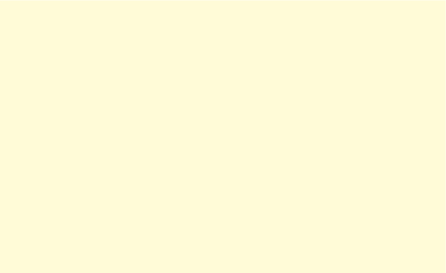
**How Can I Become a More Effective Communicator?**



**Major Topics I’ll Learn and Questions I Should Be Able to Answer**

* 9.1  **Basic Dimensions of the Communication Process**MAJOR QUESTION: ***How can knowing about the basic communication***  ***process help me communicate more effectively?***
* 9.2  **Communication Competence**MAJOR QUESTION: ***What key aspects of interpersonal communication***  ***can help me improve my communication competence?***
* 9.3  **Gender, Generations, and Communication**MAJOR QUESTION: ***How do gender and age affect the communication***  ***process?***
* 9.4  **Social Media and OB**MAJOR QUESTION: ***How can social media increase my effectiveness at***  ***work and in my career?***
* 9.5  **Communication Skills to Boost Your Effectiveness**  MAJOR QUESTION: ***How can I increase my effectiveness using presentation skills, crucial conversations, and managing up?***

“The Organizing Framework shown in Figure 9.1 summarizes what you will learn in this chapter. You can see that communication is an important process at all three lev- els of OB—individual, group/team, and organizational. The quality and effectiveness of your communication is influenced greatly by person factors, such as your interper- sonal, nonverbal communication, and listening skills. Of course many situation factors also influence the outcomes of your communication efforts. Your choice of medium, spoken or written words, and of course social media are increasingly important in the workplace. Collectively, these inputs impact communication across levels and out- comes in the Organizing Framework.”

FIGURE 9.1 ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING OB

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INPUTS |  | PROCESSES |  | OUTCOMES |
| **Person Factors**   * Nonverbal communication * Active listening * Nondefensive communication * Empathy * Ethical behavior * Social media behaviors (an  individual employee) * Communication skills  **Situation Factors** * Choice of medium * HR policies (hiring and firing) * Social media practices  (managers and coworkers) |  | **Individual Level**  • Communication **Group/Team Level**  • Communication  **Organizational Level**  • Communication  • HR policies (social media policies) |  | **Individual Level**   * Task performance * Work attitudes * Turnover  **Group/Team Level** * Group/team performance * Group satisfaction  **Organizational Level** * Accounting/financial performance * Customer satisfaction * Innovation * Reputation * Legal liability |

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|  |
| The importance of communication at work cannot be overstated. Your communication skills are important determinants of your opportunities and effectiveness throughout your working life. The fact that a large proportion of jobs require teamwork and communication technology, means that you are well served to enhance your understanding of communication processes and improve the many types of communication skills, such as non-verbal, public speaking, social media, and courageous conversations. © John Fedele/Blend Images LLC |

***335***

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| **Winning at Work** |
| Communication Counts in Landing a Job  As a job seeker, you are responsible for proving you’re the best candidate for the job. Performing well during a job interview depends on what you say *and* how you say it! Effective communication skills enable you both to sell yourself as the best candidate and to calm your own nerves.  **What You Say in a Job Interview**   * *Direct the conversation.* Many people simply wait to be asked questions, but you don’t need to. You can use small talk to get things started, but be brief. Also be sure you know your key selling points and guide the conversation to these. You can even state them upfront, saying, “I’d like to cover A, B, and C.” * *Pick your selling points.* Identify and focus on only your top two or three selling points. If you have little experience, focus on personal qualities or skills. If you have experience, highlight significant achievements. * *Substantiate.* Support and illustrate your selling points with numbers and/or stories. For instance, be explicit and say you were the number one in sales, increased efficiency by 20 percent, ranked top 10 in your class, or were member of a state champion team in a sport. Also consider using stories to describe achievements (school, work, or sports), how you dealt with a chal- lenging situation, or what you appreciated most about a particular job or experience. * *Describe what’s in it for them.* Ask not what the job will do for you, but what you can do on the job. Ex- plain why you’re a good match and what you bring to the party. * *Do your homework.* Be sure to thoroughly research the company and people. Look online for informa- tion relevant to past, current, and future company events and initiatives. Use this knowledge when talking or asking questions about the company. * *Anticipate challenging questions.* Know you will be asked, “What are your weaknesses?” The key here is to briefly identify a challenge, then discuss how you solved the problem and how it helped you grow.  **How You Say It**  • *Show them you’ll bring it.* Express your enthusiasm and willingness to do anything, not just the most in- teresting stuff. Remember, enthusiasm and other   positive emotions are both attractive to others and contagious. Positivity sells. . . be positive in your words, non-verbals, attitude, and emotions!  • *Smile.* It’s one of the easiest ways to win people over.  • *Take your time.* Nerves often make us rush through an answer just to get it over with. Slow yourself down and speak in a normal conversational tone.  • *Make eye contact.* Don’t stare in the other person’s eyes, but don’t stare at the floor or out the window either.  • *Dress the way they dress.* Regardless of your own style or wardrobe, your choices need to match what is common at the company. The rule: Anything that distracts, diminishes.  • *Close with a handshake.* End the interview with a “thank you” and a firm handshake (don’t crush bones).  • *Follow up.* At the end of the interview ask when the interviewer would like you to follow up. Then drop your interviewer a note of thanks.  **Fighting Nerves**  • Prepare. • Breathe. • Pause before answering. • Never say you’re nervous. • Use positive self-talk and visualization.1    ***336***  **What’s Ahead in This Chapter**  We’re about to give you practical guidance on how to communicate effectively. Communication is a critically important process at all levels of OB—individual, group, and organizational—and in most arenas of your life. We’ll guide you through important elements at each level, be- ginning with how individuals process information. We’ll also highlight the characteristics of competent commu- nicators and show you how to more successfully com- municate within and between generations and genders. We’ll conclude with the most practical tips of all: the do’s and don’ts of using social media in your professional life, ways to develop effective presentation and conversa- tional skills, and suggestions for managing up. |
|  |
| 9.1 **BASIC DIMENSIONS OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS**  MAJOR QUESTION  **How can knowing about the basic communication process help me communicate more effectively?**  THE BIGGER PICTURE  **By this point in your study of OB, you probably realize that communication is a critical and dy- namic *process* within the Organizing Framework. It includes a sender, a message, and a receiver; encoding and decoding; a medium; feedback; and the need to deal with “noise” or interference. You will also see why you should match the communication medium to the situation.** |
| Irish Playwright George Bernard Shaw summed up a key issue with communication in stat- ing “the single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”2  The illusion that we have communicated when we have not can lead to catastrophic consequences, such as the 2014 sinking of the *Sewol,* a South Korean ferry. Investigators concluded that “crucial miscommunication between the crew and ship traffic controllers who could have expedited rescue” was a key cause of 293 deaths. Many of the dead were 16- and 17-year-olds on a school outing.3  Effective communication helps individuals, groups, and organizations to achieve their goals. Bridgewater Associates LP, the world’s largest hedge fund, is trying to en- hance productivity and customer service by fostering open communication. Employees are asked to “tell it like it is,” according to *The Wall Street Journal*. They are “encour- aged to air any gripes and concerns about the hedge fund in a digital ‘issue log’ that can be seen by anyone at Bridgewater. The comments usually are about bigger problems but also have included difficulties formatting e-mail.” To improve individual’s performance, the company also collects and disseminates feedback collected on iPads on which work- ers use apps to rate each other on dozens of strengths and weaknesses.4  TEKsystems, an IT recruiting firm, has employed a different communication strat- egy. The company sent 18 senior leaders to visit more than 100 of its local offices over the course of one month. The goal of these meetings was to update employees in person about what was happening in the company and its plans.5  These examples illustrate why communication is a critical process at all three levels in the Organizing Framework. We hope this chapter helps you develop your communication skills.  **Defining Communication**  *Communication* **is “the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver, and the inference (perception) of meaning between the individuals involved.”**6 It is a circular and dynamic process in which people interpret and make sense of the information they exchange. And it’s a very important activity in both our personal and professional lives.7  A national survey of 400 employers and 613 college students revealed that more than 80 percent of employers and 75 percent of students believe oral and written communi- cation skills are important for workplace success. However, more than 60 percent of students reported they were skilled in oral and written communication, whereas only 27 percent of employers endorsed this conclusion.8    Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *337*** |
|  |
| These students are working on a class project in the library. Note how some of them are actively involved in the conversation and others appear a bit detached. Why do you think college students overestimate their communication skills? © Monkey Business Images/Shutterstock RF |

**How the Communication Process Works**

We all know communicating is neither simple nor clear-cut. Researchers have begun to examine it as a form of social information processing in which receivers interpret mes- sages by cognitively processing information. This work has led to development of a per- ceptual model of communication that depicts it as a process in which receivers create meaning in their own minds.9 Let us consider the parts of this process and illustrate them with an example (see Figure 9.2).

**Sender, Message, and Receiver** The sender is the person or group wanting to communicate information—the message. The receiver is the person, group, or organiza- tion for whom the message is intended.

FIGURE 9.2 COMMUNICATION PROCESS IN ACTION

(left): © Image Source/Getty Images RF; (right): © Fuse/Getty Images RF

Let’s meet at Starbucks to study.

1. **Sender** encodes message, selects medium (e.g., cell phone).

2. **Message** is transmitted through a medium (e.g., text message).

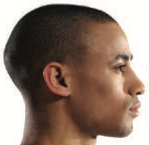
**Noise**

(any interference)

4. **Receiver** sends feedback through a medium (e.g., text message).

Which Starbucks? We have two classes together; which one are you thinking about?

3. **Receiver** decodes message and decides that feedback is needed.

***338* PART 2** Groups

**Encoding** Communication begins when a sender encodes an idea or thought. Encod- ing means translating thoughts into a form or language that can be understood by others. This language becomes the foundation of the message. For example, if a professor wants to communicate with you about an assignment, he or she must first think about what in- formation to communicate. Once the professor has resolved this issue in his or her mind (encoding), the next step is to select a medium in which to communicate.

**Selecting a Medium** Managers can communicate through a variety of media. These in- clude face-to-face conversations and meetings, telephone calls, charts and graphs, and the many digital messaging forms—e-mail, texting, voice mail, videoconferencing, Twitter, Face- book, Blackboard, and others. We discuss the best way to select a medium in the next section.

**Decoding and Creating Meaning** Decoding, the process of interpreting or making sense of a message, occurs when receivers receive a message. When a professor commu- nicates with you about an assignment, for example, you decode the message when you receive it.

The perceptual model of communication assumes the receiver creates the meaning of a message in his or her mind. This means different people can interpret the same message differently.

**Feedback** The first round of feedback occurs when the original receiver expresses a reaction to the sender’s message. Once the initial sender has obtained this feedback, he or she is likely to decode it and send corresponding feedback. This process continues until sender and receiver believe they have effectively communicated.

**Noise** *Noise* **is anything that interferes with the transmission and understanding of a message.** There are many other sources of noise: language differences, speech im- pairment, illegible handwriting, inaccurate statistics, poor hearing and eyesight, environ- mental noises, other people talking, faulty equipment, and physical distance between sender and receiver. Noise affects all the links in the communication process. Nonverbal communication, discussed later in this chapter, also is a source of noise, as are cross- cultural differences between senders and receivers, and the physical work environment.



OB in Action

The Priceline Group is an $8.44 billion online travel company that provides consum- ers with accommodation reservations for hotels, bed and breakfasts, hostels, apart- ments, vacation rentals, and other properties through its Booking.com, Priceline.com, and Agoda brands. The company does not directly provide these services. It essen- tially facilitates travel-related services from different suppliers to its customers.10

Although Priceline primarily does business online, travelers call the company for many reasons, such as to confirm travel details or make changes in an itinerary. For- mer CEO Paul J. Hennessy says about 20 percent of customers end up speaking with Priceline employees on the phone. This is a communication challenge because the company’s 12,700 employees operate 24/7 in more than 220 countries.11

For instance, most travelers prefer to speak with customer service representa- tives in their native language. To do this right, Priceline makes its customer service number visible on all online pages and provides the service itself, even though outsourcing could save money.

Booking.com, Priceline’s largest global business, employs 6,000 full-time cus- tomer service employees. Each is fluent in English and one other language. “Many



**The Priceline Group Works Hard to Avoid Noise with Its Global Customers**



Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *339***

speak three or four languages, particularly in Europe,” Hennessy says. “We test fluency, and we pay people a little more for every extra language they speak. We do offer language lessons . . . we offer service in 42 languages.”

It’s also a challenge to hire people who speak multiple languages yet possess good communication skills. One of these skills is an understanding of cross-cultural nuances. For example, people in “Brazil and China tend to call more frequently, per- haps because they’re unaccustomed to booking trips solely online,” says Hennessy. “The Dutch . . . call the least. South Americans tend to stay on calls longer, so we may need more reps speaking their languages to avoid keeping people on hold.”12

Linguistic details within a language can be a hurdle. Hennessy says, “No mat- ter how fluent the rep, customers in some parts of the world simply don’t like talk- ing to people who aren’t native speakers or don’t get the linguistic details right.” He offers the example of Japanese customers who can tell the difference “be- tween a Japanese speaker from Singapore or the United States and one from Ja- pan, and they prefer the latter.” Priceline offers special training for reps who cover Japan. The company goes to great lengths to route calls between customer ser- vice centers in such a way as to maximize the chance that customers will “speak to someone who uses their language the way they prefer.”13

Priceline also focuses on the quality of written communication. Given its global brand, the company has to hire a large number of translators to translate all docu- ments into local languages for its websites. Priceline won’t use computer pro- grams to do this work because it can lead to miscommunication.

**YOUR THOUGHTS?**

1. Which components of the communication process are most likely to create noise between Priceline’s customer service employees and its customers?
2. What most impresses you about Priceline’s methods for effectively communi- cating with customers? Explain.

**Selecting the Right Medium**

One way in which we communicate effectively is by using the medium most appropriate for the situation. That is, we match media *richness* with the situation’s complexity. Let’s look at how.

**Media Richness** *Media richness* **measures the capacity of a given communica- tion medium to convey information and promote understanding.**14 Media vary from rich to lean. The richer a medium, the better it is at conveying information. Four factors affect richness:

1. **Speed of feedback.** Faster feedback offers more richness.
2. **Channel.** The visual and audio characteristics of a videoconference are richer than  the limited visual aspects of a written report.
3. **Type.** Personal media such as phone calls and interpersonal speech are richer than impersonal media such as memos and group emails.
4. **Language source.** The natural body language and speech in a face-to-face conversa- tion provide a richer medium than the numbers in a financial statement.

**Complexity of the Situation** Situations can range from low to high in complexity. Low-complexity situations are routine and predictable, such as a manager updating em- ployees on last month’s sales or calculating someone’s paycheck. Highly complex situa- tions, such as a corporate reorganization or merger, are ambiguous, hard to analyze, and often emotionally charged.



***340* PART 2** Groups

The photo on the right represents a less complex situation than the one on the left. Speaking to a group of employees in an open forum is more complicated because the speaker has no idea what people might ask or how they might respond to the message. How would you suggest that managers prepare for an open forum meeting?

(left): © Ryan McVay/Getty Images RF; (right): © Jupiterimages/Getty Images RF

**Picking the Right Medium** A two-way face-to-face conversation is the richest form of communication. It provides immediate feedback and allows participants to observe multiple cues such as body language and tone of voice. Use face-to-face in situations that are complex or that are highly important to receivers. In contrast, telephone conversations and videoconferencing are not as informative as face-to-face exchanges even though they are relatively high in richness. For example, webinars and WebEx presentations are well suited for disseminating information, but we can say from experience that they are not as good for ensuring the messaging has been understood. At the other end of the complexity scale, newsletters, computer reports, and general e-mail blasts are lean media and best for less complex situations. E-mail and social media messages vary in media richness: leaner if they impersonally blanket a large audience, and richer if they mix personal textual and video information that prompts quick conversational feedback.15

**TAKE-AWAY APPLICATION**

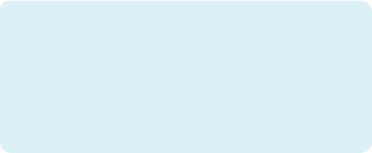
**Analyzing a Miscommunication**

Think of a recent situation in which you had a key miscommunication with an individ- ual or group. Now answer the following questions:

1. In terms of the process model of communication shown in Figure 9.2, what went wrong?
2. Based on what you’ve just learned about communication media, did you choose the most appropriate medium? Explain.
3. Based on your answers to the above two questions, what would you do differently?

We conclude this section by noting that people have preferences for communicating in different media. Research on individual differences identified the following trends:

* More educated hotel guests prefer to complain in person or via written communi- cation. Less educated people tend to complain on guest-comment cards.16
* Males and extroverts prefer to communicate via high-richness media such as face- to-face.17
* Older individuals are less likely to communicate via mobile devices.18 We suspect this will change as more baby boomers reach retirement age.



Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *341***

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| 9.2 **COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE** MAJOR QUESTION  **What key aspects of interpersonal communication can help me improve my communication competence?**  THE BIGGER PICTURE  **Communication competence is your ability to effectively communicate with others. Knowing that recruiters look for communication skills in college graduates, you’ll be happy to learn that you can improve these skills. You will learn how you can use nonverbal communication, active listen- ing, nondefensive communication, and empathy to enhance your communication competence.** |
| Although there is no universally accepted definition of *communication competence,* **it is a performance-based index of an individual’s abilities to effectively use commu- nication behaviors in a given context.**19  Are you curious about your level of communication competence? Is it low, medium, or high? Find out by completing Self-Assessment 9.1. If your score is lower than you prefer, find ideas in the chapter for improving your interpersonal communication skills.  **SELF-ASSESSMENT 9.1**  **Assessing Your Communication Competence**  Please be prepared to answer these questions if your instructor has assigned Self-Assessment 9.1 in Connect.   1. Are you happy with the results? 2. Based on your scores, what are your top three strengths and your three biggest weaknesses? 3. How might you use your strengths more effectively in your role as a student? 4. How might you improve on your weaknesses?   Let’s consider four key communication skills that affect your communication competence:  • Nonverbal communication • Active listening • Nondefensive communication • Empathy  **Sources of Nonverbal Communication**  *Nonverbal communication* **is communication without words.** According to commu- nication experts “it includes observable behaviors such as facial expressions, eyes, touch- ing, and tone of voice, as well as less obvious messages such as dress, posture, and spatial distance between two or more people.”20  Nonverbal communication adds flavor to oral communication. That is, it helps you understand the attitudes and emotions of those with whom you are speaking, which in turn helps you more accurately interpret their message.21    ***342* PART 2** Groups |

Let’s consider four key sources of nonverbal messages:

• Body movements and gestures. • Touch.

Body movements, such as leaning forward or backward, and gestures provide nonverbal information that can either enhance or detract from the communication process. Open body positions, such as leaning backward or ges- turing with palms facing up, communicate *immediacy,* a term used to represent openness, warmth, closeness, and availability for communication. A recent study showed that posi- tive hand gestures by managers produced more immediacy from employees than defen- sive or no hand gestures.22 *Defensiveness* is communicated by gestures such as folding

arms, crossing hands, crossing legs, or pointing at others.

**Touch** Touching is another powerful nonverbal cue. People tend to touch those they like. Research reveals that women do more touching during conversations than men.23 Touching conveys an impression of warmth and caring and can help create a personal bond between people. Be careful about using touch with people from diverse cultures, however, because norms for touching vary significantly around the world.

**Facial Expressions** Facial expressions convey a wealth of information. Smiling, for instance, typically represents warmth, happiness, or friendship, whereas frowning conveys dissatisfaction or anger. Are these interpretations universal? A summary of relevant re- search revealed that the association between facial expressions and emotions varies across cultures.24 A smile, for example, does not convey the same emotion in different countries. Be careful when interpreting facial expressions among diverse groups of employees.

**Eye Contact** Eye contact is a strong nonverbal cue that varies across cultures. West- erners are taught at an early age to look at their parents when spoken to. In contrast, Asians are taught to avoid eye contact with a parent or superior in order to show obedi- ence and subservience.25 Once again, you need to be sensitive to different orientations toward maintaining eye contact with diverse employees.

**Practical Tips** Here is our advice for improving your nonverbal communication skills.

**Body movements, gestures, and speech**

* Lean forward to show the speaker you are interested.
* Don’t display slumped shoulders, downward head, flat tones, or inaudible voice, all of which convey indecisiveness or lack of confidence.
* Don’t speak too fast or too slowly. Your tone of voice should match the tone of the message.
* Use paraphrasing as a mechanism to check on communication accuracy.  *Paraphrasing* **is restating what someone else has said or written.**

**Body Movements and Gestures**

• Facial expressions. • Eye contact.



Facial expressions like these can reveal the emotions behind a message, but they are easily misinterpreted. Which of these facial expressions suggest happiness, worry, and anger? (left to right): © uwe umst\_tter/Getty Images RF, © Chajamp/Shutterstock RF, © Royalty-Free/Corbis, © pathdoc/Shutterstock RF

Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *343***

**Facial expressions**

* Nod your head to show you are listening or that you agree.
* Smile and show interest.
* Don’t close your eyes or tense facial muscles.  **Eye contact**  • Maintain eye contact and don’t look away from the speaker.  **Listening**  *Listening* **is the process of actively decoding and interpreting verbal messages.** It requires cognitive atten- tion and information processing; simply hearing does not. There is general con- sensus that listening is a cornerstone skill of communication competence.  In studies that support this conclu- sion, active listening made receivers feel more understood. It also led people to conclude that their conversations were more helpful, sensitive, and supportive.26 Clearly, active listening yields positive outcomes.  Unfortunately, many of us think we are good listeners when evidence suggests just the opposite. For example, researchers estimate that typical listeners retain only 20 to 50 percent of what they hear.27  Why do you think we miss or lose so much of what we hear? One reason is that we have the cognitive capacity to process words at a much higher rate than people speak. This means our cognitive processes are being underutilized, leading to daydreaming and distractions. Noise is another reason. A third reason, and one you can control, is your motivation to listen and your listening style. It takes effort to actively listen. You won’t be a better listener unless you are motivated to become one.  **What’s Your Listening Style—or Styles?** You can improve your communication competence by understanding your typical listening style. There are four styles:28

1. **Active—I’m fully invested.** Active listeners are “all in.” That is, they are motivated to listen and give full attention when others are talking. They focus on what is being com- municated and expend energy by participating in the discussion. They also use positive body language, such as leaning in or making direct eye contact, to convey interest.
2. **Involved—I’m partially invested.** Involved listeners devote some, but not all, of their attention and energy to listening. They reflect on what is being said and half- heartedly participate in the discussion. Their use of nonverbal cues tends to be incon- sistent or intermittent, and they can show nonverbal signs of interest and noninterest in the same conversation.
3. **Passive—It’s not my responsibility to listen.** Passive listeners are not equal part- ners in a speaking–listening exchange. They assume the speaker is responsible for the quality of the interaction and believe their role is to passively take in information. Passive listeners will display attentiveness, but they can fake it at times. Overall, they don’t expend much motivation or energy in receiving and decoding messages.
4. **Detached—I’m uninterested.** Detached listeners tend to withdraw from the interac- tion. They appear inattentive, bored, distracted, and uninterested. They may start us- ing mobile devices during the speaking–listening exchange. Their body language will reflect lack of interest, such as slumping and avoiding direct eye contact.

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| As children we all were instructed to listen. However, many adults seem to suffer from poor listening skills. Why is this? For one, it takes effort and motivation to be a good listener. To communicate and perform better, we’d all benefit from investing more effort into listening more effectively. Table 9.1 provides recommendations for improving your listening skills. © McGraw-Hill Education/Eclipse Studios |



***344* PART 2** Groups

Which of the four styles do you tend to use? Do you consistently use one or two styles, or does your style vary from one situation to the next? You can answer these ques- tions by taking Self-Assessment 9.2.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT 9.2**

**Assessing Your Listening Style**

Please be prepared to answer these questions if your instructor has assigned Self-Assessment 9.2 in Connect.

1. Based on your results, how would you classify your style?
2. Are you surprised by the results?
3. Identify three things you can do to improve your listening skills.

**Becoming a More Effective Listener** Effective listening is a learned skill that requires effort and motivation. It comes down to *paying attention to the content of the message.* The suggestions in Table 9.1 can increase your listening skills at school, home, and work.

**Nondefensive Communication**

*Defensiveness* **occurs when people perceive they are being attacked or threatened.** Our “first responder” to defensiveness is the brain’s amygdala. A neuroscience expert

TABLE 9.1 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Tip | Explanation |
| Show respect. | Give everyone the opportunity to explain his/her ideas without interrupting. Actively try to help the sender convey his or her message. |
| Listen from the first sentence. | Turn off your internal thoughts and mentally put aside whatever you were thinking about prior to the interaction. |
| Be mindful. | Stay in the moment and focus on the sender. Don’t try to figure out what the speaker is going to say. |
| Keep quiet. | Use your ears more than your mouth, and try to follow the 80/20 rule. That is, your conversation partner should speak 80 percent of the time and you should speak 20 percent. |
| Ask questions. | Asking questions helps you clarify what is being said and demonstrates that you are listening. |
| Paraphrase and summarize. | Paraphrasing repeats back to someone what you believe you just heard him or her say. Summarizing consolidates an entire conversation. Both these techniques enhance communication accuracy because they help to ensure messages are being understood correctly. |
| Remember what was said. | Either take notes or make an effort to log critical information into your mental computer. |
| Involve your body. | Use nonverbal cues to demonstrate interest and involvement. |

SOURCE: Based on J. Keyser, “Active Listening Leads to Business Success,” *T*+*D,* July 2013, 26–28; and B. Brooks, “The Power of Active Listening,” *The American Salesman,* December 2010, 28–30.

Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *345***

noted the amygdala “accesses emotional memories that identify a given stimulus as potentially threaten- ing and triggers the emotional fear response that sets the fight-or-flight biobehavioral response in mo- tion.”29 This reaction leads to defensive listening and destructive behaviors such as shutting down or being passive-aggressive, standing behind rules or policies, creating a diversion, or counterattacking.

Moreover, defensiveness from one person acti- vates a similar response in the other party. All told, defensiveness from either party in an exchange fosters the exchange of inaccurate and inefficient communi- cation.30

You may be surprised to learn that defensiveness is often triggered by nothing more than a poor choice of words or nonverbal posture during interactions. In the language of behavior modification, these triggers are *antecedents* of defensiveness. For example, using absolutes like “always” or “never” is very likely to cre- ate a defensive response. Try to avoid using absolutes because they are rarely true. Instead, you can increase your communication competence by avoiding the de- fensive antecedents and employing the positive ante- cedents of nondefensive communication shown in Table 9.2.

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| Have you ever been in an auto accident? If yes, then you likely have intimate knowledge of defensiveness. In situations like this, one party often tries to blame the other while both defend themselves. Which of the toward-defensiveness styles in Table 9.2  are likely to occur in such situations? © Chris Ryan/agefotostock RF |

TABLE 9.2

Controlling

Neutral

Certain

ANTECEDENTS OF DEFENSIVE AND NONDEFENSIVE COMMUNICATION

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TOWARD DEFENSIVENESS |  | | TOWARD NONDEFENSIVENESS |  | |
| Style | | Example | Style | | Example |
| Evaluative | | “Your work is sloppy.” | Descriptive | | “Your work was two days late.” |

“You need to . . .”

*“Don’t worry about missing the deadline. It’s no big deal.”*

*“We tried this idea in the past. It just doesn’t work.”*

Problem solving

Empathetic

Honest and open

*“What do you think are the causes of the missed deadline?”*

*“I sense disappointment about missing the deadline. Let’s figure out how we can get back on schedule.”*

*Using I-messages:* “I am angry about the way you spoke to the customer because our department looked unresponsive.”

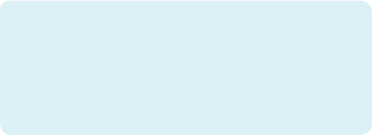
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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategizing | *“I’d like you to agree with me during the meeting so that we can overcome any challenges.”* | Straightforward | *“Vote your conscious at the meeting. You can agree or disagree with my proposal.”* |
| Superior | *“Listen to me; I’ve worked here 20 years.”* | Equal | *“Let’s figure out the causes of the missed deadline together.”* |



***346***

**PART 2** Groups

SOURCE: Based on J. R. Gibb, “Defensive Communication,” *Journal of Communication,* 1961, 141–148; and “Reach Out: Effective Communication,” *Sunday Business Post,* April 14, 2013.



**TAKE-AWAY APPLICATION**

**Realizing My Defensive Communication**

1. Think of an interaction you had with someone that resulted in defensiveness from either the sender or receiver.
2. Referring to Tables 9.1 and 9.2, identify the potential causes of the defensive communication pattern.
3. Again referring to Tables 9.1 and 9.2, identify three things you could have done differently to facilitate nondefensive communication.

**Connecting with Others via Empathy**

We first mentioned empathy in Chapter 3 when discussing the components of emo- tional intelligence. Although researchers propose multiple types of empathy, the gen- eral consensus is that *empathy* **represents the ability to recognize and understand another person’s feelings and thoughts.**31 It is a reflective technique that fosters open communication.

Being empathetic requires two key actions. The first is mindfulness. Empathy neces- sitates that we place our attention on the feelings and emotions being displayed both verbally and nonverbally by others. The second action is to incorporate our understanding of another person’s feelings and thoughts into our communications. This will lead us to use language that fits the receiver’s perspective.

Empathy leads to more effective communication and interaction because people feel heard. It also sends the message that we care about others. Although women are often more empathetic, studies show that everyone can learn this skill with training and practice.32

Ford Motor Co. is using the principle of empathy to help its engineers design more effective products.



OB in Action

**Ford Designs Products by Using Empathy**

A *Harvard Business Review* article focused on the role of empathy in organiza- tions. Here is what the author said about its use at Ford Motor Co. “Ford Motor Co. started asking its (mostly male) engineers to wear the Empathy Belly, a sim- ulator that allows them to experience symptoms of pregnancy firsthand—the back pain, the bladder pressure, the 30 or so pounds of extra weight. They can even feel movement that mimics fetal kicking. The idea is to get them to under- stand the ergonomic challenges that pregnant women face when driving, such as limited reach, shifts in posture and center of gravity, and general bodily awkwardness.”33

**YOUR THOUGHTS?**

1. Is this a good application of empathy? Explain.
2. Can you think of other contexts in which it would be useful to use empathy? Discuss.



Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *347***

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| 9.3 **GENDER, GENERATIONS, AND COMMUNICATION** MAJOR QUESTION  **How do gender and age affect the communication process?**  THE BIGGER PICTURE  **Women and men have communicated differently since the dawn of time. So do people from varying generations. You can improve your communication competence by understanding and accommodating communication differences among men and women and various genera- tions. This section will help you in this pursuit.** |
| Assume you are about to work with someone who made the following statement during a strategic planning meeting. “I’m not on board with the direction this decision is going. . . . No, I’m not finished. I won’t back down from this position, and I’m not going to commit my team and resources to this project until we have more conclusive evidence to work with. Period.” What is your impression of this person? Would it be different if the speak- er’s name were Mary rather than Mark?  A team of researchers examined this question and found that women who disagreed in a forceful manner like this were evaluated more negatively than men.34 This result held for both male and female evaluators. Let’s consider two explanations.  The first is *implicit cognition,* which was discussed in Chapter 4. Implicit cognition consists of any thoughts or beliefs that are automatically activated from memory without our conscious awareness. It causes us to make biased decisions without realizing we are doing so.35 Best-selling author Sheryl Sandberg and Professor Adam Grant commented about this bias by noting, “When a woman speaks in a professional setting, she walks a tightrope. Either she’s barely heard or she’s judged as too aggressive. When a man says virtually the same thing, heads nod in appreciation for his fine idea.”36  The second explanation is linguistic styles. Deborah Tannen, a communication ex- pert, defines *linguistic style* as follows:  *Linguistic style* **refers to a person’s characteristic speaking pattern.** It includes such features as directness or indirectness, pacing and pausing, word choice, and the use of such elements as jokes, figures of speech, stories, questions, and apologies. In other words, linguistic style is a set of culturally learned signals by which we not only communicate what we mean but also interpret others’ meaning and evaluate one another as people.37  You can see how linguistic style helps explain communication differences between women and men and across generations. This section will increase your understanding of interpersonal communication across age and gender barriers.  **Communication Patterns between Women and Men**  There are two competing explanations about the origin of linguistic styles between men and women. Some researchers believe interpersonal differences between women and men are due to inherited biological differences between the sexes. This perspective, also called the evolutionary psychology or Darwinian perspective, attributes gender differences in communication to drives, needs, and conflicts associated with reproductive strategies used by women and men. The second perspective, social role theory, suggests that girls and boys are taught to communicate differently. Here is what these explanations suggest about male and female communication patterns.38    ***348* PART 2** Groups |

**The Male Perspective** Males are expected to communicate more aggressively, interrupt others more than women, and hide their emotions because they have an inherent desire to pos- sess features attractive to females. Men also see conversations as negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand. Thus they feel it is important to protect themselves from others’ attempts to put them down or push them around. This perspective increases a male’s need to maintain independence and avoid failure.39 Although males are certainly not competing for mate selection during a business meeting, evolutionary psychologists propose that men cannot turn off the biologically based determinants of their behavior.40

**The Female Perspective** According to social role theory, females and males learn ways of speaking while growing up. Research shows that girls learn conversational skills and habits that focus on rapport and relationships, whereas boys learn skills and habits that focus on status and hierarchies. Accordingly, women come to view communication as a network of connections in which conversations are negotiations for closeness. This orientation leads women to seek and give confirmation and support more than men.41

**What Does Research Reveal?** Research demonstrates that women and men com- municate differently in a number of ways.42 Women are more likely to share credit for success, to ask questions for clarification, to tactfully give feedback by mitigating criti- cism with praise, and to indirectly tell others what to do. According to *The Wall Street Journal,* women also are “more likely to add qualifiers (‘I’m not sure, but . . .’) and apologies (‘I’m sorry to interrupt, but . . .’). When complimented on her work, a woman is more likely to downplay it, saying she was ‘lucky.’”43 These tendencies allow women to be interrupted more than men when communicating with others.44

In contrast, men are more likely to boast about themselves, to bluntly give feedback, to withhold compliments, to ask fewer questions, and to avoid admitting fault or weaknesses.

**Generational Differences in Communication**

As discussed in Chapter 4, today’s workplace often includes people from four different generations—traditionalists, baby boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials (Gen Ys). (Refer to Table 4.3 for additional details and characteristics.) Among the challenges in this sce- nario is the fact that different generations prefer different media, as discussed above, and they have different expectations and norms about communication.

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|  |
| Women are more likely to be interrupted during this meeting attended by a group of global employees. What can women do to ensure that their voices are heard and not overun by others during a meeting? © Potstock/Shutterstock RF |

Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *349***

***350* PART 2** Groups

**The Role of Digital Devices** When it comes to communication media, Millennials and Gen Xers are more likely to love their digital devices than are boomers and traditionalists. Millennials were brought up with instant messaging and texting and prefer these media over phone calls, letters, and reports. The San Francisco 49ers professional football team ac- knowledges these trends and is making accommodations in managing its operations.

The first thing the team did was to change the format of team meetings. Rather than lasting two straight hours, the meetings are now broken into 30-minute segments fol- lowed by a 10-minute break. Then-coach Jim Tomsula said the breaks enable players to “go grab your phone, do your multitasking, and get your fix” before returning to the meeting. The team now puts digital playbooks and weekly briefings on social media. Practice tapes are also made available on players’ tablets. Finally, calendar alerts ensure that players get information about meetings and deadlines, and the team is also investigat- ing how apps might help develop players’ football skills.45

**Communication Expectations and Norms** Younger employees also are more likely to use the Internet and social media to accomplish their tasks. Patty Baxter, pub- lisher at Metro Guide Publishing in Halifax, Nova Scotia, has firsthand knowledge of this communication pattern.

Baxter learned that advertising sales were down because her staff, all under the age of 35, were e-mailing sales pitches rather than calling potential clients on the phone. She noted, “E-mail won’t cut it in professions like sales, where personal rapport matters. You’re not selling if you’re just asking a question and getting an answer back.”46 Baxter wanted her employees to start calling prospective clients on the phone.

Not everyone agrees, however. Stephanie Shih, 27, a marketing manager at Paperless Post in New York, concluded that phones are outdated. For Kevin Castle, 32-year-old chief technology officer at Technossus in Irvine, California, “unplanned calls are such an annoyance that he usually unplugs his desk phone and stashes it in a cabinet. Calling someone without e-mailing first can make it seem as though you’re prioritizing your needs over theirs.”47

**Improving Communications between**

**the Sexes and Generations**

It’s unwise to generalize any trends, preferences, or perceptions to all men, all women, or all members of a particular generation. Some men, for instance, are less likely to boast about their achievements, while some women are less likely to share the credit. Some traditional- ists embrace technology and new communication practices, while not all members of Gen Y are technological whizzes. There are always exceptions to the rule. In recognition of that fact, here are some suggestions that can enhance your communication competence:

• **Clarify communication expectations and norms.** If your manager fails to dis- cuss these, bring the topic up. It’s better to understand expectations than to guess wrong. After all, you are the one who will lose if people form negative perceptions about your communication skills and patterns.

• **Use a variety of communication tools.** Regardless of your preferred mode of communication (such as face-to-face or texting), employees from all generations should use a variety of media according to the circumstances. This avoids alienat- ing any particular generation.

• **Be aware of implicit cognition.** Don’t assume, based on somebody’s gender or age, that he or she only likes one mode of communication. If you find males interrupting, gently call them out. If someone is quiet in a meeting, ask for his or her opinion.

• **Make sure people get credit for their ideas and not their gender.** Sometimes a woman “will say something, and it’s not acknowledged until a guy says it later,” Paul Gotti, Cardinal Health’s vice president of nuclear pharmacy services, says. He makes sure to credit the woman and ask her to elaborate.48

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| 9.4 **SOCIAL MEDIA AND OB** MAJOR QUESTION  **How can social media increase my effectiveness at work and in my career?**  THE BIGGER PICTURE  **Employers are continually challenged to reap the benefits of social media while controlling the costs. Your own knowledge and behavior are part of the solution. In this section, you’ll expand your understanding of how to use social media productively, the cost of social media, the effective use of e-mail, and ways to manage issues related to social media policies, privacy, and etiquette.** | |
| *Social media* **use web-based and mobile technologies to generate interactive dia- logue with members of a network.** Social media are now woven throughout the fabric of our lives. Their use affects many subjects covered in this book, highlighting the impor- tance of communication as an OB topic. Social media are now used by a significant pro- portion of people across all age groups (see Figure 9.3 for utilization rates by age).49  FIGURE 9.3 AGE DISTRIBUTION AT THE TOP SOCIAL NETWORKS    **US Data, Users Aged 18 and over, December 2014**  Snapchat 1% Vine  Tumblr Instagram 4%  Twitter Google+ Facebook Pinterest LinkedIn   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | 45% | 26% | 13% | 10% | 6% | | | 28% | 23% | 17% | 15% | 10% | 7% | | 28% | 25% | 18% | 13% | 11% | 6% | | 23% | 26% | 19% | 15% | 12% |  | | 19% | 22% | 21% | 18% | 13% | 7% | | 16% | 25% | 22% | 18% | 13% | 70% | | 16% | 22% | 19% | 18% | 15% | 10% | | 15% | 26% | 21% | 17% | 15% | 7% | | 14% | 21% | 22% | 18% | 16% | 9% |   18–24  25–34 35–44 45–54 55–64 65+    SOURCE: M. Hoelzel, “Social Network Demographics,” *Business Insider,* June 3, 2015, http://www.businessinsider.com. au/update-a-breakdown-of-the-demographics-for-each-of-the-different-social-networks-2015-6?r=US&IR=T.  Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *351*** |

These figures suggest that employers and managers are wise to utilize social media tools with employees of all generations. A human resource expert put it this way:

Used correctly, social media can benefit an organization. However, if not managed effectively, it can create many legal, financial, and personnel risks. Given the potential risks and benefits of social media in the workplace, it is critical for managers to develop policies and procedures governing its appropriate use.50

The same applies to you and other employees. Everyone needs to realize the benefits and avoid the pitfalls of social media. To do this, let’s begin our discussion with what experts and researchers say about the effects of social media on productivity.

**Social Media and Increased Productivity**

A driving force behind the use of all forms of technology at work, including social media, is to boost productivity. The key for employees, managers, and employers is to harness the potential and enhance performance at the individual, group, and organizational levels. The following quotation articulates this argument:

[W]ork is becoming a place to collaborate, exchange ideas, and communicate with colleagues and customers. Your value as an employee will be determined not only by how well you perform your job but also by how much you contribute your knowledge and ideas back to the organization. The ways in which companies develop this culture of collaboration will become a significant competitive factor in attracting and engaging top talent in the twenty-first century.51

Social media is clearly a tool that can help both you and your employers realize these productivity benefits.

**Employee Productivity** Evidence is mounting that social media confers a host of benefits for employees, such as

• Increased job satisfaction and better work–life balance.52 • Performance and retention.53 • More creativity and collaboration.54

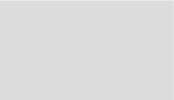
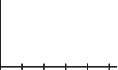
Two studies of thousands of employees even showed that those who used five or more so- cial networking sites had higher sales numbers than those who used only one to four.55 This implies that more is better for salespeople! While you should be careful about drawing broad conclusions from these findings, they are revealing.

Furthermore, if you think employees’ opinions matter, you’ll be interested in a study by Microsoft showing that 46 percent of employees across generations and industries felt social media tools would make them more productive at work.56

FIGURE 9.4 PERCENT OF RECRUITERS WHO USE VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA

LinkedIn, for example, is far more than an online résumé-hosting site. It is currently *the* key professional networking tool for job search. Recent surveys reveal that as many as 92 percent of recruiters use social me- dia for hiring purposes, and, as Figure 9.4 shows, 87 percent use LinkedIn (55 percent use Facebook and 47 percent Twitter).57 This means that nearly every re- cruiter is using LinkedIn, and you likely use it your- self. The following Applying OB box provides guidance on optimizing LinkedIn for you.

Another productivity benefit of social media is that they make digital information searchable. This ca- pability can reduce the time employees spend trying to

***352***

**PART 2**

Groups

LinkedIn Facebook Twitter

0

87% 55%

47% 20 40 60 80 100

Applying OB

**How to Optimize LinkedIn**

To use LinkedIn effectively you need to:

**Build a Professional LinkedIn Profile.** This is only the first step, but it is essential to your success.

* ∙  Focus all sections (summary and experience) to reflect your growth over time and your responsibilities in your current job.
* ∙  Consider writing your summary and experience sections in the first person and telling a story instead of using bullet points. Describe what you’ve accomplished and what you can do for other employers. (Include the past but don’t dwell on it—include more about what you do today).
* ∙  Learn and use the appropriate keywords. LinkedIn’s search function is effective and recruiters use it extensively. Learn what they are looking for and be sure to include these words in your profile.
* ∙  Spend the time necessary. Although obvious, think of what you want to achieve with your LinkedIn profile. Also, think of your profile as a living web page, some- thing that evolves over time. Explain how your past experiences helped shape who you are today.58  **Build a LinkedIn Network.** Simply building a profile doesn’t mean recruiters (or any- body else) will view it. You need to actively and wisely build and engage your connec- tions. Some helpful pointers and etiquette follow:
* ∙  Think in terms of quality, not quantity. It’s not a scoreboard. Make connections that are meaningful to you professionally.
* ∙  Don’t invite people to your network blindly, and don’t accept invitations without first learning why they reached out and how the connection might be relevant.
* ∙  Connect beyond your current industry and professional sphere. Drawing on di- verse views is a key way to expand your own knowledge and grow.
* ∙  Use the personal note option for inviting others to connect.
* ∙  When inviting others, focus only on making the connection. Other business can  wait.
* ∙  Remember that LinkedIn can be a useful introduction, but actually meeting, when  possible, is a way to foster a more productive and personal relationship.  **Build a Reputation.** You need to offer value to others, which in turn earns you trust and respect. This requires genuine thought and attention to what you post.
* ∙  Be a resource for others by liking (means “thanks”), commenting on (means you’re interested), or sharing (means you think others also will benefit) relevant informa- tion within your network.
* ∙  Always explain why you are sharing or liking content.
* ∙  Avoid controversy, criticism, and complaints. If you can’t resist doing this, then  don’t use LinkedIn. It can torpedo your reputation.  SOURCE: Adapted from T. Burriss, “Maximize the Value of LinkedIn by Connecting and Engaging,” *T*+*D*, March 15, 2016, https://www.td.org/Publications/Blogs/Career-Development-Blog/2016/03/Maximize-the-Value-of-Linkedin-by-Connecting-and- Engaging. See also T. Burriss, “How to Build an Eye-Catching LinkedIn Profile,” *T*+*D*, February 4, 2016, https://www.td.org/ Publications/Blogs/Career-Development-Blog/2016/02/How-to-Build-An-Eye-Catching-LinkedIn-Profile.

Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *353***

TABLE 9.3 SOCIAL MEDIA BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Benefit | Description |
| Connect in real time over distance | Employees, customers, communities, suppliers, prospective talent, and many others can communicate as needed and while work is being completed. |
| Collaborate within and outside the organization | Linking sources of knowledge is a means for realizing the potential of employee diversity and enhancing productivity. Social media is by definition a way of connecting people virtually, so its effective implementation benefits virtual teamwork. |
| Expand boundaries | Social networks can become critical means for organizational innovation and effectiveness, allowing them to utilize knowledge, skills, and experience of people outside (not employed by) the organization. |

SOURCE: Adapted from L. McFarland and R. Ployhart, “Social Media: A Contextual Framework to Guide Research and Practice,” *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 2015, 1653–1677.

retrieve needed information by as much as 35 percent. What would you do with 35 per- cent more time in a day, month, or year?59 Finally, consider that many of social media’s benefits for employees translate into benefits for their employers.

**Employer Productivity** Companies of all sizes and industries believe in the benefits of social media. Procter & Gamble (P&G), for instance, spends more than any other com- pany on advertising, and it now devotes more than a third of its US marketing budget to digital media. Marc Pritchard, global brand officer, says, “Digital technology . . . is en- abling P&G to expand creativity with an unprecedented delivery machine that is con- stantly evolving. . . . This is why P&G is quickly shifting to a digital-first approach to building brands.”60 If deployed effectively, social media enable businesses to realize the many benefits outlined in Table 9.3.

*Crowdsourcing* **occurs when companies invite nonemployees to contribute to achieving particular goals and manage the input process via the Internet.** Integra Gold Corp, a mining company based in Canada, illustrates the benefits of utilizing talent and re- sources outside the organization to meet goals. The company acquired a firm with mineral rights and six terabytes of geological surveys used to prospect for gold. Integra crowd- sourced the analyses of this data instead of hiring people and managing the work itself. It is offering a prize of $811,000 to whoever finds the next multimillion-ounce gold deposit.61

The OB in Action box describes how other well-known companies now use social media to innovate and solve problems using crowdsourcing.



OB in Action

GE Ecomagination Challenge is a crowd- sourcing effort designed to solicit help cre- ating the next-generation smart power grid. It is an innovation contest designed to foster collaboration with high-caliber entre- preneurs with useful ideas and solutions. The effort’s impressive results include:

∙ 70,000 users across more than 150 countries.

∙ 3,844 ideas submitted.

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**Expanding Organizational Boundaries with Crowdsourcing at GE, Lego, and YOU**

***354* PART 2** Groups

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| ∙ 80,000 comments logged. ∙ More than 120,000 votes cast. ∙ 12 projects received funds totaling $55 million.62  Lego uses crowdsourcing to help design new products. It reviews proposed de- signs three times a year, and people receive 1 percent of the toy’s net revenue if their design is selected.63  If you have sought recommendations for a restaurant, a new car, or a profes- sor on sites such as Yelp, Facebook, Twitter, or RateMyProfessor, you’ve used crowdsourcing too.  **YOUR THOUGHTS?**   1. Describe at least two ways you crowdsource and the sites you use. 2. Think of a service you use, or some element of your job, that you think would ben- efit from crowdsourcing. Remember to focus on how others can help you solve problems, which involves more than simply soliciting other people’s opinions.   **Costs of Social Media**  Lost productivity due to *cyberloafing***—using the Internet at work for personal use—** is a primary concern for employers in their adoption of social media. Some studies put the cost at $85 billion per year and report that employees spend 60 to 80 percent of their time at work pretending to do actual or legitimate work.64  How do employees waste time on social media?  • 50 percent are talking on a cell phone or texting. • 39 percent are surfing the Internet. • 38 percent are on social media. • 23 percent are sending personal e-mail.65  Perhaps the biggest problem with such productivity losses is that employees rarely think about them. Have you ever thought you were cheating your employer by checking Face- book, sending a tweet, or booking a trip during work hours? Did you ever think the mes- sage you sent a friend about work might be shared and give a competitor an advantage?  Then there is shopping online while at work. A survey by Careerbuilder found that on average 47 percent of workers planned to shop online. And it seems that the greater ac- cess you have to technology at work, the more likely you are to use it to shop—71 percent of IT workers said they were likely to shop online while at work.66  The following Problem-Solving Application regarding fantasy football highlights the magnitude of the problem. |
| Problem-Solving Application  **A Very Expensive Fantasy**  Fantasy sports are a well-entrenched phenomenon. Tens of millions of people play, and many of them do so at work. Here are some statistics:67  1. The price tag for productivity lost to fantasy football was $16 billion in 2015. That’s $1 billion a week during the football season.  Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *355*** |

1. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that employers should expect to lose approximately one hour of work per week for each employee who plays fantasy football.
2. Approximately 37.5 million fantasy football participants work full time.

That’s only one sport. Assume you own a business and know many of your employees play in a fantasy leagues. Does this change your attitude about access to and use of social media at work? What would you do?

***Apply the 3-Step Problem-Solving Approach***

**Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:**

As a business owner, define the problem posed by employees playing fantasy football. Identify potential causes of the problem.

As the owner, make your recommendations to remedy or at least reduce the problem defined in Step 1.

Let’s explore the pros and cons of e-mail next.

**Make E-mail Your Friend, Not Your Foe**

E-mail is not only one of the most useful communication tools but also one of biggest drains on your productivity. Recent estimates suggest that 40 percent of white-collar workers spend at least three hours each weekday checking *work* e-mail.68 If we add in some amount of non-work e-mail, the time it consumes is truly immense! Most people acknowledge that e-mail is essential, but handling it effectively can make it your friend instead of your foe. See Table 9.4 for the benefits and drawbacks, and Table 9.5 for tips on managing e-mail.

TABLE 9.4 E-MAIL: BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Benefits | Drawbacks |
| ∙ **Reduced costs of distributing information.** E-mail allows information to be sent electronically, thereby reducing the costs of communicating with employees and customers. | ∙ **Wasted time and effort.** E-mail can distract people from completing their work responsibilities. |
| ∙ **Increased teamwork.** Users can send messages to colleagues anywhere in the world and receive immediate feedback. | ∙ **Information overload.** The average corporate employee receives 171 messages a day, and 10% to 40% of these messages are unimportant. |
| ∙ **Reduced paper costs.** An expert estimates these savings at $9,000 per employee per year. | ∙ **Increased costs to organize, store, and monitor.** Systems are needed to protect privacy and preserve digital records. For instance, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure require organizations to keep e-mail and other employment records for up to six years. |
| ∙ **Increased flexibility.** Employees can access e-mail from anywhere. | ∙ **Neglect of other media.** People unsuccessfully attempt to solve complex problems with e-mail instead of face-to-face, which would likely be more appropriate and effective. You can’t communicate everything (successfully) via e-mail. |

***356***

**PART 2** Groups

SOURCE: C. Graham, “In-Box Overload,” *Arizona Republic,* March 16, 2007, A14; M. Totty, “Rethinking the Inbox,” *The Wall Street Journal,* March 26, 2007, R8; A. Smith, “Federal Rules Define Duty to Preserve Work E-Mails,” *HR Magazine,* January 2007, 27, 36; M. Totty, “Letter of the Law,” *The Wall Street Journal,* March 26, 2007, R10; and “The Top 10 E-Mail Courtesy Suggestions,” *Coachville Coach Training,* March 22, 2000, http://topten.org.content/tt.BN122.htm.

TABLE 9.5 E-MAIL: TIPS FOR MANAGING

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Tip | Description |
| Do not assume e-mail is confidential. | Employers are increasingly monitoring employees’ e-mail. Assume all your messages can be read by anyone. |

Be professional and courteous.

Don’t use e-mail for volatile, complex, or highly personal issues.

Save readers time.

Delete long message streams, don’t send chain letters and jokes, don’t type in all caps (it’s equivalent to shouting), wait and consider before responding to a nasty e-mail, refrain from using colored text and background, don’t expose your contact list to strangers, and be patient if you must wait to receive a reply.

Use a medium that is appropriate for the situation at hand.

Type “no reply necessary” in the subject line or at the top of your message if appropriate.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Avoid sloppiness. | Use a spell checker or reread and edit your messages before sending. |
| Keep messages brief and clear. | Use accurate subject headings and let the reader know what you want up front. |
| Be careful with attachments. | Large attachments can crash someone’s system and use up valuable time downloading. Send only what is necessary, and get receivers’ permission to send multiple attachments. |

SOURCE: C. Graham, “In-Box Overload,” *Arizona Republic,* March 16, 2007, A14; M. Totty, “Rethinking the Inbox,” *The Wall Street Journal,* March 26, 2007, R8; A. Smith, “Federal Rules Define Duty to Preserve Work E-Mails,” *HR Magazine,* January 2007, 27, 36; M. Totty, “Letter of the Law,” *The Wall Street Journal,* March 26, 2007, R10; and “The Top 10 E-Mail Courtesy Suggestions,” *Coachville Coach Training,* March 22, 2000, http://topten.org.content/tt.BN122.htm.

**Social Media Concerns and Remedies—**

**What Companies and You Can Do**

Of course *some* employees waste time. This has been and always will be true. But when it comes to social media, approximately 36 percent of employers now block employees’ access to social media sites at work (up from 29 percent in 2012).69 However,

evidence is growing that this strategy can backfire.

**Be Careful about Blocking Access**

Banning access can damage employee morale and loyalty—potentially leading to even greater losses in productiv- ity. Some experts argue, and most em- ployees would agree, that small breaks during the workday help boost produc- tivity. Such breaks can take the form of going outside to get a breath of fresh air, talking with a colleague over a cup of coffee, checking personal e-mail or Facebook, or checking and sending tweets.70

If these reenergizing benefits of so- cial media breaks are not convincing

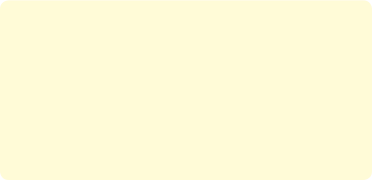
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| Companies must of course protect their own interests, such as lost productivity and legal liability. Many experts, however, warn against actually blocking employee access to social media or other websites. The costs could be larger than the benefits. They instead recommend companies create and implement other solutions. © Robin Lund/Alamy RF |

Communication in the Digital Age

**CHAPTER 9 *357***

enough for you or your employer, consider other potential and undesirable results of the blocking policies:

* ***They could alienate employees.*** Young, old, or in between, many people are ac- customed to being plugged into social sites throughout the day. Blocking their ac- cess can be off-putting. Moreover, organizations can block access on company devices, but most people have smartphones, tablets, and other devices of their own. As a result, many employees continue their typical use of social media but simply do so on their own devices—still on company time.
* ***You can’t have it only one way.*** If employers expect employees to be connected and responsive 24/7 to work-related e-mails, such as those from managers, coworkers, clients, or suppliers, it seems only fair to also allow them to reasonably tend to their own business during work hours. This is especially true if employees work both within and outside prescribed hours (such as at home in the evenings or on weekends).
* ***Blocking suggests a lack of trust.*** As one tech business reporter put it: “Banning social media may send a message to your employees that you don’t trust them. . . . This can cause a sharp divide in the team atmosphere you want to create.”71 It is difficult to manage and influence others without trust, and one of the basic ways of gaining trust from others is to trust them first.  In 2016 alone, more than two dozen states either passed or had pending legislation to prevent employers from demanding passwords and access to employees’ social network- ing sites.72 Whether an organization will consider adopting such practices depends in part on leaders’ social media attitudes.  **Assess and Manage Leadership’s Social Media Attitudes** Consider the social media readiness of an organization to which you belong. Self-Assessment 9.3 helps you assess leadership’s attitude toward social media, such as:  • How supportive management is of creating communities. • How well the culture fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing. • How widely social media is used to collaborate.  With this knowledge you can determine how well your own attitudes fit with those of the organization, and it may even unveil opportunities for you to improve the organiza- tion’s readiness.  **SELF-ASSESSMENT 9.3**  **Assessing Social Media Readiness**  Please be prepared to answer these questions if your instructor has assigned Self-Assessment 9.3 in Connect.
  1. Which of the dimensions has the highest score?
  2. What are the implications for employees/members?
  3. What are the implications for the organization and its interactions with stakehold- ers other than employees/members?
  4. Which dimension is the lowest?
  5. Describe two things that could be done to improve the organization’s social me- dia readiness.
* If the attitudes you find are not as positive as you would like, have no fear. Attitudes can be changed. Favorable leadership attitudes open the door to developing and imple- menting productive social media policies.

***358* PART 2** Groups

TABLE 9.6 EIGHT ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Element | Description |
| Create safe channels for employees to air their concerns before going online. | The key words here are *safe* and *before.* Conflicts happen, but managers and organizations should provide means by which employees’ concerns are reported and handled without retaliation so they don’t feel the need to take them to the Internet. |

Clarify what is confidential.

Designate a spokesperson for online policies.

Explain what is considered illegal.

Educate employees.

Clearly explain what information employees can and cannot share online. Providing an approval process for the release of information may help too.

You don’t want every employee fielding questions about company policies; identify a spokesperson(s) so interpretations and communications are consistent.

It is illegal to divulge proprietary information and to violate trademarks and copyrights. The organization is responsible for educating employees on these matters.

It’s not enough to have a social media policy; it is necessary to educate and train people about it and to embed it in social media practices. (One of the authors, for instance, could not locate a social media policy, or a person responsible for it, at his university.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Outline consequences for violations. | Make it known that employees can be held responsible for what they post (such as videos of undesirable behavior on the job or in company uniform), and list the consequences. |
| Discuss appropriate ways to engage others online. | It is typically a poor idea to have any and all employees responding to others’ comments about the company online. Instruct them to be polite and nonconfrontational, and then to notify the designated person to respond. |
| Align social media policy with the organization’s culture. | Your company’s social media policy is a great place to reaffirm what you want your company culture to be, while conveying your stance on this serious topic. |

SOURCE: Adapted from A. Akitunde, “Employees Gone Wild: Eight Reasons You Need a Social Media Policy TODAY,” *Open Forum,* August 15, 2013, http://www.openforum.com/articles/employee-social-media-policy/, accessed September 9, 2013.

**Adopt a Social Media Policy** Despite the pervasive use of social media, fewer than 50 percent of companies have an actual social media policy.73 If the costs and concerns noted above aren’t enough to motivate your employer to create a *social media policy* **that describes the who, how, when, and for what purposes of so- cial media use, and the consequences for noncompliance,** consider what can hap- pen without such a policy. Do you recall the photos and videos of Taco Bell and Domino’s Pizza employees in disgusting acts with food? “These viral moments do more than turn stomachs,” writes business commentator Anthonia Akitunde. “[T]hey point to a troubling trend: employees abusing social media on the job to the detriment of the brand.”74

One way to help prevent such nightmares is to create, communicate, and enforce effective social media policies. The elements of an effective social media policy are outlined in Table 9.6.

The OB in Action box below describes the Coca-Cola Co.’s social media policy.

Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *359***

OB in Action

**Coca-Cola’s Online Social Media Principles**

Coca-Cola Co. formulated its policies with the motive “to help empower our as- sociates to participate in this new frontier of marketing and communications, rep- resent our Company, and share the optimistic and positive spirits of our brands . . . we always remember who we are (a marketing company) and what our role is in the social media community (to build our brands).”75

1. **Adhere to Coke’s Code of Business Conduct and Other Policies.** All employ- ees, from the chairman to interns, must abide by our codes governing informa- tion protection, privacy, insider information, and disclosure.
2. **You Are Responsible for Your Actions.** Anything you post that can potentially tarnish the Company’s image will ultimately be your responsibility. We do en- courage you to participate in the online social media space, but urge you to do so properly, exercising sound judgment and common sense.
3. **Be a “Scout” for Compliments and Criticism.** If you encounter comments online you feel are important, then please forward them to the designated online media office (e-mail address included).
4. **Let the Experts Respond to Negative Posts.** If you see negative or disparag- ing comments online, please do not engage but instead forward these to those trained to address such concerns (e-mail address included).
5. **Be Wise When Mixing Business and Personal Lives.** “Our worlds intersect online. The Company respects the free speech rights of all of its associates, but you must remember that customers, colleagues and supervisors often have access to the online content you post. Keep this in mind . . .” as informa- tion intended for family and friends can be forwarded. “NEVER disclose non- public information of the Company, and be aware that taking public positions online that are counter to the company’s interests may cause a conflict.”

**YOUR THOUGHTS?**

1. What are two benefits you see in Coca-Cola’s social media policy?
2. What gaps do you notice, based on your experiences with social media at work and what you’ve studied in this chapter?



***360* PART 2** Groups

**Privacy** Any discussion of the effective use of social media by employees or their em- ployers must include privacy issues. People and companies have reputations, which are built over time and can be extremely consequential professionally. They can also be dam- aged in a variety of ways, with serious consequences including loss of employment or business, social stigma, embarrassment and stress, lost opportunities, and, of course, le- gal action. Many lawsuits now routinely include the content of online profiles, e-mail, instant messaging, videos, photos, and other information retrieved from social media to make the cases for and against individuals and organizations.76

Social media privacy becomes even more elusive given that better than 60 percent of employees report they are connected to at least one coworker and over 40 percent with an immediate supervisor.77 About 77 percent of employees say they use social media at work, but only 36 percent say it is allowed. This means a large percentage of employees are likely ignoring whatever social media policies, and associated privacy guidelines, may exist.78

About one-third of employees who use a mobile device for work said they “would quit if their employer could see their personal information.” Employees are especially

concerned about employers having access to personal e-mails and attachments, voice mail, text and instant messages, lists of apps on their devices, information in their mobile apps, and their location.79

What can employers do? Sean Ginevan, a director at MobileIron, a mobile device management firm, recommends the following:

1. Communicate what personal information from mobile devices is accessed by the employer.
2. Be sure employees understand what is accessible depending on the operating system used on their device (Apple or Android).
3. Create and communicate clear and sensible policies regarding potential employer ac- tions regarding information on employees’ mobile devices.
4. Do all of this when employees are setting up their devices, which is when they are most likely thinking about and can do something about such matters.
5. Tell employees that anything on the company’s e-mail server is saved for legal purposes.
6. Use the available privacy controls.80  To emphasize the importance of privacy for employers, Ginevan says chief infor-

mation officers “need to protect employees’ privacy as fiercely as they protect corporate security. . . . That goal can absolutely be achieved today.”81

**What Can You Do to Protect Yourself and Your Personal Brand (Reputation)?**

To protect your own reputation, first consider the recommendations above and other things you’ve learned in this chapter. You also may be well served to keep the arenas of your life separate in cyberspace, at least to the extent possible. Stephanie Marchesi, senior partner and CMO of the marketing firm FleishmanHillard, was well known for maintain- ing four devices to segment her professional and personal worlds. She kept an iPhone and iPad for family and social uses and a BlackBerry and laptop for work. She also had sepa- rate e-mail accounts and calendars, so members of one world could not see into the other.82 Establishing and maintaining multiple accounts, and using discretion about what you post, can be quite a challenge. But think of the potential implications—your reputa- tion and your job!

If you don’t know what your company’s policy is, ask. One of the authors did so and was told by its IT director that the university knew which porn websites were being viewed at the fraternity houses.

**Social Media Etiquette** Before leaving this section we want to raise the issue of “ap- propriate use.” Norms of acceptable social media behavior at school, work, and socially are evolving, and it pays to be mindful of them.

**Cellphones** Because they are like extensions of our hands, cell phones are with us ev- erywhere, at dinner, at work, in class, in bed, and in the bathroom. Figure 9.5 shows re- sults of a recent survey. But before you read it, remember that just because X percentage of people think something is OK, that doesn’t mean it is OK.

Here’s a good test: The next time you pull out your phone, for instance, during dinner at a restaurant or when visiting with a friend, ask yourself, *Is what I’m doing or looking at going to enhance my interaction with the other person here and now?* If it isn’t, don’t risk being rude—put the phone away.

**Videoconferencing** Skype, Google Hangouts, and other services are growing in popu- larity every year. They provide far richer communication than texts, e-mails, or even phone calls. From an employer’s perspective they also save on travel costs. But effectively com- municating on camera is quite different from doing so in other media. Videoconferencing has its own code of conduct. A number of do’s and don’ts are outlined in Table 9.7.

Now let’s move beyond social media and learn about how to deliver killer presenta- tions, conduct crucial conversations, and manage up.

Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *361***

FIGURE 9.5 PEOPLE’S VARYING VIEWS OF CELL PHONE USE

**People Have Varying Views About When It Is OK or Not OK to Use Cell Phones**% of adults who believe it is OK or not to use a cell phone in these situations

**Generally not OK**

**Generally OK**

75

74 38

12

5 5 4

While walking down the street

On public transportation

While waiting in line

At a restaurant

At a family dinner

During a meeting

At the movie theater or other places where others are usually quiet

At church or worship service

23

77

25

26

62

88



94



95



96

SOURCE: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/08/26/key-findings-about-etiquette-in-the-digital-age/.

TABLE 9.7 VIDEOCONFERENCING DO’S AND DON’TS

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| Do’s and Don’ts | Explanations and Helpful Tips |
| **DON’T type during the call.** | It’s distracting and shows you aren’t paying attention. If you must take notes *related to the call,* then do so on paper or hit the mute button. |

**DO make eye contact.**

**DO discourage interruptions.**

**DO include others.**

It is difficult to see what’s on the screen while staring at the camera, so eye contact is necessary only when you are presenting material or speaking. (Tip: Move the video chat window near the computer’s camera.)

It can be difficult to avoid interruptions, depending on your workspace. But if you’re able, put a note on your door saying you are in a conference and please do not disturb. If you work in a cubicle or in an open space, write “on video call” on a piece of paper and hold it up if interrupted.

Don’t forget any of the people in remote locations during a group call. Better still, provide cues and opportunities for them to join in.

|  |  |
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| **DON’T eat.** | If you wouldn’t bring your sandwich to the boardroom, then don’t eat during your videoconference. |
| **DON’T disconnect without notifying someone.** | If you are going to the restroom during a group call, say you’ll be back in a minute. If you are disconnecting completely, say so. It is unproductive for everybody if someone is talking to you assuming you’re still on the call, only to learn you’re not. |

***362***

**PART 2** Groups

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| 9.5 **COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO BOOST YOUR EFFECTIVENESS**  MAJOR QUESTION  **How can I increase my effectiveness using presentation skills, crucial conversations, and managing up?**  THE BIGGER PICTURE  **Presenting, crucial conversations, and managing up—master these communication skills, and they will enhance your performance and career success throughout your life. These individual- level process skills make you more effective when working with others and influence a host of outcomes at both the individual and group levels in the Organizing Framework for OB.** |
| Some jobs require you to present regularly and others never. How well you present can greatly affect others’ perceptions of you and your professional opportunities. We devote this section to practical skills to help make you a more effective presenter. Improving your presentation skills is always valuable, given that relatively few people are truly at ease or actually enjoy speaking or presenting to a group.  **Presenting—Do You Give Reports or Do You**  **Tell Stories?**  You should probably start by answering the question in the above heading. Reports are packed with data and information and can be exhausting in their detail. Stories, in con- trast, are short in all these elements but are rich in emotion and help the presenter connect with the audience.  As you learned earlier, different communication media are better than others for any given message. The challenge for you is to know what your audience wants and needs, and then to construct and deliver your presentation accordingly. It generally is more effective if you present your message more as a colorful story with emotion than as a detail-laden report. The people who organize the TED (Technology, Education, Design) talks have a five-step protocol they use to guide their presenters to deliver with impact.83  Step 1. Frame your story. Step 2. Plan your delivery. Step 3. Develop your stage presence. Step 4. Plan your multimedia. Step 5. Put it together.  Let’s consider these steps in more detail.  **Step 1—Frame Your Story** Think of your presentation as a journey and decide where you want to start and end. Consider what your audience already knows about your subject, start there, and quickly explain why it matters to you or why it should matter to them. Include only the most relevant details or points and try to bring them to life with examples.  Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *363*** |

Don’t try to do too much. Don’t just skim over all possible points either, but instead pick the best and dive deeper into each of those.

Beware of jargon, boasting, and mind-numbing details. Plan to end your journey with a solution, or even with a question to spur audience engagement and give them something to think about afterward.

For example, you have learned about and ap- plied a 3-Step Problem-Solving Approach throughout this book. Perhaps your presentation might be structured similarly—what is the prob- lem, what are potential causes or explanations, and what is your recommendation for action.

**Step 2—Plan Your Delivery** There are three basic ways to deliver a talk:

1. Read it from a script.

2. Use bullet lists that outline what you will cover in each section.

3. Memorize everything you wish to say and REHEARSE.

Reading generally is ineffective. You will almost certainly lose your connection with the audience, if you ever connect in the first place. (TED forbids presenters to read.) Memo- rizing can work, if your audience is expected to simply sit and listen, but it takes a tre- mendous amount of time and practice. Unless you have your presentation completely ingrained in your memory, your audience can easily realize you are not as prepared as you hoped. If you use the bullet list approach, be sure you know not only the content for each point, but also how you want to transition from one to the next.

**Step 3—Develop Your Stage Presence** Getting your story or message right is more important than the way you stand or whether you appear nervous. Nevertheless, beware of how much you move—not too much or too little.

If you’re really nervous, pay par- ticular attention to your lower body to prevent rocking or shifting from one leg to the other. Walking around is fine, if it is natural for you. But if it is not, then you may be well served to stand in particular spots for different lengths of time or when making cer- tain points. The nonverbal communi- cation pointers you learned earlier in this chapter are helpful too.

Your body aside, the most impor- tant element of stage presence is eye contact! Find a handful of friendly faces around the room and deliver your talk while looking them in the eyes.

We cannot learn about presenting without addressing public speaking head-on. The following Applying OB box provides suggestions. When combined with the TED protocol, it should help you overcome your ner- vousness and light up the room.

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| Amy Cuddy is a social psychologist who studies body language. She argues that the way we hold and present ourselves affects the way others perceive us *and the way* we perceive ourselves. Her TED Talk is one of the most frequently viewed online. © Craig Barritt/Getty Images |
|  |
| Former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer was famous for his explosive, sweat-drenched presentations at company meetings. He would race across the stage, wave his arms, and yell like a cheerleader. Although few employees at any rank or in any company would communicate in such a manner, many believed it was incredibly effective for Ballmer. It became a signature of his communication style and reflected his larger persona. © Adam Berry/Getty Images |

***364* PART 2** Groups

Applying OB

**How to Dazzle the Crowd—Tips on Public Speaking**

As Jim Moore, press secretary and speech writer for the Obama White House, said, “You give speeches every day to family, friends, colleagues, and, yes, even to strang- ers. Your daily conversations are nothing more than mini speeches in casual clothes. If you can talk to one person, you can talk to an audience of thousands. Really.”84

1. *Remember they are rooting for you.* The audience most often is on your side and hopes you give a good presentation, if for no other reason than that they don’t want to sit through a bad one.
2. *Know your audience.* You don’t have to be an expert on your audience or know everything they know. However, know enough to make a few meaningful, audience-specific comments and show that you care and your insights are rele- vant for them.
3. *Compliment the audience.* Building on No. 2, make your audience feel special by acknowledging what they do and its importance. For instance, if talking to a group of executives, tell them they’ve worked very hard and accomplished a lot. Or, if their jobs are especially difficult and uncelebrated, such as nurses or teachers, acknowl- edge this and tell them how important their work is and how much it’s appreciated.
4. *Be snazzy, not distracting.* Your clothes, jewelry, and any other accessories should be neat and match your audience. Don’t wear a suit or dress to a construction site, or construction boots to present a keynote at a conference. Be sharp but don’t wear anything that will cause people to comment. You want to exude confidence but not generate fodder for the next TMZ episode.
5. *Unshackle yourself.* If possible, and it is most often possible, lose the podium. Too often presenters shackle themselves to the podium, which is a physical barrier between you and the audience and ties you to one spot. Have you ever seen an excellent presentation and thought it would have been better still if the speaker had stayed behind the podium? Of course not.
6. *Be funny if you can, but don’t try too hard.* Everybody likes to be funny, and when it works and is appropriate it’s great, but when it doesn’t it can be disastrous. Don’t try too hard, but if you have something that you are confident will work with the audience, use it.
7. *Be gracious.* Thank the host, the audience, and the organization that invited you. Even if the content of your presentation will change their lives, it nevertheless is your privilege to have the opportunity to do so. Express your gratitude.

Adapted from B. Liu, “5 Simple Ways to Become a More Impressive Public Speaker,” *Inc.com,* June 30, 2015, http://www.inc. com/betty-liu/5-easy-ways-to-improve-your-stage-presence.html; and from J. Moore, “How Anyone Can Become a Good Public Speaker,” *Time,* April 1, 2015, http://time.com/3758692/become-good-public-speaker.

As for nervousness, there are many ways to help overcome this, and many of them you’ve learned in this book. For instance, what you learned about self-efficacy in Chapter 3 can be especially helpful, and preparation is a critical element in building your efficacy. But perhaps one of the most useful things you can do to overcome ner- vousness is to realize that people expect you to be nervous. Don’t make too much of it.

**Step 4—Plan Your Multimedia** Don’t feel compelled to use the latest and greatest technology, or any technology at all. But whatever you choose, keep it simple and don’t let it distract the audience. If photos or images are appropriate, use them. People respond differently to pictures and videos, which convey emotional content better than words.

Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *365***

TABLE 9.8 10 TIPS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

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| Tip | Put It in Action |
| 1. Write a script | Figure out what you want to say—beginning, middle, and end—before trying to put it on slides. Too many people start with slides and then fill in content. |

2. Show one thing at a time

4. Pay attention to design

6. Think outside the screen

8. Ask questions

10. Break the rules

The only thing on the slide should be what you are talking about. If you put multiple points on the slide, then people will always read ahead and not focus on what you’re saying.

Avoid the temptation to dress up your slides with cheesy effects and focus instead on simple design basics. Use simple font styles, sizes, and colors; place dark text on light backgrounds; and avoid clutter.

YOU are the focus when you’re presenting, no matter how interesting your slides are.

Questions engage the audience and pique their interest, so use them!

Feel free to violate any of these rules if you think it’s a good idea. Breaking rules because you have a good reason is different from not following them because you didn’t know.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 3. Don’t paragraph | Don’t put everything you want to say on a slide. No “big blocky chunks of text,” otherwise you will kill a room full of people—cause of death, terminal boredom poisoning. |
| 5. Use images sparingly | Some people think images are stimulating and others think they are distracting. Split the difference. |
| 7. Have a hook | Open with something surprising or intriguing to hook your audience. The best openers are often those that appeal to the audience’s emotions—wow them, scare them, surprise them. |
| 9. Modulate | Speak as you speak to your friends rather than reading index cards. Keeping a lively and personal tone of voice can go a long way. |

SOURCE: Adapted from D. Wax, “10 Tips for More Effective PowerPoint Presentations,” *Lifehack,* November 24, 2012, http://www.lifehack.org/articles/technology/ 10-tips-for-more-effective-powerpoint-presentations.html, accessed October 7, 2013.

However, if you use video clips, try to keep them to 60 seconds or less to prevent losing people’s attention.

PowerPoint is widely used. As one business writer aptly described: “bad PowerPoint happens to good people and quite often the person giving the presentation is just as much a victim as the poor sods listening.”85 The tips in Table 9.8 are very helpful.

**Step 5—Put It Together** Be prepared far enough in advance; think weeks if possible, not days, hours, or minutes. If you practice in front of others, which is a good idea, be selective. Anybody in the practice audience role will feel compelled to give you feedback, but you need valuable feedback, not just any feedback.

Preparation aside, remember to focus on the framing and substance of your journey and don’t get too wrapped up in the other steps and details. If you don’t think you have a compelling story, go back to the drawing board and create one.

Lastly, be yourself. Use these steps as a guide and learn from them, but don’t try to copy somebody else.

**Crucial Conversations**

*“Crucial conversations* **are discussions between two or more people where (1) the stakes are high, (2) opinions vary, and (3) emotions run strong.”**86 Such conversations



***366* PART 2** Groups

can and do occur in all arenas of your life—school, work, and socially. Examples of rel- evant occasions include:

• Ending a relationship. • Talking to a coworker or classmate who behaves offensively. • Giving the boss or a professor feedback. • Critiquing a classmate or colleague’s work. • Asking a roommate to move out. • Talking to a team member who isn’t keeping commitments. • Giving an unfavorable performance review.87

Recall what you learned in Chapter 6 related to feedback, because it also is very helpful with most crucial conversations. The consequences of these encounters can be enormous for your job and career. Handling difficult communications effectively can prevent prob- lems, motivate teams members, increase collaboration, and improve bottom-line results.88

When confronted with high-stakes interactions, you have three choices—avoid them, face them and handle them poorly, or face them and handle them well. We’ll focus on the last one. But first let’s explore why people often do so poorly in crucial situations, and it will also serve as a bit of review of things you’ve learned already.

**When It Matters Most, We Often Do Our Worst** Joseph Grenny, who cowrote the book *Crucial Conversations,* said this: “When conversations turn crucial, most of us tog- gle between some form of silence or verbal violence: Either we withdraw from sharing our information or try to force it on others by raising our voice or overstating our point. Ironically, when it matters the most we do our very worst.”89 Our negative emotions (see Chapter 3) kick in, and the fight-or-flight response takes over.

Moreover, crucial conversations often happen unexpectedly, which means we typi- cally are unprepared. When this happens, again, negative emotions can dominate and self-efficacy decline. Knowledge on positive emotions and positive OB can help you in crucial situations. Specifically, a good way to prepare for crucial conversations is to foster your own positive state. Then you can use the STATE technique, described next, to con- duct your crucial conversations more effectively.

**STATE: How to Be Effective When It’s Crucial** The acronym STATE will help you address even the most difficult conversations with a plan or path to follow.

* **Share your facts.** Start with the least controversial, most persuasive elements that support what you want for yourself and for the relationship.
* **Tell your story.** Enhance what you want by describing what has happened, how you’ve arrived where you are, how you’d like to see it change, and why. It may help to add what you *don’t* want personally or for the relationship.
* **Ask for others’ facts and stories.** This is key to creating dialogue, which is essential if you’re to have a productive crucial conversation. Don’t *talk at* but instead *talk with* others. Approach all crucial conversa- tions as two-way exchanges. Don’t be accusatory, but instead simply describe the situation, the way you feel, and what you would like to see happen. Use “I” instead of “you.”

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| Many of your important conversations with coworkers, friends, and classmates are full of emotions. Applying some of the communication skills and tools described in this chapter can help you improve the outcomes of crucial and high-stakes conversations.  © Don Hammond/Design Pics RF |

Communication in the Digital Age

**CHAPTER 9 *367***

• **Talk tentatively.** Keep in mind that you’re telling a story, not stating facts. The facts come first, then you can add “color” or describe the impact on you via your story. In other words, don’t pound the podium and talk like you’re “preaching” facts.

• **Encourage testing.** Make it safe for others to share their (opposing) views. Allow them to share or test their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Don’t interrupt, steamroll, or intimidate. It is critical to maintain mutual respect during crucial conversations. One way to do this is to explain and focus on mutual purpose—what you both stand to gain. Be sure the other person respects you in order to avoid defensiveness (recall what you learned earlier in this chapter) and conflict. If it’s appropriate, apologize to get back on track.90

**TAKE-AWAY APPLICATION**

**Planning a Crucial Conversation**

1. Think of somebody with whom you need or want to have a crucial conversation.
2. Use STATE to guide your planning.
3. Schedule and have the crucial conversation. Then review the way it went using STATE to see how well you did and what benefits both parties gained.

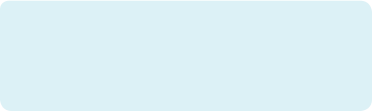
**Managing Up**

You learned in Chapter 6 about more contemporary forms of feedback (such as 360 de- gree), and that knowledge is helpful here. We are going to build on that and on crucial conversations to give you some guidance on how to manage your boss.

**Gauge Receptiveness to Coaching** Many organizations now claim they believe in the merits of employee involvement and feedback, even upward feedback. Note that trans- lating these values into action requires skill. The place to begin is by assessing your man- ager’s receptiveness. Regardless of your organization’s policy or comments from senior leadership, if your manager is not receptive, you’re wise to put your efforts elsewhere. You can’t coach a boss who doesn’t want to be coached. To gauge receptiveness, you can:91

1. Learn your manager’s view of you coaching. What are his or her expectations? What are yours?
2. Explain what’s in it for him or her.
3. Ask for permission to provide coaching or feed- back. For instance, “Would you mind if I share a different perspective, one that might help us solve the problem?”
4. Find out how best to deliver criticism. Learn where, when, and how your manager wants to hear criticism—in the moment, in private, via e-mail, face-to-face, or another way.
5. Ask for agreement and commitment. After the first two items in this list, confirm that your boss is interested.

**What to Do Next** If your boss is receptive to up- ward feedback, follow the steps in Table 9.9. If your boss is not receptive, read the table anyway. It provides helpful insight for managing others and helping others manage you.



|  |
| --- |
|  |
| A boss who is receptive to coaching is especially valuable. But be careful, don’t assume because you may appreciate coaching *from your boss,* that she or he will appreciate *coaching from you*. Gauge your boss’s receptiveness first.  © PeopleImages/Getty Images RF |

***368* PART 2** Groups

TABLE 9.9 HOW TO MANAGE UP

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Steps | Description |
| Step 1—Prepare your message. | Unlike crucial conversations that often happen in the moment, attempts to manage up or coach your boss are an agreed-upon arrangement that occurs over time. Therefore, use time to your advantage and prepare.  ∙ Know what you want to accomplish,  ∙ Support your points for your manager with examples, data, or other evidence. |

Step 2—Plan your delivery and tactics.

Plan your delivery of your message—the tone and choice of words that will most likely achieve your desired result. Role- playing is a very valuable practice tool—use it!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Step 3—Deliver. | When conducting the coaching conversation, be sure you:  ∙ *Are sensitive.* Your boss has feelings just like you, and just as you don’t like to get hammered with comments about how horrible and disappointing you are, neither does your boss.  ∙ *Don’t generalize behavior.* Speak to specific areas of your boss’s job, specific behaviors, and specific situations.  ∙ *Provide ideas or suggestions.* Don’t introduce your ideas as if they are the only ones that will work, or use language like “you must” or “you should.” |
| Step 4—Follow up. | Coaching and managing both consist of more than simply providing feedback. Follow up to see how your boss has been doing in the areas discussed. Also ask what else you can do to help him or her in the future. |

SOURCE: Adapted from M. Rosenthal, “Constructive Criticism for Managers,” *Training,* July/August 2013, 64; and C. Patton, “Coaching Up,” *Training,* July/August 2013, 29–31.

**TAKE-AWAY APPLICATION**

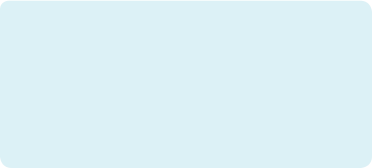
**Practicing My Managing Up Skills**

Apply Table 9.9 to manage up.

1. Think of somebody who has authority over you, either at work, at school, or in another organization to which you belong.
2. Which step of the managing-up process do you think will be most difficult with the person identified in No. 1? Explain.
3. Which do you (and others) most often overlook when trying to manage up? Why?
4. How could this approach to managing up be improved? Are any steps missing? Explain.

We conclude this section with words of wisdom from Dana Rousmaniere, a contribu- tor to the *Harvard Business Review* series on managing up:

The most important skill to master is figuring out how to be a genuine source of help—because managing up doesn’t mean sucking up. It means being the most effective employee you can be, creating value for your boss and your company. That’s why the best path to a healthy relationship begins and ends with doing your job, and doing it well.92



Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *369***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What Did I Learn?** | | | |
| You learned that you can become a more effective communicator by understanding communication as a process that operates at all levels of the orga- nization. You learned about the differences and similarities between genders and generations, as well as the benefits and costs of social media. You also explored how the proper approach to com- munication can allow you to manage up to higher levels in the organization and how to prepare for crucial conversations. Reinforce your learning with the Key Points below. Then consolidate your learn- ing using the Organizing Framework. Challenge your mastery of the material by answering the Major Questions in your own words.  **Key Points for Understanding Chapter 9**  You learned the following key points.  **9.1 BASIC DIMENSIONS OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS**   * All communication involves a sender, mes- sage, and receiver. * Noise has many sources and types and can interfere with communications. * Choosing the appropriate medium is critical for effective communication. * Media richness helps convey information and promote understanding. It is influenced by feedback, channel, type, and language source.  **9.2 COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE**   common listening styles are active, involved,  passive, and detached.   * The feeling of being attacked or threatened is  the cause of defensive communication. * Empathy, the ability to recognize and under- stand another person’s feelings and thoughts,  is an important communication skill.   **9.3 GENDER, GENERATIONS, AND COMMUNICATION**   * Linguistic style is a person’s characteristic speaking pattern. * Women and men communicate differently. Women are more likely to share credit and ask clarifying questions, and men are more likely to give blunt feedback and withhold compliments. * Each generation has its own communication norms and preferences. * It’s a mistake to generalize anything we know about communication and apply it to entire genders or generations.  **9.4 SOCIAL MEDIA AND OB**  • Social media can increase employee and em- ployer productivity.  • The use of social media at work also has many costs, some potentially significant.  • E-mail can increase teamwork and flexibility and reduce costs of paper and the distribution of information. But it also has costs: wasted time, information overload, and increased time and money costs to organize, store, and monitor.  • Social media policies help outline what is ex- pected and what is forbidden. They also help guard employers against liability and undesir- able events.  • Organizations need to monitor and manage privacy in the digital space. Individuals must monitor and manage their personal brand (their reputation) and their employer’s.  • Mobile technology etiquette is evolving. Dif- ferent contexts and different technologies come with different norms and expectations.     ***370***  **PART 2** Groups  • •  •  Communication competence refers to an indi- vidual’s ability to effectively use communica- tion behaviors in a given context. Nonverbal communication is a component of effective communication and includes many potential elements, such as body movements and gestures, touch, facial expressions, and eye contact.  Listening is the process of actively decoding and interpreting verbal messages. Four | | | |
| **9.5 COMMUNICATIONSKILLSTO BOOST YOUR EFFECTIVENESS**   * Effective presenters are more likely to tell sto- ries than give reports. It is helpful to frame your story, plan the delivery, develop stage pres- ence and multimedia, and put it all together. * Crucial conversations are those between two or more people in which the stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong. * Managing up is more effective if you gauge your manager’s receptiveness, ask permission to pro- vide feedback/input, prepare your message, plan your delivery and tactics, and follow up.  **The Organizing Framework for Chapter 9**  As shown in Figure 9.6, communication is a key indi- vidual-, group/team-, and organizational-level pro- cess. We explored a host of inputs, both person factors (nonverbal communication, active listening, empathy, communication skills, and social media behaviors) and situation factors (choice of communi- cation medium, HR policies, and social media prac- tices of your manager and coworkers). You learned that communication links to outcomes across the three levels of OB. At the individual level, communi- cation relates to task performance, work attitudes, citizenship behavior/counterproductive behavior,   turnover. Communication also is related to group/ team performance, group satisfaction, and group cohesion and conflict. Finally, communication influ- ences organizational outcomes such as accounting/ financial performance, customer satisfaction, inno- vation, reputation, and legal liability.  **Challenge: Major Questions for Chapter 9**  You should now be able to answer the following questions. Unless you can, have you really pro- cessed and internalized the lessons in the chap- ter? Refer to the Key Points, Figure 9.6, the chapter itself, and your notes to revisit and an- swer the following major questions:  1. How can knowing about the basic communi- cation process help me communicate more effectively?  2. What key aspects of interpersonal communi- cation can help me improve my communica- tion competence?  3. How do gender and age affect the communi- cation process?  4. How can social media increase my effective- ness at work and in my career?  5. How can I increase my effectiveness using presentation skills, crucial conversations, and managing up?  FIGURE 9.6 ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING OB   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | INPUTS |  | PROCESSES |  | OUTCOMES | | **Person Factors**   * Nonverbal communication * Active listening * Nondefensive communication * Empathy * Ethical behavior * Social media behaviors (an  individual employee) * Communication skills  **Situation Factors** * Choice of medium * HR policies (hiring and firing) * Social media practices  (managers and coworkers) |  | **Individual Level**  • Communication **Group/Team Level**  • Communication  **Organizational Level**  • Communication  • HR policies (social media policies) |  | **Individual Level**   * Task performance * Work attitudes * Turnover  **Group/Team Level** * Group/team performance * Group satisfaction  **Organizational Level** * Accounting/financial performance * Customer satisfaction * Innovation * Reputation * Legal liability |     © 2014 Angelo Kinicki and Mel Fugate. All rights reserved. Reproduction prohibited without permission of the authors.  Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *371*** |  |
|  | | | IMPLICATIONS FOR ME  This chapter contains six practical implications for you. The first is that communication is a perceptual process, meaning that what we say is not always what people hear. Always be on the lookout for misinterpretations in your communications. Second, you can improve your communication competence by following the advice presented in Section 9.2. Third, miscommunication is likely to occur between men and women and across generations. Be sensitive to these differences and try to modify your communication accordingly. Fourth, the pervasiveness of social media means that to distinguish yourself, you need to be better than the rest. Learn how to use services such as LinkedIn like the pros; the time and effort will make a difference in your job and career. Fifth, learn your employer’s social media policies, and regardless of what you learn, you may be wise to keep your digital worlds separate. Make appropriate use of mobile devices; don’t be rude or embarrass yourself or others. Finally, you are always presenting when communicating. The only things that differ in a formal presentation are the number of people, the context, the objective, and the me- dium. These are skills—learn, practice, improve!    IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS  We point out eight practical implications that will benefit you as a manager. First, it is easy to encounter miscommunication because communication is a perceptual process. To over- come this, try paraphrasing and summarizing what others communicate to ensure you are getting the intended message. Second, your choice of communication medium needs to match the complexity of the situation. You can improve your communication by considering this requirement when choosing the best way to communicate with others. Third, be aware of the linguistic differences between men and women. Failure to appreciate these nuances can lead to inaccurate attributions and conclusions about others. Fourth, assess how social media can boost your productivity and that of those you manage. Learn specifically which forms help you and how. Also learn how workplace productivity is lost via social media. Then collaborate with your employees to generate policies that are both reasonable and legally defensible. Communicate these policies and expected practices. Fifth, get a handle on your e-mail as a way of boosting your productivity! Part of your solution may be to use other technology, but another part is certainly being aware of your own behaviors and us- ing discipline. Sixth, always be mindful of social media privacy. Seventh, learn about and build your skills related to crucial conversations; these are critical for your success when managing both down and up. Finally, model the communication behaviors, including use of social media, you expect from those you manage. Your own behavior is one of your most powerful means for influencing others.  ***372* PART 2** Groups |
| **PROBLEM-SOLVING APPLICATION CASE**  **What Can You Say About Your Employer on Social Media? Whatever You Want, Maybe**  Employees’ social media behavior can both help and hurt businesses’ efforts to build reputations with customers, foster employee engagement, and earn profits. Because of this, nearly every day we hear of another employee fired for inappropriate social media posts. These conflicts take place at the intersection of employer interests, employee rights, and the law. Let’s begin by briefly outlining what the law says.  **NLRB AND THE LAW**  Determination of employee rights is primarily the respon- sibility of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which largely relies for guidance on section 7 of the Na- tional Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935.93 Yes, the law that governs most matters of social media at work is more than 80 years old. Section 7 allows employees to union- ize and/or act in concert to improve working conditions. One employment law expert described it this way: “Em- ployee social media communications that relate to work- ing conditions or unionization will often be protected even if they are offensive, obscene, or attack individual members of management personally.”94  **EMPLOYEE INTERESTS**  Employees have issues. Some are completely their own and personal, such as bad attitudes and stressful life events, and some are largely the fault of their em- ployers, like unfair manager behaviors, draconian com- pany policies, counterproductive coworker behaviors and attitudes, and annoying customers. Whatever the sources of their concerns, employees also complain, sometimes on the phone, other times face-to-face, and now more often on social media.  The First Amendment of the Constitution gives ev- erybody the right to free speech, and the NLRA en- ables you and other employees collectively to improve working conditions or unionize.95 However, while you can rant about your employer, manager, coworkers, or customers all you want on the phone or at happy hour with your friends, there *are* some limits to your free- dom to post the same comments on social media. These limits are in part determined by employers’ rights to protect their business interests.  **EMPLOYER INTERESTS**  The position of employers is pretty simple: They don’t want employee comments damaging the company’s reputation, costing it business, or causing legal  liabilities. Cyber security issues aside, a business’s rep- utation and relationships are often hard-won and re- quire considerable time, effort, and money to build.96 But all can be undermined when one negative post goes viral.97 If the intent is clearly to sabotage the busi- ness or steal proprietary information, most people and the law would agree that it is reasonable to create and enforce policies to protect against these possibilities.  Fewer people, however, agree when policies at- tempt to restrict social media comments that bad- mouth management, other employees, or customers or that discuss compensation and other policies with employees or others. Regardless of your own views, the law and a growing number of cases are showing that employers’ broad policies prohibiting such prac- tices are unwise and indefensible. Consider the follow- ing examples.  **TRIPLE PLAY—YOU’RE OUT!**  Triple Play Sports Bar & Grill in Connecticut was made aware of an accounting error that caused employees to pay more taxes and scheduled a meeting to discuss the issue. But before the meeting, a former employee posted a complaint on Facebook: “Someone should do the owners of Triple Play a favor and buy it from them. They can’t even do the tax paperwork cor- rectly!!!”98 A current bartender responded with another derogatory comment about a manager, a comment that was subsequently “liked” by one of the cooks. The bartender and the cook were fired. Management cited Triple Play’s employee handbook:  “[W]hen Internet blogging, chat room discussions, e-mail, text messages, or other forms of com- munication extend to employees . . . engaging in inappropriate discussions about the company, management, and/or coworkers, the employee may be violating the law and is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.”99  What ultimately happened? The employees filed a com- plaint with the NLRB, which decided in their favor. First, the NLRB said the term *inappropriate* in the handbook was entirely too vague and open to interpretation by em- ployees.100 It also said the employee’s “like” response to another’s post was a form of “concerted activity,” which means the employee was agreeing with the view of an- other employee and cannot be punished for doing so.  Communication in the Digital Age **CHAPTER 9 *373*** | | |  |
|  | | | ***374***  **PART 2** Groups  The board further explained that even though custom- ers learned of the comments, the effect was the same as if they had overheard a discussion between two employ- ees, which is not grounds for dismissal. Furthermore, the *comments were not directed at customers,* and thus no offense was committed. Finally, the intent of the commu- nication was to talk about workplace conditions, some- thing employees have the right to complain about.101  **PIER SIXTY—UNDER WATER**  Pier Sixty is a New York City catering company whose employees were in the midst of attempting to form a union because of what they perceived as a pattern of bad behavior by management. The company opposed this action, but unionizing is employees’ legal right. Be- fore the union vote, a company director “harshly be- rated servers, in front of customers.” During a break, one of the servers “used his iPhone to post an expletive- laden message” blasting the director on Facebook that ended with, “Vote YES for the UNION!!!!!” (The post was quite profane and named the director, made com- ments about his mother and family, and called him a “loser,” among other things.) The post was visible to the employee’s Facebook friends, some of whom were also Pier Sixty employees. When word got back to management, the employee was fired. The reason? “His Facebook post violated company policy and was egregious, inappropriate, and possibly defamatory.”102  The NLRB decided in favor of the employee. “Be- cause the record showed that the work environment at Pier Sixty was permeated with hostile and offensive language, which the company regularly tolerated, the NLRB concluded that none of the factors weighed in favor of a finding that [the employee’s] comments were so egregious as to lose the NLRA’s protections. . . . [The employee] posted his comment in the midst of a contentious union election—when heated rhetoric should have been expected from both pro- and anti- union advocates—and ended his post with an express statement of union support. In addition, the record was replete with examples of employees using profane lan- guage without experiencing discipline. . .”103  **GENERAL TAKE-AWAYS**  The above examples make clear that social media pol- icy alone will not solve a company’s challenges. But to help, here are some conclusions about (im)permissible social media comments by employees that have con- siderable support:  1. If a post is related to a union or some form of employee organizing, employee protections are strong.  2. If multiple employees are part of the exchange, it may be considered “concerted” and acceptable.  But if a lone individual posts, that person may be in the wrong.104   1. Profanity isn’t necessarily prohibited, even if directed at an individual, especially if the same language is used and tolerated in that particular employer’s workplace without consequences. 2. If there is a reason for conflict, such as a proposed unionization vote or policy change, disagreement is to be expected, and voicing support or opposition is not an offense.  Assume you own a sports bar like Triple Play. Of   course you want to protect its reputation with custom- ers, foster employee engagement, and earn profits. What would you do?  **APPLY THE 3-STEP PROBLEM- SOLVING APPROACH TO OB**  Use the Organizing Framework in Figure 9.6 and the 3-Step Problem-Solving Approach to help identify in- puts, processes, and outcomes relative to this case.  Step 1: Define the problem.  A. Look first at the Outcomes box of the Organizing Framework to help identify the important problem(s) in this case. Remember that a problem is a gap between a desired and current state. State your problem as a gap, and be sure to consider problems at all three levels. If more than one desired outcome is not being accomplished, decide which one is most important and focus on it for steps 2 and 3.  B. Cases have protagonists (key players), and problems are generally viewed from a particular protagonist’s perspective. In this case you’re asked to assume the role of a business owner.  C. Use details in the case to determine the key problem. Don’t assume, infer, or create problems that are not included in the case.  D. To refine your choice, ask yourself, *Why is this a problem?* Focus on topics in the current chapter, because we generally select cases that illustrate concepts in the current chapter.  Step 2: Identify causes of the problem by using ma- terial from this chapter, which has been summarized in the Organizing Framework for Chapter 9 and is shown in Figure 9.6. Causes will tend to show up in either the Inputs box or the Processes box.  A. Start by looking at the Organizing Framework (Figure 9.6) and decide which person factors, if any, are most likely causes of the defined problem. For each cause, explain why this is a cause of the problem. Asking why multiple times is more likely to lead you to root causes of the problem. For |

example, do employee characteristics help explain the problem you defined in Step 1?

1. Follow the same process for the situation factors. For each ask yourself, *Why is this a cause?* By asking why multiple times you are likely to arrive at a more complete and accurate list of causes. Again, look to the Organizing Framework for this chapter for guidance.
2. Now consider the Processes box in the Organizing Framework. Social media policies and practices can be but are not necessarily a cause. Are any other processes at the individual, group/team, or organizational level potential causes of your defined problem? For any process you consider, ask yourself, *Why is this a cause?* Again, do this for several iterations to arrive at the root causes.
3. To check the accuracy or appropriateness of the causes, map them onto the defined problem.

Step 3: Make your recommendations for solving the problem. Consider whether you want to resolve it, solve it, or dissolve it (see Section 1.5). Which recom- mendation is desirable and feasible?

1. Given the causes you identified in Step 2, what are your best recommendations? Use the material in the current chapter that best suits the cause. Remember to consider the OB in Action and Applying OB boxes, because these contain insights into what others have done that might be especially useful for this case.
2. Be sure to consider the Organizing Framework— both person and situation factors—as well as processes at different levels.
3. Create an action plan for implementing your recommendations.

**LEGAL/ETHICAL CHALLENGE**

**Should Employers Monitor Employees’ Social Media Activity?**

There are at least two sides to the question whether employers should monitor employees’ social media use. Employees have a right to the privacy of what they say, to whom, when, and through which channels (face-to-face, phone, or social media). Employers must also “be vigilant about ensuring that employees are not disclosing confidential or proprietary information through social media, or using it to harass other em- ployees or engage in otherwise unlawful conduct,” says employment law attorney Christin Choi.105

Bolstering the argument for monitoring, Nancy Flynn, director of the ePolicy Institute, says:

It’s all too easy for disgruntled or tone-deaf employees to go on to social media and criticize customers, harass subordinates, and otherwise misbehave. Sometimes that can bring workplace tensions and complaints, sometimes it can damage a company’s reputation in the marketplace, and sometimes it can lead all the way to lawsuits or regulatory action.106

Consistent monitoring enables companies to catch problems early, get undesirable information off-line quickly, begin damage control, and promptly discipline employees.

In support of employee privacy, some argue that so- cial media monitoring often becomes a malicious fish- ing expedition, a disguised means of undermining or even terminating employees inappropriately, such as to settle personal grudges. Employees also have been fired for posting non-work-related content, such as re- ligious or political views or bikini contests. Privacy ad- vocates often concede that companies might be justified in snooping if they have a legitimate reason to do so, such as genuine suspicion of inappropriate con- duct. But even in these instances, they argue that it is appropriate to investigate only what employees do on company computers and networks, not their use of personal devices and personal accounts.107

**If You Made Social Media Policy at Your Employer, What Would You Do?**

1. Monitor all employees. Justify.
2. Never monitor employees. Justify.
3. Monitor selectively. Specify the conditions under which you would monitor, which employees, which devices, and with what frequency.
4. Invent other options and explain.