving Compaq Computer to become CEO of WorldCom, Michael Capellas explained his 100-day plan for turning around the company after a \$9 billion accounting scandal. In a one-hour internal broadcast to the company's 60,000 employees, Capellas said, “There will be some people who are leaving the organization as a result of some of these [misstated accounting] reports.” As for turning the company around, he said, “I know it will be tough. But we have the will to win.”¹⁰⁰ (One of his first moves was to change the company's name to MCI.)

Corporate talk shows are a variant on televised/videotaped speeches and meetings. But instead of simply being watched, **corporate talk shows** allow remote audience members, all of whom are typically workers or managers, to pose questions to the show's host and guests. For example, once a month, Emma Carrasco, vice president of marketing and communication, and Dan Hunt, president of Caribbean and Latin American operations, host the Virtual Leadership Academy, which is a corporate talk show for Nortel Networks. Typically, 2,000 employees

online discussion forums

The in-house equivalent of Internet newsgroups. By using Web- or software-based discussion tools that are available across the company, employees can easily ask questions and share knowledge with each other.

Exhibit 15.14
Establishing Online Discussion Forums.



Source: Based on G. McWilliams & M. Stepanek, “Knowledge Management: Taming the Info Monster,” *Business Week*, 22 June 1998, 170.

televised/videotaped speeches and meetings

Speeches and meetings originally made to a smaller audience that are either simultaneously broadcast to other locations in the company or videotaped for subsequent distribution and viewing.

corporate talk shows

Televised company meetings that allow remote audiences (employees) to pose questions to the show's host and guests.



While working through the preparatory work for the purchase of Gillette by Procter & Gamble, it was important that both companies got their message out to employees. One way that occurred was through an external relations director at P & G whose job it is to teach Gillette employees about Procter's corporate culture. Pictured here are A.G. Lafley (CEO of P & G) and Jim Kilts (CEO of Gillette) being interviewed about the merger.

organizational silence
When employees withhold information about organizational problems or issues.

in 46 countries watch the live broadcast and can call in with questions about Nortel and its competitors. Why a corporate talk show? Carrasco says, "We're always looking for ways to break down barriers in the company, and people are comfortable with the talk-show format. People watch talk shows in every country in the region, and they've learned that it's okay to say what's on their mind. In fact, it's expected."¹⁰¹

Voice messaging, or "voice mail," is a telephone answering system that records audio messages. In one survey, 89 percent of respondents said that voice messaging is critical to business communication, 78 percent said that it improves productivity, and 58 percent said they would rather leave a message on a voice messaging system than with a receptionist.¹⁰² Nonetheless, most people are unfamiliar with the ability to *broadcast voice mail* by

sending a recorded message to everyone in the company. Broadcast voice mail gives top managers a quick, convenient way to address their work forces via oral communication. Harry Kraemer, CEO of pharmaceutical giant Baxter International, describes Baxter's broadcast voice mail system: "We have more than 30,000 Baxter team members hooked onto the same voice-mail system. That includes everybody but the folks on the factory line. This is hooked up in over 50 countries."¹⁰³ At Ernst & Young, the company-wide broadcast voice mails of Chairman Phil Laskawy were so well known and well liked that E & Y employees called them "Travels with Phil." No matter where he was traveling on business for the company—and he traveled all over the world—Phil would begin his voice mails, most of which lasted 5 to 10 minutes, with a weather report, a couple of bad jokes, and an update on his beloved New York Yankees baseball team; then came the core part of his message.¹⁰⁴

4.2 Improving Reception: Hearing What Others Feel and Think

When people think of "organization-wide" communication, they think of the CEO and top managers getting their message out to people in the company. But organization-wide communication also means finding ways to hear what people throughout the organization are feeling and thinking. This is important because most employees and managers are reluctant to share their thoughts and feelings with top managers. Surveys indicate that only 29 percent of first-level managers feel that their companies encourage employees to express their opinions openly. Another study of 22 companies found that 70 percent of the people surveyed were afraid to speak up about problems they knew existed at work.

Withholding information about organizational problems or issues is called **organizational silence**. Organizational silence occurs when employees believe that telling management about problems won't make a difference or that they'll be punished or hurt in some way for sharing such information.¹⁰⁵ For example, after the space shuttle *Columbia* exploded over east Texas, the investigation board charged with determining the cause of the accident that killed all seven people on board concluded that "the NASA organizational culture had as much to do with this accident as the foam [debris that damaged the shuttle's wing at liftoff]." How so? "Cultural traits and organizational practices detrimental to safety and reliability were allowed to develop, including . . . organizational barriers which prevented effective communication of critical safety information and *stifled professional differences of opinion*. . . . When they did not speak up, safety personnel could not fulfill their stated mission to provide 'checks and balances.'"¹⁰⁶ In short, NASA's culture encouraged organizational silence with

deadly consequences. Fortunately, though, company hotlines, survey feedback, frequent informal meetings, surprise visits, and blogs are ways of overcoming organizational silence.

Company hotlines are phone numbers that anyone in the company can call anonymously to leave information for upper management. For example, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu has a toll-free hotline for employees to call to report any kind of problem or issue within the company. Hotlines are particularly important because 44 percent of employees will not report misconduct. Why not? The reason is twofold: they don't believe anything will be done, *and* they "fear that the report will not be kept confidential."¹⁰⁷ David Chillers, CEO of Ethicspoint, which runs hotlines for corporations, says that companies can expect 1 to 1.5 percent of their employees to call their hotlines and that 10 to 15 percent of the calls will involve serious problems that require immediate company action.¹⁰⁸

Survey feedback is information that is collected by survey from organization members and then compiled, disseminated, and used to develop action plans for improvement. Many organizations make use of survey feedback by surveying their managers and employees several times a year. FedEx, for example, runs its own Survey Feedback Action program. The survey, which is administered online and is completely anonymous, includes sections for employees to evaluate their managers and the overall environment at FedEx, including benefits, incentives, and working conditions. After the surveys are completed, the results are compiled and then fed back to each FedEx work group. Each group then uses the results to decide where changes and improvements need to be made and to develop specific action plans to address those problems. The final step is to look for improvements in subsequent employee surveys to see if those plans worked.¹⁰⁹

Frequent, *informal meetings* between top managers and lower-level employees are one of the best ways for top managers to hear what others feel and think. Many people assume that top managers are at the center of everything that goes on in organizations, but top managers commonly feel isolated from most of their lower-level managers and employees. Consequently, more and more top managers are scheduling frequent, informal meetings with people throughout their companies. John Much, the CEO of HNC Software in San Diego, gets some of his best information from informal "Java with John" meetings held each week with the first 20 employees to sign up.¹¹⁰ Says Much, "As a leader, you need a network of people from the highest to the lowest levels who can be your trusted advisers, and who know that you are open to hearing any message, bad as well as good, that they may send you." Michael Bonsignore, the former CEO of Honeywell, agrees, saying, "There's no substitute for skipping down management layers and finding out what lower-level employees think."¹¹¹

Have you ever been around when a supervisor learns that upper management is going to be paying a visit? First, there's shock. Next, there's anxiety. And then there's panic, as everyone is told to drop what he or she is doing to polish, shine, and spruce up the workplace so that it looks perfect for the visit. Of course, when visits are conducted under these conditions, top managers don't get a realistic look at what's going on in the company. Consequently, one of the ways to get an accurate picture is to pay *surprise visits* to various parts of the organization. These visits should not just be surprise inspections, but should also be used as an opportunity to encourage meaningful upward communication from those who normally don't get a chance to communicate with upper management. Such surprise visits are part of the culture at Enterprise Rent-a-Car. Fred Sorino, who manages an Enterprise office in Eatontown, New Jersey, said, "Once I was working at a branch in Cranbury, New Jersey, and a corporate vice president and a regional president showed up for a surprise visit. I was outside washing cars in 20-degree weather, and we were very busy. These

company hotlines

Phone numbers that anyone in the company can call anonymously to leave information for upper management.

survey feedback

Information that is collected by surveys from organizational members and then compiled, disseminated, and used to develop action plans for improvement.

two executives offered to help me clean the cars. I felt so awkward that I said I didn't need help, but they did it anyway." Enterprise's then CEO Andy Taylor tells a similar story: "We were visiting an office in Berkeley and it was mobbed, so I started cleaning cars. As it was happening, I wondered if it was a good use of my time, but the effect on morale was tremendous."¹¹²

blog

A personal Web site that provides personal opinions or recommendations, news summaries, and reader comments.

Blogs are another way to hear what people are thinking and saying, both inside and outside the organization. A **blog** is a personal Web site that provides personal opinions or recommendations, news summaries, and reader comments. At Google, which started Blogger.com, hundreds of employees are writing *internal blogs*. One employee even wrote a blog for posting all the notes from the brainstorming sessions used to redesign the search page used by millions each day. Staffer Marissa Mayer says, "Our legal department loves the blogs, because it basically is a written-down, backed-up, permanent time-stamped version of the scientist's notebook. When you want to file a patent, you can now show in blogs where this idea happened."¹¹³

External blogs, written by people outside the company, can be a good way to find out what others are saying or thinking about your organization or its products or actions. Tim Holmes, Ford's executive director of public affairs, believes that companies have to pay attention to what is being said about them online. Says Holmes, "Like most big companies, we monitor the press, but the problem with that is it's always retrospective, everything's a few weeks old. The real value of searching the net, including blogs, is that you get a live picture of what people are thinking about certain issues. It means that you can predict if there is going to be an issue that's going to grow and become something you need to respond to before it gets to the mainstream press."¹¹⁴

Procter & Gamble is also turning to the Internet to do a better job of hearing what people outside the company are feeling and thinking. P&G is working with PlanetFeedback.com to find out what consumers are saying about P&G's two biggest brands, Tide detergent and Pampers diapers. PlanetFeedback.com collects consumer comments on its Web site, from telephone hotlines, and from faxes. It will also search online message boards, discussion Web sites, Usenet user groups, and blogs to find out what people are saying about P&G's brands.¹¹⁵

Review 4: Managing Organization-Wide Communication

Managers need methods for managing organization-wide communication and for making themselves accessible so that they can hear what employees throughout their organizations are feeling and thinking. Email, online discussion forums, televised/videotaped speeches and conferences, corporate talk shows, and broadcast voice mail make it much easier for managers to improve message transmission and "get the message out." By contrast, anonymous company hotlines, survey feedback, frequent informal meetings, and surprise visits help managers avoid organizational silence and improve reception by hearing what others in the organization feel and think. Monitoring internal and external blogs is another way to find out what people are saying and thinking about your organization.

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Concept Check

- Describe the perception process.
- What role do perceptions (of oneself and others) play in communication problems?
- Outline the communication process.
- Compare formal and informal communication channels.
- Explain the difference between coaching and counseling.
- What types of communication media can managers use? When is it appropriate to use each medium?
- What differentiates constructive feedback from destructive feedback?
- How can managers increase their chances for successful cross-cultural communication?
- How can managers best communicate with people throughout their organization?
- Explain how managers can encourage broad-based upward communication.

Self-Assessment

HOW DO YOU LISTEN?

Have you ever been eager to tell someone a funny story, only to have that person interrupt you repeatedly to ask for details or clarification? And have you ever said in exasperation, “Will you just listen?” Some people prefer an inquisitive listening style, whereas others

prefer a contemplative listening style. What listening style best describes you? The Self-Assessment Appendix has a listening styles inventory on page 622. Take the 10-question survey to establish a baseline you can use as a foundation for developing your listening skills.

Management Decision

TO BLOG OR NOT TO BLOG

Just this month, your company, AeroPrecision, a manufacturer of aircraft engine components, completed the upgrade of its computer system—the first upgrade in nearly 15 years.¹¹⁶ Everyone cheered when the DOS-based operating software was replaced with the newest Windows-based version. Now, for the first time data are being electronically collected directly from the factory floor, and the engineering, tooling, and maintenance departments are connected. You and the other top managers expect to reap terrific gains in productivity—and profitability—as a result of the upgrade. As the operations manager, you were ultimately responsible for revamping the entire system, and the process has left you motivated to adopt even more technological advances.

Over the course of the upgrade, you came across several short articles and references to *blogs*, which you learned was short for “Web logs.” Not too savvy about these things at the time, you turned to asked your IT consultant, and she told you that blogs are Web pages that serve as publicly accessible journals. That didn’t help you much, so she directed you to a variety of blogs to find out what they were all about. After only a few visits you started thinking about creating a blog for AeroPrecision.

Some managers use blogs to communicate with employees, and others use them as marketing tools to “get the message out” about their companies. The question for you is how AeroPrecision would use blogs. Only 30 of AeroPrecision’s 100 employees have computers at their desks (only 30 have desks). The rest of the employees are shop-floor workers who use the 20 terminals located on stands throughout the factory to record their personal production information. Shop-floor terminals don’t have Internet access. Could you justify connecting the 20 factory terminals to the Web? And do

you really want employees standing around the shop-floor terminals reading a company blog? But then you wonder, “Would that be any different from them hovering around the bulletin board by the time clock reading the company’s biweekly newsletter? And with a blog, the information would be more timely.”

Or would it? You pause to think about the time required to maintain a blog. And what would you link out to? A public blog would need to be an authoritative voice on, well, what? You could hook up to links about aerodynamics, metal prices, and travel statistics. If you could leverage AeroPrecision’s technical expertise, you would be able to position the company as a premier provider of component parts for aircraft engines. You may even be able to convert the research you do for the blog into new customers or products for new industries. If you put your mind to it, you are confident that you can brainstorm enough valuable resources for a blog, but you come back to the issue of time. Would the time spent be worth it?

Questions

1. Does it make sense for AeroPrecision to create a company blog for employees only? In other words, is a blog the best medium to get the company’s message out to employees and to hear what they feel and think? Explain.
2. Brainstorm possible items for inclusion on an AeroPrecision blog destined for public viewing. Can you think of any topics that you would want to avoid linking to?
3. How could a blog play a role in designing a company’s strategy? (Recall the issues discussed in Chapter 6, Organizational Strategy.)
4. Do you create a public blog for AeroPrecision? Why or why not?

Management Team Decision

COMMUNICATION DILEMMAS AND DECISIONS

As you watch the falling snow, you can't help thinking about the way the fax machine coughs out legal mis-sives into a collection bin. You are a partner at Shaw Walker Theobald, a law firm with offices across the United States, and your office sits right next to the constantly humming fax machine. You're at your wit's end from the incessant buzzing. Documents of all lengths and levels of importance come through the fax; sometimes, a lawyer at another firm will write a question on a cover letter, send it to a lawyer at your firm by fax, and then request the answer by fax! While you pack your briefcase before heading home, you think, "What a drain on productivity! And the client ends up footing the bill. There has to be a more efficient way to communicate."

After you finish dinner, you open your work, and are again distracted—not by a fax, but by the pinging of your teenager's instant messaging on the computer in the den. Immediately, you think you've hit on a solution for the office. If the firm used instant messaging, you could save the energy used by the fax, eliminate all the paper, and have answers in an instant. Communication would reach terminal speed! Unfortunately, you can't just implement your idea when you walk in tomorrow morning. You're only one of many partners, and they all have to approve anything that affects the management of the firm. How are you going to persuade a team of people trained to object? Instead of pulling a brief out of your bag, you flip to a clean sheet on your legal pad and begin drafting a convincing memo.

GETTING STARTED

This exercise will give you practice in writing memos and giving verbal feedback. You will begin by writing a memo on your own based on the scenario you just read. Then assemble a team of 5 to 6 students. Make enough copies of your memo so that each team member can have one. The job of the team is to review and critique all the memos. You will want to review Section 3.3 on giving feedback before convening the team to evaluate the memos. Choose one team member to be the moderator. The moderator will be in charge of keeping the discussion on track and ensuring that it doesn't disintegrate into subjective attacks.

Activities

1. Write a memo to your colleagues proposing the use of instant messaging to speed communication.
2. Convene the team and critique the members' memos. Try to use descriptive terms to give feedback about the memos. Avoid words like "good" and "bad"—they don't give the writer any real information about the effectiveness of the memo. Here are some adjectives that you might find useful as a starting point:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| • Convincing | • Neat |
| • Persuasive | • Hard to follow |
| • Condescending | • Clear |
| • Concise | • Sloppy |
| • Wordy | • Off-putting |
| • Informative | • Effective |
| • Detailed | • Inappropriate |
| • Sparse | • Unprofessional |

Don't limit your comment to a negative adjective, either. If you say a memo is hard to follow, explain *why*. What makes it hard to follow? If you say a memo is wordy, explain how it is wordy.

3. Assume that your individual proposal was accepted, and the partners (your team) have asked you to announce the new capabilities and outline the rules for their use. Determine the best way to communicate the instant messaging plan to the junior partners, associates, paralegals, and office staff. Using whatever medium you think is best, write out your communication. For example, if you think email is best, draft a relevant email. If you think a memo would be appropriate, then draft one. If you think oral communication would be a better choice, draft the speech you will give. Regardless of your medium, you will need to remember your audience.
4. If you have time, repeat the group critique session with the second communication. You may also wish to discuss as a team which medium would be the best for telling everyone at the firm about the new instant messaging initiative.

Develop Your Career Potential

I DON'T AGREE, BUT I'M LISTENING

Being a good listener is a critical part of effective communication. Without it, you're unlikely to be a good manager. Therefore, the purpose of this assignment is to help you develop your listening skills. And there's no better way to do that than to talk to someone whose views are quite different from yours. In the best of situations, being a good listener is difficult. Because of perceptual filters, distractions, or daydreams, we retain only about 25 percent of what we hear. When we're talking with people who have very different views and opinions, it can be almost impossible to be good listeners. We tend to interrupt, jump to conclusions about what they'll say, and hurry them to finish their points (which we don't want to listen to anyway) so that we can “correct” their thinking with our own opinions.

To complete this assignment, you'll have to find someone who has different views or opinions on some topic (handgun control, abortion, capital punishment, and euthanasia are just some of the topics on which you can always find someone with a different viewpoint). Once you've found someone, conduct a 10-minute listening session, following this simple rule: Before stating your opinion, you must first accurately reflect or paraphrase the statement that your listening partner just made (be sure to reread Subsection 3.2 on listening). For example, suppose that your listening partner says,

“Women shouldn't have to ask anyone for permission for what they do to their bodies. If they decide they want an abortion, they should go ahead and have it.” Before making your point or disagreeing with your partner's, you will have to accurately paraphrase that statement in your own words. If you don't paraphrase it correctly, your listening partner will tell you. If you or your partner has difficulty accurately paraphrasing a statement, ask the other person to repeat the statement, and try again. Also, don't parrot the statement by repeating it word for word. Good listening isn't mimicry. It's capturing the essence of what others have said in your own words. And, before your listening partner responds, he or she, too, has to accurately paraphrase what you say. Continue this listening-based discussion for 10 minutes.

Questions

1. Was this discussion different from the way you normally discuss contentious topics with other people? Why or why not?
2. Was it difficult to reflect or paraphrase your listening partner's perspectives? Explain and give an example.
3. Did active listening techniques or empathetic listening techniques lead to more effective listening for you? Explain.



Biz Flix *The Paper*

This engaging film shows the ethical dilemmas and stress of producing the *New York Sun*, a daily metropolitan newspaper. Metro Editor Henry Hackett (Michael Keaton) races against the clock to publish a story about a major police scandal that could send two young African American men to jail. He is in constant conflict with Managing Editor Alicia Clark (Glenn Close) who is more concerned about controlling the budget than about running accurate stories. Hackett is also under constant pressure from his wife Marty (Marisa Tomei), who is pregnant with their first child. While Hackett tries to get his story, Marty urges him to take a less demanding job at *The Sentinel*.

This scene occurs early in *The Paper*. It shows a staff meeting that takes place the day after the *Sun* missed a story about a murder and other shootings with racial overtones. Instead, the *Sun* ran a front-page story about parking problems. At the meeting, Senior Editor Bernie White (Robert Duvall) discusses his preferences in front-page stories.

What to Watch for and Ask Yourself

1. Use the model of the communication process to diagram what is occurring in the clip.
2. What types of communication do you see in the video?
3. Discuss the paralinguage used in the clip. What mood or attitude does it convey?



Management Workplace *Tires Plus*

Tires Plus started when Tom Gegax and Don Gullet left Royal Dutch Shell in 1976. The pair bought three gas stations, which they converted to tire stores that sold high-end tires and served cappuccino. The real competitive advantage of Tires Plus, however, was not the unique way the company delivered its service. Instead, Tom and Don thought their competitive advantage came from their employees, so they nurtured communication throughout the organization. After 25 years, Tires Plus has become a 150-store powerhouse that employs 2,000 people and generates over \$200 million in annual sales.

What to Watch for and Ask Yourself

1. How do the leaders of Tires Plus work to avoid perception problems?
2. What kind of communication seems to be most important at Tires Plus? Why?
3. How do Tom Gegax and Don Gullet improve one-on-one communication?
4. Describe the technique Tom uses to hear what others in the organization feel and think.

Take Two