

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION FOR MANAGERS

SECOND EDITION



 Pearson

PAYAL MEHRA

Business Communication for Managers

Second Edition

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Business Communication for Managers

Second Edition

PAYAL MEHRA

Indian Institute of Management Lucknow



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Preface

The value of communication, particularly in business situations, cannot be overemphasized. It is the bedrock on which all important organizational functions are based. It facilitates interaction at personal, interpersonal, and team levels for the fulfilment of organizational goals and objectives.

The second edition is an improvement on the first edition in that short cases have been added to each chapter (except chapter 2 and 14). This would enable the readers to have practical insights on the realities of communication at the workplace. The second edition also includes interviews and comments of seasoned professionals, on “what constitutes effective communication at the workplace”. I hope that you enjoy reading the second edition; feel free to pen down your comments and suggestions to me at: payal@iiml.ac.in

COMMUNICATION IS EVOLVING RAPIDLY

Communication has evolved over the years. Face-to-face interactions of the past have given way to technology-driven channels of communication in present times. Communication audit, crisis communication, financial communication, communication beyond boundaries, and corporate communication are the new buzzwords in the language of business.

It is not difficult to predict the new frontiers of business communication. In a borderless world (well, almost), technology will dictate the form of communication, making it necessary for us to revisit the norms of direct and indirect communication. A few experts also predict the gradual demise of face-to-face interaction in business situations. Whatever the case may be, the message—with its focus on what is to be said, how and when it is to be said, and at what cost—is becoming the uncrowned king of business communication. Regardless of the channel, form, and language used, designing messages to achieve the objective of the organization is the crux of business communication. This is why it is imperative for management students to learn how to communicate effectively in a business environment. For this to happen, management students need to understand and appreciate the concepts that underlie workplace communication, and this book is an endeavor in this direction.

Business Communication for Managers, aimed at all MBA students, begins by briefly analysing the various theories of communication because I believe that a sound theoretical knowledge always helps to improve one’s grasp over the practical aspects of communication. It demonstrates methods of effective communication through examples, real-life scenarios and role-plays. It adopts a multi-dimensional and integrative approach to solve communication dilemmas at the workplace and touches upon the thoughts related to attention, perception, empathy, and professionalism.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1, “Introduction to Business Communication”, introduces students to the value of communication in the business world and talks about barriers to the same.

Chapter 2, “Theories of Interpersonal and Organizational Communication”, presents the various theories associated with communication, and discusses why it is good to have a sound knowledge of communication theories in order to communicate effectively.

Chapter 3, “Interpersonal Communication”, explores the complexity of interpersonal communication as well as the key issues about relationships that influence the same.

Chapter 4, “Analysing Transactions: The Units of Communication”, deals with the analysis of transactions and differentiates between healthy and unhealthy interactions.

Chapter 5, “The Language of Persuasion”, talks about persuasion and how it differs from influence. It also instructs students on how to write persuasive documents.

Chapter 6, “Communication in a Diverse Work Environment”, discusses the role of culture in shaping perspectives as well as methods to communicate effectively across cultures.

Chapter 7, “Crisis Communication Strategies”, distinguishes crisis communication from crisis management and talks about effective communication measures during crisis. It also provides insights about organizational communication strategies to be implemented during and after a crisis.

Chapter 8, “Business Meetings and Negotiations”, describes the key attributes of a successful meeting and teaches students a host of things like creating an agenda for a meeting and taking down minutes.

Chapter 9, “Preparing and Delivering Presentations”, captures the difference between presentations, student lectures, and talks. It offers tips and suggestions about presenting with confidence and chutzpah. With the help of numerous examples and illustrations, this chapter emphasizes preparation, delivery, and style as keys to an effective presentation.

Chapter 10, “Introduction to Business Writing”, introduces business writing and emphasizes the value of writing. It talks about the essentials of business writing, particularly business grammar.

Chapter 11, “The Writing Strategy”, deals with the formulation of a writing strategy and provides ways of organizing and arranging the information to be communicated.

Chapter 12, “Business Letters, Memorandums, and E-mails”, talks about the anatomy of business documents and, with the help of numerous pertinent examples, discusses the art of writing business letters, memorandums, and e-mails.

Chapter 13, “Planning, Composing, and Writing Reports”, discusses the principal considerations in drafting a report and creating a structured as well as persuasive report and proposal.

Chapter 14, “Employment Communication”, describes employment communication strategies and ways to influence recruiters. This chapter prepares the student in all the important areas of employment communication—from writing a cover letter to facing interviews

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Learning objectives

After completing these chapters, you should be able to:

- Understand the value of communication in the business world.
- Appreciate the role of technology in shaping business communication.
- Appreciate the significance of maintaining lines of communication.
- Learn about the barriers to communication and their influence on organizational and personal communication.
- Understand the role played by the internal communications department in facilitating effective communication.

The **learning objectives** include a set of salient points that students need to focus on while going through the chapter.

Communication Bytes

Communication Bytes provide additional information regarding the topic being discussed in the text.

 **Communication Bytes 1.1**

The advisory firm Corporate Executive Board (CEB) conducted a survey that revealed that, in order to retain talented people, a company should direct its employees towards the right goals through proper communication. Just 21 per cent of the surveyed employees were found to be completely aware of, and working towards, the company's goals. Poor communication and an incompetent manager might be the reason behind this. If the manager-led approach doesn't work, then the Town Hall approach, in which the senior management engages directly in a dialogue with employees, might be successful. The survey also revealed that employees who were more engaged in the process of job design were likely to be more satisfied with their jobs.

A major Indian IT company recently caught an employee in the finance department embezzling funds. In order to avoid such cases, it is always important to improve employee confidence in the organization. The top managerial rung should be consistent in behaving ethically and dealing decisively with misconduct. It is also important for the management to recognize the emotional toll that recession takes on employees and to ensure that communication regarding finances is always frank and focused on employee concerns.


Source: Adapted from Mahima Puri, "High Performers Head for Exit During Economic Recovery," *The Economic Times* (March 15, 2010), available at: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/jobs/High-performers-head-for-exit-during-economic-recovery/articleshow/5683778.cms>, accessed on January 4, 2011.

Point/Counterpoint

POINT	Good communication can only be in proper English.	Good communication requires clarity of message, irrespective of the language used.	COUNTERPOINT
	Communication occurs when the message is sent.	Communication occurs when the message is received.	
	Communication is a natural process.	Communication is an acquired/learnt process.	
	One cannot change one's basic style of communication.	Communication can always be improved, depending on the feedback one gets or takes.	
	Good communicators are excellent orators.	Good communicators speak and listen equally well.	
	Communication is about maintaining relationships within an organization.	Communication is also about getting a task done in the minimum possible time and within a reasonable cost.	
	Communication is abstract.	Communication can be measured.	

Point/Counterpoint lists the pros and cons of a specific debate. This helps students understand both sides of an argument.

Information Bytes

 **Information Bytes 1.1**

Job applicants at a certain multinational fast food joint in Japan are asked to describe their most pleasant experiences. Managers then evaluate applicants by matching their facial expressions with the experiences they recount. If the smile is perceived to be hypocritical, they are not recruited for customer service.

Information Bytes provide additional, and sometimes anecdotal, information about a specific topic in order to make it more interesting for students.

Exhibits within the chapter range from simple figures and illustrations to sample letters, e-mails, notices, and memos that help students have a better understanding of business communication.

Exhibits

Exhibit 12.8

Example of a Letter to a Client

Megatel Corporation Limited
MEGATEL! MEGA DEAL! MEGA OFFER!

Dear Pankaj,

What would you do if we were to offer you a mobile phone as well as two software packages of your choice along with every laptop you buy? We know that you would jump at the offer! Well, this is not a dream, but a reality, a never-before combination from Megatel—the quality service company.

Our company boasts of the finest brands. Nowhere else will you find the coveted big five—Apple, HCL, Compaq, Sony, and Toshiba—under one banner. Not only that, the cherry on the cake comes from our offer of giving away any one cell phone set with this deal. These are not ordinary phones, but the top-of-the-line Nokia 3456 and Motorola 2567 phones. You'll be spoiled for choice!

This is a special offer for our most valued customers on the occasion of our tenth birthday. Look at the benefits it gives you:

- We have 25 accredited service centres. This ensures that you'll always have a service centre nearby.
- We have the latest software of your choice. We have something for everyone in your house—from games and educational software to SPSS.
- We give you personalized attention. We're just a call away at our toll-free number: 05223-333-0033. Call us for prompt service!

So book your laptops right away. Search for details on our Web site www.megatel.org, or call our service representative Ashutosh at our toll-free number.

With regards,

Sirish Sahni,
Area Manager
Megatel Corporation Limited

Address the recipient as friend. Ask a question that would result in you listing the main benefits of your offer.

Answer the question in one or two sentences.

Explain why your product or service is essential or superior to other similar offerings. Address doubts.

Use easy-to-read bulleted points to point out why your product stands out.

Close by guiding the customers to action.

Summary

The Summary captures the main topics covered in the chapter for a quick review.

SUMMARY

- Technological advancements, diversity, globalization of business, growth in legal issues, and time constraints have made communication a key skill in the knowledge economy.
- Communication is rather complex. This is because everyone has their particular mental frames that guide their speech. Sensitivity to the “otherness” of others improves communication considerably.
- Barriers to communication can be resolved by knowing what, how, when, and where to communicate.
- First impressions are usually based on the visual impact, followed by the verbal impact. It is thus important to control one's body language and build a positive perception about oneself.
- Internal communications plays a key role in organizational communication systems by regulating the flow of information through communication media. New media are being harnessed to create links between employees.
- The proposed model of effective communication strategy at the workplace emphasizes “measurement” among other factors. Communication initiatives must be measurable with a proper “audit.” This is bound to give them the respectability they deserve.

Assess Your Knowledge

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Describe the process of communication. Do you think that the process has undergone a radical transformation with the introduction of newer forms of communication?
2. In what way can mental barriers hinder communication?
3. How do you distinguish between synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication? Do you agree with the statement that face-to-face communication has declined over the years? Give reasons for your view.
4. Distinguish between internal and external communication in an organization.
5. What are the benefits of internal communications? How has Google crafted its internal communications strategy?
6. What are the benefits of keeping the lines of communication open in an organization?
7. Write short notes on the following:
 - The human moment at work
 - Blogs as tools for organizational communications
 - Mental filters
 - How to make others *listen* to you

Assess Your Knowledge consists of review questions designed to assess one's understanding of the topics discussed in the chapter.

Use Your Knowledge

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Hari is proposing a reduction in travelling expenses and the entertainment budget for client meetings. To assess the reaction of the 23 sales representatives and ask for their suggestions on how to reduce expenses, he decides to call a meeting. This would be on a Monday, when all the sales professionals touch base at the company headquarters. Additionally, Hari wanted to bring up a few issues relating to discipline and filing of weekly sales reports. Also, there is a conference scheduled for sales professionals in Singapore, for which he wanted to invite two nominations. Based on this information, answer the following:
 - Frame an agenda for the meeting.
 - How would the manager prepare a mental frame to deal with opposition to the proposal?

Use Your Knowledge comprises questions requiring students to apply their knowledge of business communication to real-life situations.

Web-based Exercises

Web-based Exercises

contains analytical as well as comprehensive questions that students have to answer with the help of information from various Web sites and online resources on business communication.

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Visit <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/body-speaks.htm>. Explain the differences in body language across countries.
2. Visit <http://eqi.org/summary.htm>. What does the author mean by "being emotionally literate." What kind of semantics are used when one uses language that is high on emotional intelligence?

Further Reading

Further Reading

provides a list of various books and articles students can look up in order to enhance their knowledge of business communication.

FURTHER READING

- Eric Berne, *Games People Play* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964).
- Thomas A. Harris, *I'm OK. You're OK* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1967).
- C. Steiner, *Scripts People Live: Transactional Analysis of Life Scripts* (New York: Grove Press, 1971).
- D. Tannen, "The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why?" *Harvard Business Review* (1995) Prod.# 95510-PDF-ENG, 138–148.

Appendices 1 to 6

Appendices 1 to 6

provide examples of various documents related to business communication, including samples of a long report and a proposal.

SUMMARY					
Meeting topic	Topic name				
Date	Date/month/year	From	hh:mm	To	hh:mm
Location	Location details	Note taker	First name Last name	Duration	00:00 hrs

AGENDA	
Time	Topic
15 mins	1. Topic name and brief description
35 mins	2. Topic name and brief description
10 mins	3. Topic name and brief description

PARTICIPANTS				
#	Name	Position	Present?	Reason for absence
1	First name Last name		Y	
2	First name Last name		Y	
4	First name Last name		N	Out sick

MEETING NOTES	
1	Mention significant points of the meetings in third person and using bullets.
2	Mention significant points of the meetings.
3	Mention significant points of the meetings.

MAJOR DECISIONS TAKEN			
#	Task	Person responsible	Due date
1	Brief description	Department name or First name Last name	Date/Month/Year
2	Brief description	Department name or First name Last name	To be decided
3	Brief description	Department name or First name Last name	Date/Month/Year

Appendix 7

The Missing Assistant Manager

You are a senior manager in World Works Ltd., a company producing customized software for leading business clients. One morning, you want one of the assistant managers, Rajeev, to handle an emergency. However, you learn that he has still not reached the office. You are informed that Rajeev was working late the previous day. Even then, you are annoyed at his unpunctuality. You had noticed Rajeev coming late to office on several previous occasions. When Rajeev eventually reaches the office in the second half, you decide to talk to him.

Identify a fellow student to play the role of Rajeev. List the key points that you would like to convey to Rajeev. As the senior-most member of the team, what steps will you take to ensure that such a situation does not arise in the future?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 2, “Theories of Interpersonal and Organizational Communication”; Chapter 3, “Interpersonal Communication”; Chapter 4, “Analysing Transactions: The Units of Communication”.

Appendix 7 includes several role plays designed to help students apply their theoretical business communication knowledge to practical workplace situations.

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PACKAGE

The complete teaching and learning package, available at www.pearsoned.co.in/payalmehra, includes PowerPoint slides and an extensive instructor’s manual.

- **Instructor’s manual:** The instructor’s manual provides a chapter overview as well as hints to the relevant chapter-end problems and the role plays which are part of Appendix 8.
- **PowerPoint slides:** Detailed lecture slides provide an overview of the various important concepts discussed in each chapter. They are also a handy teaching tool.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The book owes its existence to many conversations and collaborations with students, professors, and mentors. I would particularly like to acknowledge the learning that I have gleaned from discussions with my mentors Mathukutty M. Monipally and Asha Kaul from IIM Ahmedabad, and Renu Luthra, J. V. Vaishampayan, and Nina David from the University of Lucknow. All of them are teachers of considerable eminence and standing, and have been instrumental in shaping my thoughts as a teacher.

The book has been in the making for quite some time and many people have contributed towards its completion. The role-plays have been contributed by my students at IIM Lucknow in the form of an assignment on an experience in miscommunication. I converted these select experiences into themes for role plays. The sample of a long report as part of Appendix 5 has also been created by my students. I am indeed thankful to all of them for their selfless contribution.

I would like to thank my publisher, Pearson, for facilitating completion of this project, Bimbabati Sen for her painstaking editing, and Praveen Tiwari for getting everything started. For the second edition, special thanks are due to G. Sharmilee, Senior Production Editor for her patience and suggestions to improve the book.

I am grateful to my family for their whole-hearted support in all my endeavours—to my husband Sanjay for always being patient and understanding, to my parents and parents-in-law for their support and encouragement, and my lovely daughters Rhea and Aarushi for just being there! Papa, you proudly showed the book to everyone who visited our house—and that means everyone—when it was first released in 2012. The second edition is dedicated to your memory. I miss you... Last, but certainly not the least, I thank my employer IIM Lucknow for giving me all the support for writing the book. It has been a long but fulfilling journey.

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About the Author

Payal Mehra currently serves as Associate Professor at the Indian Institute of Management Lucknow (India). AMBA accredited and an AACSB member, IIM Lucknow has recently been rated as the fourth best management institution in India by NIRF 2016—the national ranking framework for educational institutions in India. Payal has close to 20 years of industry, teaching, research, and training experience in the field of business communication. Prior to joining IIM Lucknow she worked in a private management institute for 10 years after a brief stint in industry.



Payal Mehra's academic interests cover all aspects of managerial communication including interpersonal communication, effective presentation skills, communication beyond boundaries, and ways in which technology influences communication. In 2004, one of her papers titled "Stress Levels in Organizations and Impact on Employee Behaviour" was awarded the Kamla Award by the Indian Society of Training and Development. The Kamla Award is given out each year to the best woman writer of an article published in the *Indian Journal of Training and Development*. As of 2016, she has published close to 40 articles in numerous national and international journals in well known, peer reviewed category publications of Sage, Emerald, Inderscience, World Scientific, amongst others. Her second book titled "Communication beyond Boundaries", was recently released by the New York based publisher in 2014 to the world market. Her writings have earned her five Publication Awards at IIM Lucknow.

A dedicated teacher, researcher, and trainer, she believes that teaching is more than just a job—it's something that nurtures the pursuit of wisdom with love, care, and compassion.

Apart from academics, she loves to read and travel as she believes that travel affords an education that no book can. She also loves to observe human behaviour in different settings in order to understand better why people behave the way they do. For more information on her academic profile, please visit the IIM Lucknow website link: http://payalmehra.com/payal_cv%20UPDATED.pdf

For feedback and comments you are welcome to write to payal@iiml.ac.in

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the value of communication in the business world.
- Appreciate the role of technology in shaping business communication.
- Appreciate the significance of maintaining lines of communication.
- Learn about the barriers to communication and their influence on organizational and personal communication.
- Understand the role played by the internal communications department in facilitating effective communication.

“You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can’t get them across, your ideas won’t get you anywhere.”

Lee Iacocca¹

All activities involve some form of communication. Discussions with one’s boss and co-workers, conversations with peers, interviews, meetings, presentations, memos, letters, faxes, and telephone exchanges are all forms of communication that take place in organizations. Regardless of one’s official designation, if one is managing or even interacting with people, then communication is an essential part of one’s job.

Effective communication requires competence in five major areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and non-verbal communication. Writing and speaking are transmission skills (sender-related skills), and listening and reading are reception skills (receiver-related skills). Skill in non-verbal communication is the “fifth dimension of communication.” Effective communicators are able to use non-verbal messages for a broader impact.

A manager’s responsibility is to coordinate, train, control, and review the performance of others and to oversee results. In the process of doing so, they interact with others in meetings, interviews, and interpersonal exchanges, as well as via reports, business proposals, and presentations. Managers have to learn to manage their own communication (personal communication), their communication with others (interpersonal communication), and their communication within an organizational context (group communication) to achieve the desired results.

Five factors have contributed to the growing importance of effective interpersonal communication at the workplace:

- **Technology:** E-mail, voice mail, text messages, and online chats are some of the means through which technology has pervaded our lives. Technology has affected the workplace to such an extent that face-to-face communication has been sharply declining over the years. The demands of technology have made it imperative that communication be quicker and easier to understand. This means that the language has to be simpler, sentences shorter, and paragraphs coherent and concise. It also becomes imperative to convey emotions and sensitivity even when messages are short and crisp. This requires effective communication.
- **Diversity:** Organizations are employing more diverse people than ever before. Differently abled employees as well as employees belonging to different cultures mingle and work together. Effective communication at the workplace must therefore employ both sensitivity and tact.

- **Dispersal and decentralization:** Most global organizations are geographically dispersed today, in order to better manage the scale of operations and achieve greater efficiency. This places new demands on one's communication skills, since the traditional top-down communication is ineffective in such organizational setups. When communication is not centralized, organizations must develop a comprehensive corporate communication strategy.
- **Time constraints:** Executives are increasingly pressed for time. With time as a premium, communication needs to be more crisp, focused, and precise. This requires excellent analytical skills and the ability to express oneself clearly and succinctly.
- **Legal liability:** As organizations grow more professional, legal issues need to be kept in mind. The written or spoken word is susceptible to misinterpretation. Messages must therefore be carefully crafted to carry home the point without harming, defaming, or maligning the reputation of the recipient.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is essential for the survival and progress of a business concern. Managers use effective communication skills to get work done. This includes crafting meaningful and persuasive messages and business correspondence and using new media to get messages across.

Communication is effective when it produces the desired action in the reader or audience. Effective communication means the message is understood and acted upon, and not merely sent to the recipient. The ability to communicate effectively is essential for a business executive. As Lee Iacocca pointed out in the opening quote of this chapter, a person may be immensely knowledgeable or skilled, but if their ideas are not communicated properly, those ideas are as good as absent.

Successful communicators build immense goodwill. They have a positive impact on the stakeholders within the organization, including employees, supervisors, seniors, customers, suppliers, and associates. Effective communicators also build goodwill for the company they represent. Successful communicators are also good planners and possess the skills to transfer their knowledge and ideas to the people whom they work with at all levels of the organization.

Successful communication is the foundation of a cordial and pleasant working relationship between workers and the management, between subordinates and supervisors, and between customers and suppliers. Efficient internal and external communication policies result in cordial relations and willing cooperation among employees.

Ineffective communication systems, by the same logic, result in mismanagement. They can destroy trust and engender ill will, depending on the context. A poorly worded message may result in a communication breakdown. On the other hand, good communication contributes to better service, removes misunderstandings and doubts, builds goodwill, promotes the business, and earns favourable references.

When a group of industrial engineers were asked in a study in 1990 how they might improve productivity, communication concerns drew the strongest responses. More than 88 per cent of the engineers surveyed stated that the lack of communication and cooperation among different components of a business leads to reduced productivity.²

CEOs have also recognized the importance of communication. A study by A. Foster Higgins and Company, an employee-benefit consulting firm, found that 97 per cent of the CEOs surveyed believed that communicating with employees positively affects job satisfaction. Furthermore, the survey found that 79 per cent think that communication benefits the bottom line; but surprisingly, only 22 per cent communicate with employees weekly or more frequently.³



Communication Bytes 1.1

The advisory firm Corporate Executive Board (CEB) conducted a survey that revealed that, in order to retain talented people, a company should direct its employees towards the right goals through proper communication. Just 21 per cent of the surveyed employees were found to be completely aware of, and working towards, the company's goals. Poor communication and an incompetent manager might be the reason behind this. If the manager-led approach doesn't work, then the Town Hall approach, in which the senior management engages directly in a dialogue with employees, might be successful. The survey also revealed that employees who were more engaged in the process of job design were likely to be more satisfied with their jobs.

A major Indian IT company recently caught an employee in the finance department embezzling funds. In order to avoid such cases, it is always important to improve employee confidence in the organization. The top managerial rung should be consistent in behaving ethically and dealing decisively with misconduct. It is also important for the management to recognize the emotional toll that recession takes on employees and to ensure that communication regarding finances is always frank and focused on employee concerns.

Source: Adapted from Mahima Puri, "High Performers Head for Exit During Economic Recovery," *The Economic Times* (March 15, 2010), available at: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/jobs/High-performers-head-for-exit-during-economic-recovery/articleshow/5683778.cms>, accessed on January 4, 2011.

GOALS OF COMMUNICATION

Organizational communication is purposeful. There are three objectives to such communication:

- **To inform:** When the objective is to inform, the speaker is merely elucidating facts, instructions, rules, guidelines, explanations, and examples.
- **To persuade:** When the intention is to persuade, the speaker aims to change both perception and mindset. The communication is intended to bring about a change in the target, from the current to a desired state, through a series of planned statements.
- **To mobilize:** When the intention is to mobilize the recipient of the message, the speaker focuses on an action the target should take. Communication is considered complete when the target has received the message and understood it, and agrees to act upon it.

POINT	Good communication can only be in proper English.	Good communication requires clarity of message, irrespective of the language used.	COUNTERPOINT
	Communication occurs when the message is sent.	Communication occurs when the message is received.	
	Communication is a natural process.	Communication is an acquired/learnt process.	
	One cannot change one's basic style of communication.	Communication can always be improved, depending on the feedback one gets or takes.	
	Good communicators are excellent orators.	Good communicators speak and listen equally well.	
	Communication is about maintaining relationships within an organization.	Communication is also about getting a task done in the minimum possible time and within a reasonable cost.	
	Communication is abstract.	Communication can be measured.	

ONE-WAY AND TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Communication may be considered one-way when no reply is expected or desired. For example, a public notice outside a room stating “Trespassers prohibited” is a command or order that does not require a response. In organizations, most communications are two-way, with some **feedback** or response desired from the receiver.

If an official response were desired to a sign prohibiting entry to a particular location, a different means of communication would have to be used. Instead of putting up a notice, a **memorandum** or brief e-mail message would have to be sent to the heads of all departments informing them that entry was prohibited to that particular room. The sender could ask for the message to be acknowledged or for the heads of the departments to report what action they were taking to put the order into effect. If the sender wanted to make the message more persuasive, a reason for the request could be given—for example, the need to preserve security in a sensitive zone.

DIRECTIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Within any organization, the characteristics of a particular piece of communication vary based on whether the message is going vertically (top-down or bottom-up) or sideways. *Vertical communication* involves movement of a message from superiors to subordinates and vice versa. *Horizontal* or *sideways* communication involves movement of a message between employees of equal rank. This is illustrated in Exhibit 1.1.

The main uses of vertical downwards communications are:

- To give orders or instructions
- To provide or ask for information

The main uses of vertical upwards communication are:

- To describe the results of actions
- To provide information that has been requested
- To make requests or appeals

The main uses of horizontal, or sideways, communication are:

- To keep equals informed of actions taken or results achieved
- To seek the counsel or opinion of peers
- To discuss problems
- To chat informally

CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

There are three main channels of communication:

- **Spoken:** This channel includes meetings, presentations, oral instructions, chats, discussions, and so on.

Top-down	Bottom-up	Sideways
Circulars	E-mails	E-mails
Newsletters	Proposals	Chat
Memos	Applications	Intranet communications
E-mails		
Meeting agendas		

Exhibit 1.1
Directions of Organizational
Communication

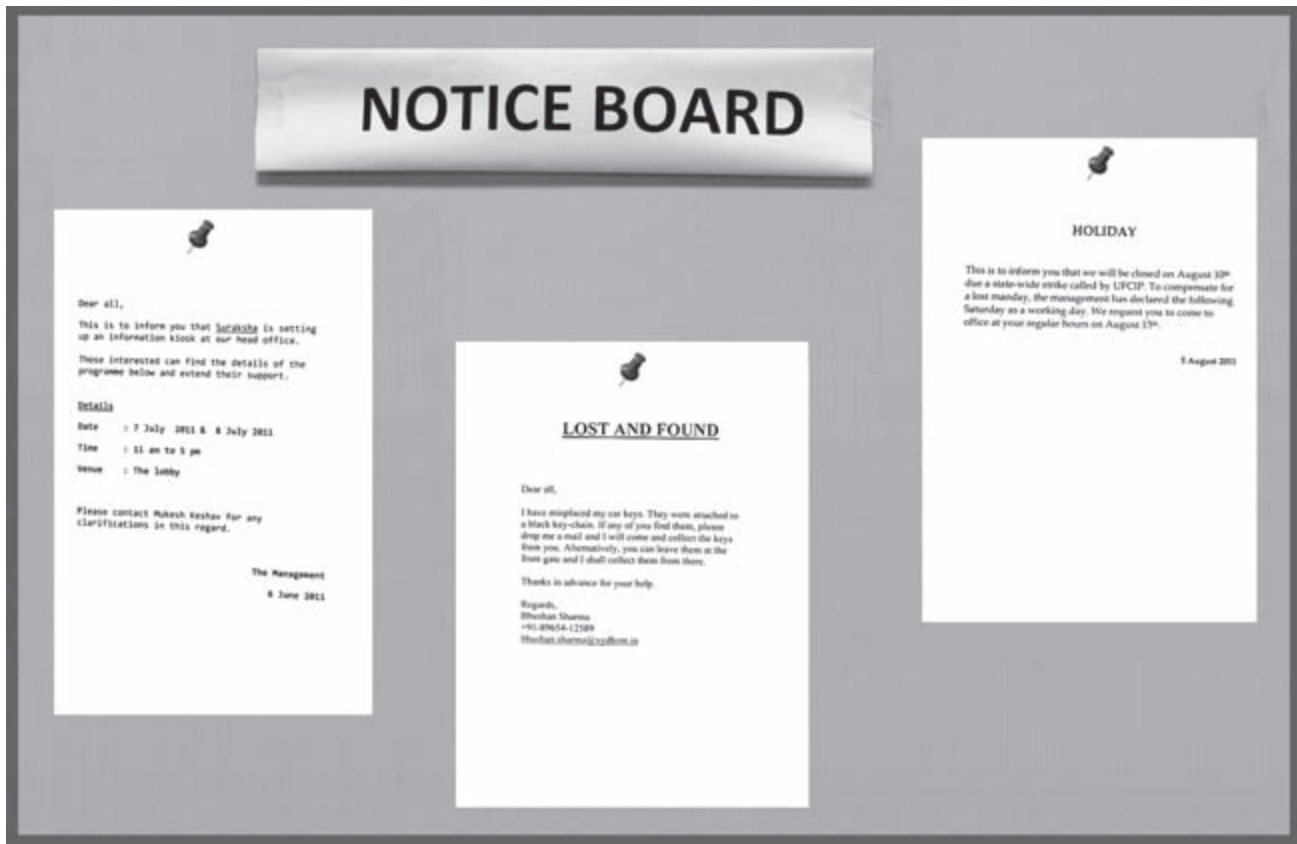
- **Written:** The written form of communication includes bulletin board notices, circulars, letters, memoranda, reports, proposals, and notes.
- **Electronic:** This method includes e-mail, instant messaging, video conferencing, phone messages, voice mails, and blogs.

Visual aids such as charts, graphs, diagrams, photographs, and other illustrations are often used to support messages. They summarize information and present it in a striking manner.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

A variety of methods are used in each of the three channels. Some methods are used mainly for internal communications, while others are used mainly for external communications.

- **Meetings:** Face-to-face communication offers opportunity for discussion and immediate feedback. The sender and receiver can catch the cues and clues that they receive from each other and modify the message according to this immediate feedback. But face-to-face meetings are sometimes costly to arrange in terms of time and money. Essentially designated as communicative events, meetings involve the framing and coding of the agenda, determination of participation criteria, channel-selection, and identification of the norms of speaking and interaction.
- **Presentations:** Managers, often accompanied by members of their staff, use presentations to explain a project or plan to colleagues and persuade them to accept the presenter's point of view. Visual aids such as transparencies projected onto a screen are often used to illustrate points. Presentations are also given externally to clients or potential clients. For example, an advertising agency might make a presentation of its advertisement campaign. Presentations allow a large amount of complex information to be communicated to a large number of people at the same time. They also provide opportunities for feedback and discussion.
- **Written Messages:** Formal business communication is written. This allows for a permanent record to be created and used for later reference. Written communication results in delayed feedback, however, as it usually takes time for messages to reach their targets.
- **Public notices on bulletin boards:** Public notices on bulletin boards are easy and cost-effective methods to communicate the same information to a large number of people. However, there is no way to ensure that notices are read and registered; even if they are read, they might be ignored.
- **Memoranda:** A *memorandum* or *memo* is a top-down form of written internal correspondence. Nowadays, memos are sent through e-mail and are also called *e-memos*. Memoranda are still one of the main means of communication within a business. Used to disseminate information, they are useful for making arrangements or requests and sending confirmations.
- **Reports:** Reports are widely used in business. They are the written equivalent of presentations. Visual aids such as charts and photographs are often used to illustrate reports. There is generally a standard format for a report. Most reports include the name of the author(s), a title, a brief introduction, headings or subheadings for each section, a conclusion, and a list of recommendations.
- **Staff bulletins or magazines:** Many big firms publish bulletins or larger—often richly illustrated—magazines to give employees information about the company, to make them feel they are part of a team, and to increase their morale.
- **Electronic messages:** In this day and age of electronic communication, information has to be disseminated quickly, and electronic methods provide the means to do just that. Economical and efficient, they allow for speedy transmission of information. Feedback is usually quick, and messages are nearly always recorded. However, electronic systems are not easy to install. And in order to avoid “crashes,” high levels of maintenance are required.



Public notices via bulletin boards are easy and cost-effective methods to communicate the same information to a large number of people.

- **Telephone conversations:** One of the earliest and most widely prevalent means of communication, telephones are used for both internal and external exchanges. Mobile telecommunication using Short Message Service (SMS) is now in vogue.
- **Communication through computers:** The personal computer (PC), which processes data at enormous speed, has revolutionized communication as well as many other aspects of business. By using different kinds of software, PCs can perform a variety of tasks, including word processing for letters and documents, storing information on a database, and making financial calculations using a spreadsheet.
- **Communication through local area networks:** Firms can connect all computers in the same building to form a local area network (LAN). Linked computers can communicate with each other and also share common facilities, such as printers. The PCs are all linked to a more powerful computer or server, which stores a vast amount of information and can send relevant parts of a business plan to computers in different departments. A LAN makes it easier for managers to access information from other departments and also monitor the work within their own department. By using a modem, messages can be sent along telephone lines. This enables the computer to become part of a wide area network (WAN), which links it to other computers anywhere in the world.
- **Video conferences:** Video conferences are online communication tools that facilitate interaction between two or three geographically dispersed units of a global firm. Communication is synchronous and the speaker is able to see and interact with the people at the other end.
- **Fax:** A fax or facsimile machine can send an exact copy of a document to another fax machine anywhere in the world. The sender places the document in a fax machine, dials the fax number of the recipient, and the fax machine at the other end prints a copy of the document automatically. Letters, plans, diagrams, and drawings can all be transmitted in this way.

- **E-mail:** The Internet provides electronic mail or e-mail service to users all over the world, and is much quicker and cheaper than the traditional postal service. The service provider stores the message in an electronic mailbox until the receiver views it.

Exhibit 1.2 discusses the various ways in which people might communicate within an organization.

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

The line of communication proceeds in two directions and moves back and forth. It is a systematic means of keeping in touch with a business partner. Frequently, people assume that communication evolves on its own, but this is not the case. This is especially true in cases of international negotiations, where contact and correspondence are critically important to understanding the other side's needs and viewpoints.

Maintaining an open line of communication is important for two main reasons. First, it affects the degree and quality of the relationship that has been created with the partner during negotiations. Second, it creates a positive impression on the partner regarding the seriousness of one's intent and helps to build a strong, long-term business relationship.

COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

Communication channels are linked in a number of ways to form communication networks. A *communication network* demarcates the positions of the senders and recipients of information in a communication loop. It affects the quality of team decisions as well as team dynamics. The questions that need to be resolved while setting up a communication network are:

- Who should be a part of a particular network?
- What channels of communication should be devised to carry the information forward?
- Who are the primary and secondary recipients of the information?
- Who controls or regulates the flow of information from one point to the other?

There are two types of communication networks: centralized and decentralized. In *centralized networks*, information is stored and retrieved from a central pool or repository. The information has to pass through multiple links to reach the intended audience. This type of network values power over parity and centralized decision-making over a democratic process.

Type	Internal	External	Form
Formal	Memoranda, circulars, notices, newsletters, pre-printed forms, short reports, proposals	Letters, press releases, reports, proposals	Written
Formal	Voice calls	Faxes, voice calls	Electronic
Formal	Face-to-face departmental or company meetings, voice calls, presentations	Presentations, negotiations, sales calls	Spoken
Formal	Decision support systems, e-memos	Video conferences, audio conferences, decision support systems, e-mails	Electronic
Informal	Instant messaging, blogs, links to Web sites	Instant messaging, blogs, social networking sites	Electronic

Exhibit 1.2
Ways to Communicate in Organizations

Though decision-making is quicker in this type of network, member satisfaction is low. On the other hand, in a *decentralized network*, information is made available to everybody in the network. Decision-making is consultative and participative, and everybody has a stake in the information-processing and decision-making processes. This is particularly useful when task complexity increases and creative solutions are required to make effective decisions.

Chain networks, hairpin networks, and wheel networks are types of centralized networks, whereas star-shaped and circular networks depict decentralized networks. Exhibit 1.3 illustrates circular, wheel-shaped, and chain networks.

NEW COMMUNICATION MEDIA

In these days of the so-called Thumbing Generation, when the Internet is easily accessible and very popular, there are over a dozen different channels of communication. Exhibit 1.4 provides an overview of these new media.

Social media is a channel that facilitates dialogue between employees, the organization, and external sources. Previously, people could get in touch with each other through an e-mail, a telephone call, or a voice mail. However, the new media offers communication at different levels. Contrary to popular belief, it is more a facilitator of communication than a marketing tool. It employs modern media much like an e-mail to connect to employees, customers, and clients in an engaging and ongoing manner. Recruiters, customer service professionals, potential clients, and press may actively get in touch with an individual or a company through social media to engage them in meaningful ways. Networking for referrals, sharing information about one's organization, easy monitoring of customer complaints, and compliments are a few benefits of utilizing social media in organizations. Thus, social media allows us a wider reach than a telephone, e-mail or voice mail.

There was a time when a face-to-face conversation was the starting point of all relationships. However, things have changed today. Relationships might also start through the public interactions facilitated by Twitter and Facebook. Short, crisp messages can be sent via Twitter and people can widen their social networks with the help of Facebook. Thus, social media is an open and transparent medium to share and elicit public responses from individuals, organizations, and brands. Once a preliminary contact has been established, formal or informal communication may follow.

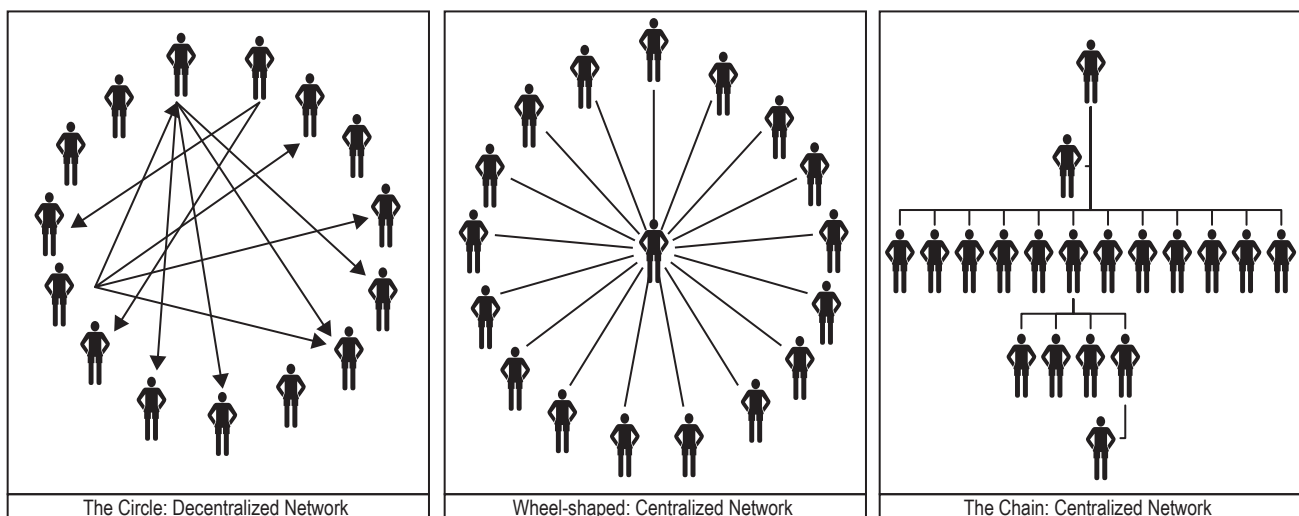


Exhibit 1.3 Some Communication Networks

Exhibit 1.4 New Communication Media

Different kinds of communication	Blogs	Instant messaging	Podcasts	Smartphones	Short message service (SMS)	Twitter	Webcasts	Wiki
Description	Online journal or commentary with reader responses	Real-time chat	Online radio show	Cell phones with inbuilt computers	Very short text	Social networking and microblogging Web site	Online conferences that are usually interactive	Web page created by group collaboration
Content	Text	Short text	Audio only, with no live interaction	Usually audio	Text message that is less than 160 characters	Text messages (called tweets) of up to 140 characters	Audio and video	Online Web page (text)
Media	Computer to computer	Computer to computer	On MP3 players or iPods	Cell phone to any phone or computer	Cell phone to cell phone	Computer to computer	Computer to computer—can be viewed on a larger screen if many people are involved	Computer to computer
Uses	An internal blog enhances a sense of community and helps express an individual's personal opinions. Externally it helps in branding and public relations.	Instant messaging is like a conference call. It can be used for finalizing agreements and decisions.	Podcasts can be used as audio tours and to update everyone on meetings and company issues.	Smartphones are used for sending and receiving e-mails and accessing the Internet on the go.	An SMS is for sending and receiving short messages.	Twitter can be used to express personal feelings and emotions or to make an informal public announcement.	Webcasts can be used to broadcast annual meetings or discussions, and to communicate messages from the top management.	Wikis are used behind firewalls as collaborative software and a means of communication.

Source: Adapted from Mary Munter, "What are They Talking About," published in *Proceedings of the Association for Business Communicators (ABC) National Convention at Lake Tahoe, Nevada (2008)*.

VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

In the mid-1960s, Paul Ekman studied emotions and identified six facial expressions that are universally recognized: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise. Although his contentions were controversial at first (reports suggest that he was booed off the stage when he first presented his research to a group of anthropologists and was later called a fascist and a racist), they are now widely accepted. However, an ongoing controversy is about the amount of context needed to interpret these facial expressions.

According to researcher Albert Mehrabian, 55 per cent of the content of a message is the visual component, 38 per cent is the auditory component, and 7 per cent comes from the language used. However, these percentages only apply in a very narrow context.

Dr Mehrabian was interested in how listeners get information about a speaker's general attitude in situations where the facial expression, tone, and/or words are sending conflicting signals. He designed some experiments to investigate this. In one experiment, Mehrabian and Ferris⁴ researched the interaction of speech, facial expressions, and tone. Three different speakers were instructed to say "maybe" with three different attitudes towards their listener: positive, neutral, or negative. Next, photographs of the faces of three female models were taken as they attempted to convey the emotions of like, neutrality, and dislike. Test groups were then instructed to listen to the various renditions of the word "maybe" while viewing the pictures of the models, and asked to rate the attitudes of the speakers. Note that the emotion and tone were often mixed; for instance, a facial expression showing dislike would be paired with the word "maybe" spoken in a positive tone. Significant effects of facial expression and tone were found in the study. Verbal communication was found to be effective only 7 per cent of the time, the impact of vocal communication was assessed to be effective 38 per cent of the time, and facial expression and gestures had the largest impact (55 per cent). In other words, at least initially, how we communicate was deemed to be more significant than what we communicate.

What finally can be concluded is that when people communicate, a listener derives information about the speaker's attitude from visual, tonal, and verbal cues; however, the percentage derived from each type of cue can vary greatly depending upon a number of other factors, such as the context of the communication and how well the communicators know each other. To deliver the full impact of a message, non-verbal signals are important. Some non-verbal signals are:

- **Eye contact:** Eye contact signals interest in others and increases the speaker's credibility. People who make eye contact open the flow of communication and convey interest, concern, and warmth. This is especially useful during presentations, negotiations, meetings, counselling, and giving and taking instructions and feedback.
- **Facial expressions:** Smiling is a powerful cue that transmits happiness, friendliness, warmth, and liking. Individuals who smile frequently are perceived as more likable, friendly, warm, and approachable. Smiling is often contagious and people react favourably to a smiling person. Smiling individuals make others feel comfortable and reduce their anxiety. In a genuine smile, the muscles used are controlled by the limbic system and other parts of the brain that are not under voluntary control. In a perfunctory smile, a different part of the brain (called the cerebral cortex) is used. That part of the brain is controlled voluntarily. Fake smiles, thus, use a completely different set of muscles than genuine ones.
- **Gestures:** Some people gesticulate while speaking. This often brings vigour and vibrancy to their speech. Lively speakers are perceived as more interesting and captivating than



Information Bytes 1.1

Job applicants at a certain multinational fast food joint in Japan are asked to describe their most pleasant experiences. Managers then evaluate applicants by matching their facial expressions with the experiences they recount. If the smile is perceived to be hypocritical, they are not recruited for customer service.



Communication Bytes 1.2

The rules of business etiquette keep evolving but the biggest change in the last decade has been with respect to gender. Today, as more and more women enter the workplace, business has become gender-neutral.

Greetings: Professional handshakes are preferred over masculine or feminine handshakes. The handshake should be firm and quick, and there is no protocol as to who should offer the handshake first.

Business meetings: Both men and women are expected to step from behind their desk to shake hands and offer a seat to their visitors. Maintaining appropriate eye contact, respecting personal space, and escorting visitors to the lobby/elevator at the end of the meeting is expected from all professionals. At business lunches or dinners, the person who extended the invitation pays, irrespective of gender.

Introductions: Men and women are expected to stand for all introductions and when exchanging business cards. Rules for making introductions in the corporate arena are driven by rank or hierarchy and not gender.

Titles: Women are introduced or addressed using the title “Ms” in all spoken and written business communication. If they prefer to be addressed as “Mrs” or “Miss,” they are expected to inform their business associates accordingly.

Propriety: A handshake is the only physical contact between professionals in the workplace. Using terms of endearment, giving excessive compliments, or cracking off-colour jokes is considered inappropriate. There are strict sexual harassment laws regarding offences of such kind.

Civility in the workplace: Women do not expect men to hold open doors for them—the person who reaches the door first is expected to hold it open for the other person. Similarly, the person closest to the elevator door/ car door exits first. Regardless of gender, one is expected to help a colleague carry heavy files, hail a cab, or help with the luggage in an airplane aisle.

Source: TNN, “Corporates Team up to Avoiding Gender-bias”, *The Economic Times* (February 22, 2008), available at: <<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/features/corporate-dossier/corporates-team-up-to-avoiding-gender-bias/article-show/2803146.cms>>, accessed on January 4, 2011.

dull speakers, who rarely use gestures. Apart from making the conversation interesting, gestures, when used appropriately, also facilitate greater understanding. For instance, a handshake is a suitable barometer to judge a person’s communication skills and personality.

- **Posture and body orientation:** Posture and body stance are the meta-messages that a speaker’s body conveys to the audience. An erect posture indicates positivity and confidence while a droopy posture indicates nervousness or passivity. Leaning forward, nodding one’s head, and making frequent eye contact indicate receptivity and approachability, while the reverse holds true for leaning backwards, sprawling one’s legs, and having a casual style.
- **Proximity:** Cultural norms dictate the comfortable distance for interaction with others. Every individual has a comfort zone and a discomfort zone when interacting with others. Proximity not only indicates physical closeness but also less of a power gap between the communicators. The high-backed chair, long table, and distance from the door indicate a CEO’s authority and that CEOs generally prefer formality in their approach. A manager who prefers a round table in the meeting room generally gives the impression of being egalitarian in their outlook. A subordinate who places documents on a colleague’s table without permission may arouse annoyance in the latter. Generally it is agreed that 18 inches is the distance maintained for friends and family; about 18 inches to 4 feet is the appropriate distance for colleagues, and, for even more formal relationships, 4 feet to 12 feet is suitable.
- **Appearance:** This includes attention to clothing, personal grooming, and accessorizing. Our physical appearance reveals our innermost feelings as to how we would like to be viewed by others. It is the most noticeable aspect of self in relation to the external world.

- **Vocal elements:** Vocal elements such as tone, pitch, rhythm, timbre, loudness, and inflection are very important for the impact of any message. A strong message conveyed in a dull voice is uninteresting. Speakers who have a coherent argument must also inject passion into their speech for greater impact.

THE GRAPEVINE

The term *grapevine* is believed to have originated during the American Civil War, when telegraph lines were sometimes strung from tree to tree, resembling grapevines. Because of their rigged nature, these telegraph systems often generated ambiguous and garbled messages. Informal and sometimes distorted messages were hence said to come from the grapevine.

The corporate grapevine is the informal communication network that operates within the organization. It can be described as an invisible flow of rumour, innuendo, and speculation that runs within the informal channel of the organization, often bypassing the chain of command and the official lines of communication. It is necessary for management to provide complete information. If this is not done, then employees will fill in the gaps and the story will take on a life of its own. However, it is not necessarily true that grapevine is harmful. When properly nurtured, corporate grapevine can be a valuable asset. The main way in which the grapevine can help is in getting a feel for the “pulse” of the organization. Employers who truly understand this use the grapevine to get a feel of what the employees think about an existing or impending situation. This helps to assess the morale of the workforce as well as to evaluate the efficacy of the existing channels of communication. It is also useful in identifying the points at which misinformation and misunderstandings occur.

Several studies have explored the use of the grapevine. One study by De Mare⁵ contends that nearly 70 per cent of all organizational communication occurs at the grapevine level. Research suggests that a person’s position in the informal communication network correlates with achievement and demonstration of power. There are several case studies that reveal that managers use the grapevine to outmanoeuvre and outsmart others. Patterns of voluntary turnover significantly link to the heavy presence of informal communication networks within an organization. In fact, a high level of grapevine activity is associated with stress, medication, insecurity, and fear. Studies reveal disparity between a manager’s perception of how they communicate and employees’ perception of the same.

Certain conditions might impact grapevine activity. These include how intensely employees associate with the grapevine, how important the issue under discussion is to employees, the ambiguity of the situation, as well as the level of trust in the formal communication network.

MISCOMMUNICATION AND COMMUNICATION FAILURES

Miscommunication can occur due to lapses on the part of the sender, the receiver, or the channel used for communicating.

- **The sender:** In some cases, the sender is to blame. The message may not be clear and accurate or simple enough to be understood by the receiver. It may be badly presented or so boring or complicated that it fails to hold the receiver’s attention. The sender may have not taken care to frame the message according to the needs of the recipient, as a result of which the receiver may tune the message out. At times the sender may use harsh words that cause the receiver to shun the message completely.
- **The recipient:** Receivers may be unwilling to take in the message because they are too busy, because they have made up their mind about the issue at hand already, or because they are biased towards the sender or the sender’s message. The recipient may be biased towards the sender or have made faulty assumptions about the sender, as a result of which the sender may have fail to make an impact.

- **The channel:** The choice of channel may also be the cause of miscommunication. For instance, if the sender uses the phone or writes an impersonal e-mail in a situation when face-to-face communication would have been more appropriate, it may offend the receiver.

There have been numerous well-documented cases of miscommunication in the public arena. For example, the BJP's India Shining campaign had immense political implications. This was an INR 1,000 million campaign that focused on the achievements of the (then) BJP Government of India. The punch line was excellent and the advertisement was well timed and well executed. However, the campaign failed to draw in the crowds at the time of the polls, mainly since the advertisement had targeted only the top two sections of society.

Unintentional communication blunders are also not uncommon. American Motors Corporation once tried to market its new car, the Matador, based on the image of courage and strength. However, in Spanish, the word "matador" means killer. As a result, the car was not popular on Spanish roads. Similarly, in 1999, Crayola was compelled to change the name of a shade of red to "Chestnut" from "Indian Red" because students mistook the latter as a racist reference to the skin colour of Native Americans. However, in reality the name came from a reddish-brown pigment found in India and commonly used in oil paint.⁶

In 2003, seven astronauts died as the space shuttle Columbia broke upon re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere. An independent investigation team spent months studying thousands of pieces of debris, as well as data recovered from computers that tracked the *Columbia's* final moments. The conclusions of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board, published in August 2003, expressed the opinion that a breach of the shuttle's heat shield on take-off caused it to break up on re-entry. The report was also highly critical of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) itself, saying management blunders were as much to blame for this tragedy as technical problems for the destruction of the shuttle.⁷ As most management blunders happen as a result of miscommunication at one level or another, this might be a lesson no one will forget in a hurry.

On a personal level, miscommunication and unresolved issues usually involve hurt feelings and emotional turmoil. Most often than not, people do not know how to communicate effectively, and this usually has a "snowballing" effect. For example, a misunderstanding with one's spouse might lead one to being distracted at a meeting, which might lead to misunderstandings with a boss or colleagues. This, in turn, might once again lead one to behave grumpily with one's family.

Respondents of a survey report that by far the biggest issue in working with offshore providers is miscommunication. Different communication styles and differing approaches to conflict resolution might result in miscommunication. This, in turn, might hamper productivity and teamwork.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

Effective communication occurs only if the receiver understands the exact information or idea that the sender intended to transmit. Studying the communication process is important because managers coach, coordinate, counsel, evaluate, and supervise through this process. It is the chain of understanding that integrates the members of an organization from top to bottom, from bottom to top, and from side to side. Despite the best intentions of the sender and receiver, several barriers inhibit the effective exchange of information. Executives estimate that 15 per cent of their time is wasted owing to poor communications with employees. This translates into approximately 8 weeks per person each year.

Some of the various barriers to communication are discussed in this section.

The Noise Barrier

Noise is any random or persistent disturbance that obscures, reduces, or confuses the clarity or quality of the message being transmitted. In other words, it is any interference that takes place between the sender and the receiver. This is why we generally identify any communication

problem that can't be fully explained as noise. The biggest single cause of interference in the communication process is the assumption that the act of communicating is a simple process that does not require much thought or practice and that all effective managers are born with this skill. This is not true. Effective communication comes only with study and practice. The effectiveness of the communication process is dependent on the capabilities of the people involved.

To overcome the noise barrier, one must discover the source of the noise. This may not be easy. Noise appears in a variety of ways. During a conversation, if one is distracted by the pictures on the wall, the view from the window, a report lying open on a desk, or a conversation taking place in an adjacent room, then there is noise affecting the quality of the communication.

Once the source of the noise has been identified, steps can be taken to overcome it. The noise barrier can't always be overcome but, fortunately, just the awareness of its existence can help to improve the flow of communication.

The Feedback Problem

Feedback is reaction. Without it, the sender of the message cannot know whether the recipient has received the entire message and grasped its intent. Feedback includes verbal and non-verbal responses to another person's message. It is thus the return of a portion of the message to the sender with new information. It regulates both the transmission and the reception of the message.

The process is essentially straightforward: the sender transmits the message via the most suitable communication medium, the receiver gets the message and decodes it, and then provides feedback to the sender. When the message is transmitted and effectively received, feedback serves as a regulating device. The sender continually adjusts the transmission in response to the feedback. Feedback also alerts the sender to any disruptive noise that may impede reception of the message. Feedback not only regulates the communication process, but reinforces and stimulates it. In fact, it actually serves as the hallmark of dialogue, because it forces communication and makes it two-sided. Two-sided expression, when combined with mutual feedback, becomes a dialogue.

Feedback can manifest itself in the following ways:

- **Evaluative:** Evaluative feedback judges the worthiness of the other person. Here's an example: "I feel that this project has certain language flaws that prevent it from being published in this journal."
- **Interpretive:** Interpretive feedback generally paraphrases the other person's statement. Here's an example: "You mean to say that corruption begins with us, right?"
- **Supporting:** Supporting feedback motivates and bolsters the other person. Here's an example: "I agree with your statement that we must not take insubordination lying down."
- **Probing:** Probing feedback seeks to clarify and gain additional information. Here's an example: "What does corruption mean to you?"
- **Understanding:** Understanding feedback seeks to decipher the other person's meaning. Here's an example: "What you are trying to say is that we only vote for the corrupt, and that is why we are corrupt in the first place."

There is no feedback in one-way communication. Such communication involves passing ideas, information, directions, and instructions from higher management down the chain of command without asking for a response or checking to see if any reaction has taken place at all. But as we have discussed, it is not enough to just ensure that the message has been received. For communication to be effective, a two-way process must exist so that the sender knows whether the message has been *understood*. The two-way communication process involves sending a message down the chain of command and transmitting a response containing information, ideas, and feelings back up the chain. In verbal, face-to-face communication, the process doesn't happen sequentially. Instead, all of these actions occur almost

simultaneously. For example, the sender acts as a receiver while transmitting the message, and the receiver acts as a sender providing immediate feedback.

Providing feedback involves two things. First, it involves restating the sender's feelings or ideas (for instance, "This is what I understand your feelings to be. Am I correct?"). This helps listeners understand and evaluate what the other person is saying. Second, feedback involves using appropriate non-verbal cues. (e.g., nodding your head to show agreement, or frowning to show poor understanding or lack of agreement.) Note that a Japanese person nodding their head during a presentation is anything but agreeable to the content of the presentation. This is contrary to Indian norms, where nodding one's head indicates understanding and agreement. This gesture isn't a positive one in Japanese culture.

The Problem of Media Selection

In any given situation, the medium or transmission mode for communication must be selected. The medium chosen may be personal or impersonal. Personal media includes face-to-face communication, chat using instant messaging, videoconferencing, phone calls, voice messages, and other synchronous modes. Impersonal media includes e-mail, blogs, voice mails, text messages, decision support systems, and other asynchronous forms of communication. Any media might use oral or written forms. Oral forms include presentations, meetings, chat, and the like. Written communication may be in the form of letters, e-mails, notices, circulars, and so on. Sometimes, a combination of media is used to deliver a message.

The selection of media is made by the manager, though in many cases it may also be decided by general organizational norms and practices. If the media selection is a personal choice, message transmission depends on the following:

- Personal inclination
- Personal experience in media selection and message optimization
- Personality characteristics

On the other hand, if media selection is based on organizational norms, message transmission depends on the integration of information technology, information systems, and social communication issues within the organization, as well as the capacity of the system to support feedback, accessibility, and quality of the information used for decision-making and knowledge management.

The media becomes a barrier to communication when the wrong channel is selected. For instance, if an employee is asked to leave an organization by e-mail rather than in a face-to-face interaction, the communication is bound to be characterized as insensitive. On the other hand, a letter appreciating an employee's work is held in greater esteem than mere verbal praise. Generally speaking, media selection should be matched with the requirements of feedback. If immediate feedback is required, synchronous forms of communication are preferred. If there is no immediate need for a response, an impersonal medium will do just fine. Studies have also revealed that the role of culture, media accessibility, and media apprehension are important factors for the choice of channel.

Sometimes, the complexity of the message decides the medium. Complex messages usually demand a written format, and simpler messages require a simpler format. But it is not always easy to determine what is simple and what is complex. Asking for a promotion is not a very simple task, but should it not be communicated verbally?

Mental Barriers

In our own way, we all see the world differently. The perceptual process determines what messages we select or screen out, as well as how the selected information is organized and interpreted. There is significant chance of noise in the communication process if the sender's and receiver's perceptions are not aligned.

Many times, noise exists in the mind of the sender or the recipient. This may be due to many factors, such as the emotional state and attitude of the sender or the receiver, faulty

assumptions, stereotyping, fixed beliefs, and a closed mindset. A closed mindset could be a result of defensiveness (when we feel someone is attacking us), a sense of superiority (when we feel we know more than others), and egocentricity (when we find it difficult to see things from someone else's point of view).

Stereotyping causes individuals to typecast a person, place, event, or thing according to an oversimplified belief and opinion. Thus, actors can be perceived as vain, self-centred artists, professors can be viewed as overtly intellectual and pedantic, politicians as wily, and models as empty-headed individuals. Stereotyping prevents us from viewing a person, situation, or event in an open and new way. It functions as noise in the communication process because the receiver or sender ends up drawing conclusions based on preconceived notions. If the sender or the receiver believes that they know everything about the subject being transmitted, they expect acceptance of those ideas. Any ideas to the contrary are perceived as threatening, and this, in turn, leads to poor communication.

Failure to attune the message to the audience's sensitivities also acts as a major barrier to communication. The speaker may assume that the audience's logic is similar to their own, and this may lead to unfair assumptions on their part. Presence of strong bias, a closed mindset, and irrational attachment to a certain belief or approach might hamper communication and lead to poor exchange. In such a case, ego clashes become inevitable, as there remains no common ground between the sender and the receiver. Preconceived attitudes also affect our ability to listen. For instance, some people listen uncritically to people with a higher status and dismiss those they perceive as being of a lower status.

The Problems of Language and Articulation

Words and gestures carry no inherent meaning. The sender must ensure that the receiver understands the symbols and signs being used. Language and communication dynamics have become the driving force in international business operations in recent times. Though technology has paved the way for globalization, the latter can't be successful without the correct negotiation of cultural factors such as the use of language. Language that describes what we want to say in our terms may present barriers to those not familiar with our expressions, buzz words, and jargon. When we couch our communication in such language, it can become a way of excluding others.

Three potential language barriers are the use of improper words, the use of jargon, and ambiguity.

- **Use of improper words:** Words, when improperly used, create the wrong impression. Most words have more than one meaning and, often, different implications in different cultural contexts. As words are widely used for communication, it is important to address any potential barrier that may occur from their use. One way to penetrate the word barrier is for the sender to write or speak in relation to the receiver's background, experiences, and attitude. The more the focus on the audience, the greater is the effectiveness of the communication. S.E. Hayakawa, a U.S. Senator from California, expressed it very well when he said, "The meanings of words are not in the words; they are in us."⁸

At times, messages may be vague and unclear. For instance, "Please submit your report by tomorrow evening" is a vague message that leaves one in doubt about what kind of report is being discussed and when exactly it needs to be submitted. In contrast, "Please submit the feasibility report between 4 and 5 tomorrow evening" is precise and clear in its intentions.

To communicate effectively, we must try to see ourselves through the eyes of others in the communication link. By empathizing with the people to whom we direct messages, we might recognize the need to modify our messages from time to time before sending them. Douglas McGregor, one of the leading authorities on management practices, says that, "It is a fairly safe generalization that difficulties in communication within an organization are, more often than not, mere symptoms of underlying difficulties in relationships between parties involved. When communication is ineffective, one needs to look first at the nature of these relationships rather than at ways of improving communication."⁹ Thus, the ability

of the sender to penetrate the communication barrier is determined to a large extent by the depth of the relationship between the sender and the receiver.

- **Use of jargon:** Jargon includes technical language and acronyms as well as recognized words with specialized meanings in specific organizations or social groups. A well-known multinational computer software giant promotes the use of jargon as it believes that it can potentially improve communication efficiency when both the sender and receiver understand this specialized language. Jargon also shapes and maintains the organization's cultural values and symbolizes an employee's self-identity in a group. However, jargon can be a serious communication barrier at times. The use of jargon in some situations can promote a form of technical snobbery that may prevent employees from receiving important knowledge and undermine relations with customers.
- **Ambiguity:** We usually think of ambiguous language as a communication problem because the sender and receiver interpret the same word or phrase differently. If a co-worker says, "Would you like to check the figures again?", they may be politely telling you to double-check the figures. But this message is sufficiently ambiguous that you may think they are merely asking if you want to do this. This does not make for effective communication.

Ambiguous language is sometimes used deliberately in work settings to avoid conveying undesirable emotions. CEOs sometimes refer to the "integration processes" with other companies. This sounds better than words like "merger" and "monopoly." Software firms for example, do not warn computer users about fatal software errors; they are "undocumented behaviours." And when millions of customers of a software company suffered through significant e-mail delivery problems, the company described the incident as "a partial e-mail delay." Why the obfuscation? Customers tend to respond more calmly to integration processes, undocumented behaviours, and partial e-mail delays than to monopolies, fatal software errors, and e-mails lost for weeks or forever.



Research shows that one of the most important factors in building cohesive teams is proximity. As such, round tables are perceived to promote egalitarian thinking.

Ambiguous language may be a barrier, but sometimes it is necessary when events or objects are ill-defined or lack agreement. Corporate leaders often use metaphors to describe complex organizational values so that they may be interpreted broadly enough to apply to diverse situations. Scholars also rely on metaphors because they convey rich meaning about complex ideas.

Physical Barriers

Physical barriers in the workplace include marked-out territories into which strangers are not allowed, closed office doors, barrier screens, separate areas for people of different statuses, and so on.

Research shows that one of the most important factors in building cohesive teams is proximity. As long as people still have a personal space that they can call their own, nearness to others aids communication because it helps team members know each other's strengths and weaknesses. Office infrastructure and designs of tables, meeting rooms, and conference halls are subtle indicators of power hierarchy and status. Round tables are perceived to promote egalitarian thinking, while a rectangular table denotes that authority is vested in one person sitting at the head of the table.

Personal Barriers

One of the chief barriers to open and free communication is the emotional barrier. It comprises fear, mistrust, and suspicion. Emotional mistrust of others often has its roots in the directives we might have received as children, such as "Don't open your mouth to speak until asked." As a result, many people hold back from communicating their thoughts and feelings to others. They feel vulnerable. While some caution may be wise in certain relationships, excessive fear of what others might think of us can stunt our development as effective communicators and our ability to form meaningful relationships.

Cultural Barriers

When we have to be a part of a group, the unwritten understanding is that we accept the collective code of conduct or behaviour. Sooner or later we become part of the group and adopt its behavioural pattern as our own. This is perceived as a sign of acceptance by the other group members, and is rewarded by inclusion. In groups that are happy to accept newcomers and where newcomers are happy to conform, there is a mutuality of interest and a high level of win-win contact. Where there are barriers to membership in the group, power conflicts replace effective communication.

Interpersonal Barriers

Interpersonal communication is communication between two people, groups, departments, or organizational units. By building bridges and inducing commonality, organizational members seek task satisfaction and job fulfilment. However, not many people build interpersonal relationships. There are levels at which people distance themselves from one another:

- **Withdrawal:** Withdrawal is where interpersonal contact is shunned and an individual refuses to be in touch.
- **Rituals:** Rituals are when interpersonal contact is perceived to be mere formality, devoid of genuine interaction.
- **Pastimes:** Pastimes are where interpersonal relationships are perceived as social but superficial activities to be indulged in when one is free.
- **Working:** This is when interpersonal activities are confined to discussions at work, but no further.
- **Games:** This is where interpersonal activities are considered to be subtle, manipulative interactions that are about winning and losing.
- **Closeness:** This is the aim of interpersonal contact, and happens when there is a high level of honesty and acceptance of yourself and others.
- **Technology:** This is where interpersonal satisfaction is sought through social networking sites.

Information Overload

Every day, Dave MacDonald was flooded with up to a hundred e-mail messages. The former Xerox executive was reportedly bombarded with voice mail, faxes, memos, and other pieces of information. “Without some kind of system in place, I’d spend practically all my time trying to sort through it and not get much of anything else done,” says MacDonald.

Just like Dave MacDonald, thousands of workers around the world deal with hundreds of e-mails, phone calls, voice mails every day. It is no wonder that people are overwhelmed. *Information overload* occurs when the volume of information received exceeds the person’s capacity to process it and it is a significant obstacle in the path of effective and smooth communication. It can be overcome by either increasing the capacity of processing information or by reducing the amount of information that is being processed. For example, working for longer hours might help reduce some amount of information overload. However, that is a feasible solution when the overload is not a permanent fixture and only temporary. Screening messages, condensing information, and ignoring information not deemed as important are other ways of reducing information overload.¹⁰

Passive Listening

Hearing and listening are two distinctly different things. *Hearing* is an involuntary act and happens when we receive aural stimuli. *Listening*, on the other hand is a voluntary activity that involves interpreting the sound one receives and decoding its meaning.

People engage in two types of listening: passive and active. Passive listening is little more than hearing. It occurs when the receiver of the message has little motivation to listen carefully. Listening to music, stories, television programmes, or pretending to listen while merely being polite in another’s company may be cited as examples of passive listening. Exhibit 1.5 categorizes the habits of good and poor listeners.

People speak at 100 to 175 words per minute (WPM), but they can intelligently listen to 600 to 800 WPM. Since only a part of our mind is paying attention, it is easy to go into “mind drift” (thinking about other things while listening). The cure for this is active listening, which involves listening with a purpose. This purpose may be to gain information, obtain directions, understand others, solve problems, share interests, see how another person feels, show support, and so on. Thus, active listening requires attending as well as engaging skills. A few traits of active listeners are:

- They listen more and talk less.
- They are not judgmental.
- They do not finish the sentences of other people.
- They do not allow bias to creep in.

Good listeners	Poor listeners
Talk less	Interrupt frequently
Ask open-ended questions at the end	Finish the sentences of the speaker
Make eye contact	Let their attention wander
Nod frequently	Dominate the conversation
Take brief notes	Argue to win
Repeat and paraphrase as necessary	Wait for their chance to speak
Accept that everybody has different views	Are judgmental
Focus on the words rather than the personality of the speaker	Form biased opinions

Exhibit 1.5
Habits of Good and Poor
Listeners

- They stay focused.
- They are not swayed by the speaker's persona.
- They seldom dominate conversations.
- They do not plan responses.
- They do not interrupt the speaker.
- They take mental notes while listening.
- They do not jump to conclusions.
- They engage in open-ended conversations.
- They indicate their engagement by gestures and make proper eye contact.

Listening is different from hearing. Listening involves not only the ears, but also the mind and heart. Listening is not always easy, but it can be learnt. Here are a few suggestions to listen better:

- Lean forward and make eye contact with the speaker. Nod your head to show understanding.
- Take notes as you listen. Jot down the key points.
- Clarify points that you do not understand. Politely interrupt the speaker or raise your hand.
- Paraphrase what the speaker is saying; do not judge until the speaker has finished talking.
- Subdue your inner voice. Focus on the topic.
- Ignore distractions.

Getting the attention of the audience is an art, but it can greatly improve with practice. Here are a few suggestions:

- Organize your material into manageable chunks of information. Audiences tend to get bored with monologues. Listening is easier if the key points are described sequentially or in some sort of a structure.
- Build a rapport with the audience. An audience is likely to listen to a speaker who cares to share some personal information with them. There is a better connection if the audience feels that the speaker “is just like them.”
- Build humour into the talk. This makes the atmosphere relaxed and comfortable.
- Answer questions adeptly. This does not imply that the speaker must know the answer to all the questions, but the speaker should be able to manage and control the audience through powerful use of ethos and logos. *Ethos* is the use of an appeal to credibility by the speaker. *Logos*, on the other hand, is the use of logical appeal in an argument.
- Use linguistic tools. Create abbreviations and short forms of the key messages so that it is easier for the audience to remember them. Repeat messages frequently to reinforce the important points.
- Use ample illustrations, examples, and graphics to appeal to all audience types—auditory, visual, and verbal.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN: SEVEN CARDINAL MISTAKES MANAGERS MAKE

Despite the best of intentions, management communications can be misinterpreted. There are numerous ways in which managers can commit mistakes as far as communication is concerned.

Communicating Without Adequate Preparation

Speaking without thinking about the consequences does not pay off in professional communication. For instance, before announcing a controversial decision to employees, managers should take into account the sensitivities of the affected parties. This will prevent malicious

gossip, planned resistance, and office manipulation, which are common when employees are taken by surprise. Even presentations, proposals, and e-mails written without proper preparation can land managers in trouble. It is worthwhile to individually consult pressure groups, opinion leaders, and office groups on a one-on-one basis before making any decisive commitments. It is also a good idea to convey empathy and concern using one's tone, voice, and body language appropriately.

Underestimating the Intelligence of the Audience

Many managers fail to take employees into confidence by citing the popular refrain, “they will not understand.” This is a mistake. The audience—supervisors or subordinates—are likely to be knowledgeable about many factors and deserve to know the rationale behind the company's strategic plans.

Using Inappropriate Channels of Communication

Sometimes, managers use e-mails to convey messages best conveyed in a face-to-face conversation. Deplorably, many times, managers publicly deride an employee when a personal putdown would have been enough. These so-called small blunders have the potential to trigger great unrest. Generally speaking, potentially emotional issues are best dealt with face to face, while more professional issues can be handled via electronic channels. Managers may also make the mistake of sending verbal information to an employee who essentially prefers the face-to-face mode and vice versa. Knowing the communication channel preferences of employees can bridge gaps between managers and subordinates.

Believing that Words Speak Louder than Actions

Lofty appeals and ambitious promises hold true when employees feel that the manager “walks the talk.” For example, talking of equality but drinking tea/coffee in a porcelain cup as opposed to the paper cups used by employees, gives the impression that status and position do matter. Therefore, before communicating any standards of behaviour, rules, regulations, or beliefs, it is important for managers to take a long hard look in the mirror. The culture perpetrated by managers should reflect the goals set by the organization.

Listening Only to Good News

As managers go higher up the corporate ladder, they somehow surround themselves with people who create deliberate noise in the information processing chain. As a result, managers may fall prey to the good-news-only syndrome, where they disregard bad news and react negatively to bearers of such news. It is often observed that bad news is softened as it moves up the hierarchy and magnified as it travels down. Effective managers are open to receiving bad news and seek to solve the issue, instead of brushing it under the carpet. Effective managers deal with rumours and the grapevine head-on and talk to others directly in plain language.

Playing Guessing Games with Employees

Some managers rarely seem to give complete information to their employees. They appear to revel in keeping their employees in a state of suspense. In the guise of “testing” the subordinate's skill at “discovering information,” managers try to exercise power and control over subordinates. This can boomerang in the form of incomplete reports, unprofessional presentations, and improper research. An effective manager learns to harness the skills of the subordinate to match their own for a productive solution.

Rarely Talking to Employees

Some managers do not speak at all with their employees. Cocooned in their plush air-conditioned chambers, they fail to tune in to the needs of their employees—the salespeople, field staff, receptionists, factory supervisors, and new recruits. They neither praise nor reprimand. They distance themselves from the very people who work for them, believing that the middle and supervisory management will take care of their needs. In this scenario, it may happen that employees lose



Information Bytes 1.2

Many organizations have not reacted very kindly towards the two most popular social media sites: Twitter and Facebook. According to them, employees waste time on Twitter, Facebook, and Orkut. Many have even barred them from the workplace.

The popular view is that organizations can gain from this vast resource and should make it a preferred mode of communication. According to many employees, these social networking sites serve as effective agents of internal communications. Over time, the role of these social networking sites has changed substantially from sharing personal thoughts and brief updates to informative bulletins.

Organizations must recognize this and adapt to the new world, which is led by technology. Compatible across all platforms and interfaces, most social networking sites, including Twitter, afford a lot of flexibility. Almost anybody can access them, read them, post comments, and respond on these sites.

their vision and motivation with respect to their work. Effective managers are also leaders and should have their feet planted firmly on the ground.

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS AND TECHNOLOGY

Barriers to communication in the workplace are gradually being overcome in several organizations, thanks to effective use of social media. The “Social Media in the Enterprise”¹¹ conference held in March 2010 focused on how various organizations use social media to their advantage. Different organizations use social media in different ways. Some feel that the main obstacles to social media are generally the people concerned while others felt that it was a challenge to get the HR and IT departments to communicate efficiently in order to effectively implement social media within an organization. However, others feel that the one major benefit of implementing social media within a company is that it helps move the internal, “water cooler conversations” into the public arena and brings together people from different departments. The British supermarket chain Asda, for example, has a social media system called the Green Room, where the employees, among other things, share information about the charity work they are doing. Certain speakers in this conference, however, described the rising cost of social media (Sonia Carter from Axa, U.K., described how the first version of a particular social media platform was free and took six weeks to implement, while the next version cost the company GBP 500,000 and took twelve months to fully swing into action) as one of the major drawbacks. A publicly accessible social media site of a company also needs to be closely monitored and controlled so that important data doesn’t find its way into the wrong hands.

FACILITATING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

There are many factors that facilitate effective communication. They are discussed in this section.

Develop a Genuine Desire to Communicate

The desire to communicate is the first step in being effective. The desire to connect with another human being is the bond that facilitates clear expression perhaps more than anything else. A genuine effort to understand another person goes a long way in enhancing the quality of interaction.

Understand Oneself and Others

The key to effective communication is, first and foremost, an understanding of oneself and then, an understanding of others. When we have fully reflected on our own communication style, we can adequately revise and respond to others. The first step in this direction can be to prepare an inventory of one’s biases and prejudices.

Encourage an Open Climate

In most situations, managers overestimate their capacity to communicate and underestimate the extent of positional authority that prevents most employees from voicing their concerns. Most managers are averse to listening to bad news (unplanned expenditure, sanctioning leave, greater budget outlays, sales decline, and the like). They may avoid interaction, change the subject, tell employees clearly that they would not like to listen to such things, and so on. This inhibits the flow of unpleasant yet important communication.

In turn, employees may at times feel discouraged to present constructive ideas for improvement of processes—simply out of fear of reprimand or ridicule. A good example is that of Sheryl Sanders, currently chief operating officer of Facebook. When she worked at Google, she was responsible for the company's automated system. She made a costly mistake once, and informed the founder of Google, Larry Page, telling him how bad she felt about the million-dollar loss. Sheryl recalls that Page accepted her apology and then went on to say that he was quite glad that she had made the mistake ... and that the mistake was a good indicator of the risks Google was taking in business. As Sheryl said later, few CEOs actually walked the talk and Google's was one of them.¹²

Develop Strong Internal Communications

Internal communications or *employee communications* refer to the information channels made available to the employees of a firm. These channels are used to disseminate information to employees about current and future activities of the firm, awards and recognition, and plans concerning the company. It also allows for some form of feedback from employees regarding these issues. An informed and motivated workforce is crucial for a healthy organization. Companies like Google, Starbucks, Unilever, and Mastek, which employ good internal communications systems prove that success really starts from within.

Internal communications, however, has some drawbacks. They include:

- **Ignoring the merits of face-to-face communication:** Sophisticated tools and technologies have made organizations too dependent on technology; companies sometimes fail to realize that face-to-face communication and meetings are still the most personal form of communication.
- **Cascading communication:** In a global environment, it is impossible to communicate face to face with employees all the time; hence information “cascades” through successive management levels. This leaves the message at the mercy of the senders, who may not all be skilled in the art of communication. This leads to message distortion, confusion, and conflict.



Communication Bytes 1.3

Mastek was the first IT company to introduce the idea of a virtual bench. It was the most drastic action taken so far by this 27-year-old company. Due to the sensitive nature of the action, a lot of brainstorming was done and everything was planned in great detail. Employees who were put on the virtual bench had the option of leaving it and resigning from the company after receiving a severance pay.

However, after its implementation, a staggering 85 per cent opted to remain in the company. All the 425 affected employees were informed of this decision through a joint presentation, which stressed how they were still precious resources for the company. They were also informed about the kind of training they would receive. As everything was there in written form, there was little chance of miscommunication. The presentation came with a letter including detailed legal implications and frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the measure they had taken. This document included mentors who could be contacted. Doctors and counsellors were also made readily available in case of emergencies.

Source: Based on N. Shivapriya, “HR Heads Look to Control Costs Without Layoffs,” *The Economic Times* (May 3, 2009), available at <http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2009-05-03/news/28457262_1_virtual-bench-salary-cuts-employees>, accessed on January 5, 2011.

- **Disintegrated communication:** Often tools are just used to inform employees about events and schemes, with little or no follow-up. Thus, communication appears to be one-shot event rather than a coherent whole or a part of a strategy.
- **Too focused on quantitative surveys that are time-consuming and yield little:** It is recommended that managers not rely overly on surveys, and “walk the talk” instead. A great deal of information can be obtained by simply walking outside one’s cubicle, sitting with employees in the cafeteria, or talking with them on the telephone.

The business leader has to tear down fences, punish internal politics, reward cooperation, and encourage sharing of ideas if internal communications are to improve. Creating an open organizational climate to support employee concerns and objectives might be a good way to improve internal communications. It is a good idea to let everyone in the organization know what others are doing. Pasting the objectives of all the teams working on various projects on the intranet or the dashboard reporting system might be helpful as well. Organizing cross-functional teams for projects can also help facilitate internal communications. Team leaders must engage the teams in contests, quizzes, club activities, and other extracurricular activities, and create a suitable provision for incubation of ideas.

Encourage “hot desking.” *Hot desking* is the practice of not providing desks to employees, specifically the sales staff. They can take a seat anywhere within a conference room. This can prevent a silo mentality, that is, the practice of owning or possessing something in an unreasonable manner and failing to share it.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

There are two sides to strategy in communications. In the first instance, there is the organization’s strategy: what it hopes to achieve and how it plans to go about achieving it. That strategy will be supported, and to some extent, delivered through effective internal communications.

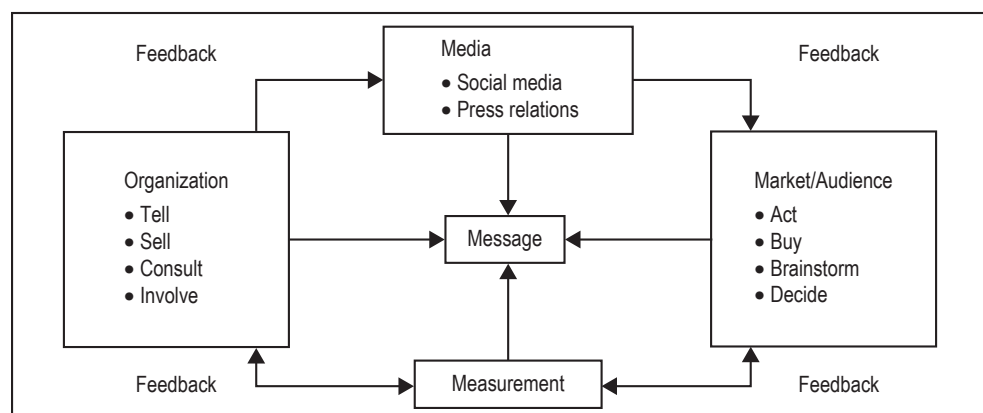
In this context internal communications can help on several different levels:

- **Tell:** Informing people of the direction taken (non-negotiable).
- **Sell:** This is done while anticipating some form of backlash, and it requires some amount of persuasion.
- **Consult:** Soliciting specific areas of input to the decision-making process.
- **Involve:** Seeking varying degrees of involvement and co-creation.

Exhibit 1.6 explains the communication process diagrammatically.

Second, and more important, internal communications needs a strategy of its own. It should be positioned as more than a simple plan of tactical interventions in support of business activities.

Exhibit 1.6 A Model of Strategic Communication



- **Audience/Market:** What does the organization know about the information needs of its audience/market? How should its audience/market be segmented? (*Audience* refers to the employees and *market* refers to clients, customers, suppliers, and, in essence, all the people external to the organization.)
- **Message:** What is the organization's message trying to achieve? In what tone should it be conveyed? Message can be informational, persuasive, and motivational.
- **Media:** Which channels work best for the different audience segments? How will they maximize reach and facilitate action? Are there clear guidelines for each? Media includes social media and other channels of internal communications; media also means the press and other mass media.
- **Measurement:** Are there clearly defined success criteria for the quality of communication? What are the leading and lagging measures?

Numerous corporate organizations have effective communication strategies. Here is an example: A leading mobile company has an unwritten rule that prevents employees from eating lunch at their desks or going out for a meal. They are generally asked to eat at the in-house, inexpensive cafeterias. This leads to greater intermingling of employees outside their own department. This has been found to be helpful in sharing ideas and understanding issues.¹³

In 2004, the corporate communications department of a multinational distribution company wanted to improve its internal communications. It authorized Pulse Check, a survey feature launched by The Booth Company, to devise and manage a series of quarterly “pulse surveys.” The pulse surveys allowed them to gauge employee attitudes towards the new corporate brand strategy and provide feedback to help them improve internal communications. The content was divided into five areas: Strategy, Performance, You and the Company, Leadership, and Communication. The data provided the corporate communications department with a clearer picture of how employees want internal communications to work.¹⁴

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has something called the Ultimatix—an online system that helps connect employees to one another on a daily basis. The company has also collated all the programmes that helps it communicate internally within the organization. According to the Chief Executive Officer of the company, the senior management always tries to meet as many employees as possible and the hierarchy within the organization is never a hindrance in this case. Effective internal communications also manages to take away the stress from the hectic schedules most TCS employees have to maintain. Most of the employees of this company are in their late twenties and the programmes are often geared towards their satisfaction. Last year, with an extremely low employee attrition rate of 3 per cent, TCS proved that its internal communication system was working effectively.¹⁵

TCS also employs other effective communication strategies like the open-door policy in which any employee can approach the CEO or the top management with work-related problems. Open-house sessions allow employees at all levels to meet and discuss various work-related issues. Employees can also take part in one-on-one sessions with the senior management. These sessions are helpful in providing mentorship, as well as understanding real-life issues that workers might face at the office. The queries and discussions are formally recorded and followed up.

Companies like Infosys have effective in-house communication strategies as well. There, InSync is the internal communications programme focused on keeping Infosys employees abreast of the latest corporate and business developments, and equipping them to be a “brand ambassador” for the company. This programme combines a communication portal with workshops, monthly newsletters, articles, daily cartoons, and brainteasers to synchronize each employee with the organization.

Companies like Wipro have various internal communications channels in order to connect with its employees. For example, Channel W is an employee portal at Wipro that creates a de facto “Wipro community” by allowing employees to interact with each other and disseminate information on things they most cherish. The intranet ensures that the entire

organization is wired in and that there is meaningful exchange of information and views across domains. Key sections of Channel W encourage employee participation and communication through bulletin boards and chat rooms.

W10 is a dipstick survey with ten questions, which checks the satisfaction level on issues affecting company stability, security issues, and supervisory effectiveness in Wipro. Feedback given by employees is shared with the top management through scorecards in this system. These W10 scores then trigger managers or supervisors to meet their teams and resolve issues that create dissatisfaction in the workplace.

Wipro also conducts employee satisfaction surveys every two years. Employees are encouraged to comment on and rank the organization on certain areas or satisfaction drivers. The top management then prepares a timely action plan to address the areas of concern. Task forces are created to focus on areas that can be improved.

Wipro believes that team feedback is an important parameter of leadership development as well as team cohesiveness. A “skip level meeting” is, therefore, rather popular. These are formal team feedback sessions facilitated by HR as well as the supervisor’s supervisor. This is an institutionalized process in Wipro and managers see great merit in it as they get feedback from the team. Consequently, managers can make changes in the middle of an ongoing project in order to improve effectiveness at work.¹⁶

SUMMARY

- Technological advancements, diversity, globalization of business, growth in legal issues, and time constraints have made communication a key skill in the knowledge economy.
- Communication is rather complex. This is because everyone has their particular mental frames that guide their speech. Sensitivity to the “otherness” of others improves communication considerably.
- Barriers to communication can be resolved by knowing what, how, when, and where to communicate.
- First impressions are usually based on the visual impact, followed by the verbal impact. It is thus important to control one’s body language and build a positive perception about oneself.
- Internal communications plays a key role in organizational communication systems by regulating the flow of information through communication media. New media are being harnessed to create links between employees.
- The proposed model of effective communication strategy at the workplace emphasizes “measurement” among other factors. Communication initiatives must be measurable with a proper “audit.” This is bound to give them the respectability they deserve.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Describe the process of communication. Do you think that the process has undergone a radical transformation with the introduction of newer forms of communication?
2. In what way can mental barriers hinder communication?
3. How do you distinguish between synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication? Do you agree with the statement that face-to-face communication has declined over the years? Give reasons for your view.
4. Distinguish between internal and external communication in an organization.
5. What are the benefits of internal communications? How has Google crafted its internal communications strategy?
6. What are the benefits of keeping the lines of communication open in an organization?
7. Write short notes on the following:
 - The human moment at work
 - Blogs as tools for organizational communications
 - Mental filters
 - How to make others *listen* to you

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Read the following situation and answer the question that follows.

Companies have fired thousands of employees in the recent economic downturn. A few years ago, RadioShack Corporation sent e-mails to approximately 400 of its employees, informing them that they had lost their jobs. It is part of the culture of certain organizations to communicate important messages through e-mails.

As the HR manager at RadioShack, write a one-page memo to persuade the CEO to adopt a more suitable and less dehumanizing strategy for notifying employees that they have been let go.

2. Google, the popular Internet search engine, has taken the rules of grammar a step further. As hurried e-mails and instant messages become more commonplace, Google is doing its best to encourage clear and effective communication on the Web through proper grammar and spelling. Its AdWords division, which is responsible for advertisements appearing alongside search results, insists on standard English and correct spelling for any ads placed on the side. Google disallows the use of unjustified superlatives, such as “best” or “tastiest” and excessive punctuation such as multiple exclamation points. The division’s director insists on these editorial

guidelines to ensure clear, effective, and to-the-point communication between advertisers and viewers.

As the director of the AdWords division of Google, you have received many e-mails from advertising copywriters questioning why Google has not accepted their submissions. Write an e-mail that will explain why these ads are not being accepted. In your e-mail, address Google’s intent to keep the message clear and effective. As you evaluate your draft, consider the subject line, the main content, and the letter’s grammar. You would also like advertisers to continue advertising with Google and, as such, recommend that they work with Google’s editors to develop easy-to-follow standards for submissions.

3. Many times recruiters ask typical questions that aim to understand the candidate beyond carefully scripted responses. As a savvy recruiter, evaluate the responses to the following interview questions as shown in Exhibit 1.7. The recruiter’s evaluation criteria include seeing whether the candidate is a good fit for the company, whether he or she is oriented towards teamwork and has an enterprising nature, and whether the potential recruit has a responsible attitude and makes intelligent choices.

Question	Response
Give me an example of a time when you had a conflict with a team member.	Our leader asked me to handle all external correspondence for the team. I did it, but felt that correspondence was a waste of my time
Tell me how you solved a problem that was impeding your project?	One of the engineers in my team was not pulling his weight and we were closing in on a deadline. So I took on some of his work.
What’s the one thing you would like to change in your current position?	My job as a marketing executive has become mundane. I would like the responsibility of managing people.
I am interviewing 120 people for two jobs. Why should I hire you?	I represent one of the best management schools in the country. I feel that I am the best in this area. With four years of experience in this industry and all the necessary qualifications, I can offer you something unique, that no other candidate can.
Why are your grades so low in this subject?	I did not really like this subject. I am far more interested in accounts and finance, where you can see I have high scores.
Show me some samples of your writing.	I am sorry. I do not have writing samples. I did not know that these were required for the interview.
What have you read recently? Any movies that you have seen recently?	I do not have the time to read. However I saw the Hindi movie “Apna Sapna Money Money” and liked it immensely.

Exhibit 1.7

4. Please read the scenario given here. The perspectives of each participant in the communication process have been detailed. After you have read the case, answer the questions that follow.

■ **Background:** According to a poll funded by Levi Strauss & Co., more than half of all white-collar workers can now dress casually at work. This trend reflects larger changes in work patterns. The workplace is more flexible and more people now work at home or have flexible hours. Even John Molloy, the guru of the 1980s' "dress for success" movement, now works with befuddled executives, teaching them what to wear in a casual world.

■ **The team leader's perspective:** Dressing casually in professional places seems to be an increasingly common phenomenon. The COO of the accounting firm you work for has written to you to enforce "limited dress-downs," as he calls it. In his e-mail, the COO has pointed out the "frivolous" dressing style of some employees. You feel that the COO is being overly "stuffy." You do not find anything objectionable in the manner in which your team members dress. You feel that they appear much more relaxed now and willing to put in longer hours of work. The office atmosphere lightens, and one does get a break from monotony. Yes, you do admit that Sujoy was looking a little scruffy during the presentation but it's the end result that matters, doesn't it? The presentation was a success.

You feel that the firm should allow its employees dress-down options, ideally at all times. However, if that is not acceptable (though you don't see why it shouldn't be), then it should be permissible for at least one or two days in a week. Why not? Even your team members have raised objections to the e-mail sent by the COO. (By the way, you're eager to bring

the Gucci briefcase you bought the other day to the office!) You're on the way to meet the COO to sort out the issue. He is a nice person and you respect him for his knowledge and credibility.

■ **The COO's perspective:** You are the COO of Eastman and Associates, a sedate, well-established, and highly respected accountancy firm. You are concerned about the dwindling professionalism in your company. This is especially in relation to the casual dressing style you are seeing at the workplace. If you had your way, you would prefer the traditional style of dressing. You express your concerns to various team heads and urge them to either be formally attired or establish some sort of a written dress code. Your worry is that an increase of casual wear in office might look unprofessional, encourage sloppy work, and in general promote "fooling around." Moreover, you are concerned about what people might wear. Is a written code necessary if a casual dress policy is allowed? Why, the other day you were amazed to see Sujoy dressed so casually for an important presentation! It's a wonder you clinched the deal, because the client gave you quite a lot of negative feedback about Sujoy. You had a tough time convincing your client. One of the team heads, Bharat, has asked to see you. Bharat may have some radical views but he is an asset to your company. Moreover, he attended the same college you did.

Taking a cue from the communication models discussed in the chapter, analyse the communication between the COO and the team leader as presented in this case. Specifically, highlight the role of perceptions and how one can overcome them. Also write a dialogue representing both the roles. You are free to add more information where it is necessary.

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Visit <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/body-speaks.htm>. Explain the differences in body language across countries.
2. Visit <http://eqi.org/summary.htm>. What does the author mean by "being emotionally literate"? What kind of semantics are used when one uses language that is high on emotional intelligence?
3. Can miscommunication be ever a good way to communicate? Visit <https://psmag.com/when-miscommunication-is-the-only-way-to-communicate-6cb7d3ac815d#e9vkddb0u>. What is the role of "egocentric processes" as pointed out by author Boaz Keysar in the article (visit the link: http://psychology.uchicago.edu/people/faculty/keysar/24_icp07.pdf)
4. Outline ways to avoid virtual miscommunication according to the Harvard Business Review article (visit: <https://hbr.org/2013/04/how-to-avoid-virtual-miscommunication>)
5. Highlight the dangers of miscalculation and miscommunication (visit: <http://www.globalsources.com/NEWS/SIC-danger-miscommunication-china-suppliers-examples.HTM>) what do these case studies reveal about the inherent dangers of miscommunication? (also visit: <http://www.businessinsider.com/8-tragic-miscalculations-and-miscommunications-2013-10?IR=T>)
6. Visit the website: <http://www.ndtv.com/offbeat/a-buddha-on-your-desk-could-ward-off-an-evil-boss-1279274>. Now analyse the role of symbols in business communication at the workplace

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CASE STUDY 1

Too Less an Information: A Barrier to Communication?

Summary

A disciplined working environment is necessary to survive in this competitive world, where the technology is evolving at a terrifying pace. However, too much emphasis on rules and regulations can act as a barrier for communication within an organization, affecting its growth in the long run.

Introduction

Aiko Pvt. Ltd. was a leading Japanese computer-manufacturing firm with a market share of 60% worldwide. In these technology-intensive times, each firm was putting its best foot forward to adopt preventive measures. To prevent information leakage Aiko had appointed its new CEO, Mr Hiroshi Karuki recently. He had recently introduced strict norms within the organization with an aim to retain its power in the market and prevent any disclosure of strategic information. The working environment after the changes brought by the new CEO was a big contrast to what happened earlier. Earlier, there had been no restriction on communication and this resulted in tremendous amount of creativity and innovation among employees.

Problem

In this new environment employees were discouraged to disclose any information about new product launches. As a result, there was a lack of proper communication between low-level sales personnel and administration. The work of the employees was made to go through various layers of scrutiny without disclosing their identity. It appeared that

employees worked in a vacuum without any knowledge of what their colleagues in the other cabin were doing.

Impact

Because of such communication barriers, there was total lack of trust and feeling of mutuality. The environment was extremely secretive as employees were kept in the dark about present and potential research activities. Vertical communication was nearly made redundant. This was reflected in the performance appraisal systems most when close to 20 employees resigned as they felt that their performance was not appraised correctly. Due to limited communication between the employees and supervisor, feedback mechanism did not serve its purpose.

Even the sales personnel at the stores were also not informed about new product launches so that information could not be leaked out; this affected the basic operations at the stores. Simple problems became too complex to be addressed at the retail stores. The salesmen found it extremely difficult to cope with technical queries raised by customers visiting the stores. Communication was faulty, incorrect, and at times, misleading; this happened because the salespeople were unaware about the product details. This also impacted retail sales. Poor updates led to poor planning at the business level affecting market share.

Questions

1. What do you think should constitute the action plans of Hiroshi at this juncture?
2. Is communication the same as information? How is too less communication a barrier to productivity?

CASE STUDY 2

Faulty Assumptions and Loss of Money

Summary

ABC Inc. for the first time introduced the mobile payments technology in the market and committed XYZ mobile services for the delivery of the same. The employees needed to be trained in digital payment technology to understand the mobile payment technology. The chief technology officer of ABC Inc., Mr Ratan Birla assigned the training programme to Mr Raj Shah, a subject matter expert in mobile technologies. The training programme did not add any value to the employees and ABC Ltd. missed the deadline ending up paying a contractual penalty to XYZ mobile services.

Introduction

Mr Ratan Birla was the CTO of ABC Inc. which was a global provider of financial services technology. The company served more than 11,000 clients worldwide, including banks, thrifts, credit unions, investment management firms, leasing and finance companies, retailers, merchants, and government agencies. ABC had been ranked the largest provider of payment technology services to the financial services industry worldwide for six of the past eight years.

In 2015, ABC Inc. reported total revenue of \$4.3 billion. It had developed a new mobile payment technology and entered into a contractual agreement with a leading mobile services provider, XYZ mobile services. Ratan Birla was supposed to organize training programme for the

employees of ABC Inc. on the mobile payment technology. Mr Birla assigned this work to Mr Shah, a subject matter expert in mobile technologies. He created a schedule for the same.

Problem

Mr Shah received a mail from Mr Birla about the training program on mobile payment technology. The program was aimed at training the employees of the whole business unit, which was supposed to be working on this deliverable to the XYZ mobile services.

Mr Birla sent a mail to the business unit regarding the training programme and mentioned about the trainer and the schedule. Mr Shah believed that people could not understand the mobile payment technology unless they had prior knowledge of digital payment technology. He assumed that Mr Birla must have selected the trainees who had to be trained on digital payment technology.

The training programme started; however most trainees did not have a prior knowledge of the digital payments. Mr Shah began the training without gauging the audience's comfort level with the technology and directly jumped on to the topic of mobile technology. Most of the audience was quite at sea, having no knowledge about the jargon Mr Shah was spouting.

As the training programme progressed, a large number of participants lost interest and dozed off; the productivity

of the programme severely deteriorated. No one among the employees interrupted due to peer pressure (what will other people think?). Asking questions would be considered as evidence of poor awareness and was avoided by most of the participants.

The training programme ended without any value addition to the participants. There was no feedback taken on the training programme and the employees were directly put on the project.

While working on the project, only the employees who had understood the mobile technology were able to work; the rest struggled causing a dip in the productivity and wastage of time.

Impact

This caused the time required to complete the project to increase beyond the estimate and threatened the deadline for the deliverables of the project. The timeline for the project had to be re-estimated. It resulted in the extension of the deadline which had a monetary impact on ABC Inc. as it was contractually bound to deliver to XYZ mobile services on the aforementioned date.

Questions

1. How could the problem been prevented?
2. What communication issues are necessary to facilitate training programme effectiveness?

CASE STUDY 3

Communicating Job Responsibilities to Avoid Confusion

Summary

ABC Repairing Co. is a large laptop repairing and maintenance firm that operates in all major metro and cities across India. It provides laptop repairing solutions to a sizeable number of users who own desktops or laptops and require quick, reliable and accurate repairing solutions. The firm has become a major national-level player in repairing business in the last 10 years. It had currently recorded a decline in market share and needed to revisit communication fundamentals at the workplace.

Introduction

Anil Bajaj was the regional manager of ABC Repairing Co. for more than two years now. He worked for a competitor before joining ABC. Though ABC paid more, he still felt that the work environment was not as vital or energetic as it was with its competitor. This, he felt has affected their level of motivation. When he conducted a survey to collect information from the existing cus-

tomers, his fears were confirmed. Although a majority of respondents said they were satisfied with the overall experience, 40% felt their experience was not at all good. Anil is wondering whether it is the lack of communication that is causing this widespread dissatisfaction with the company.

Problem

ABC had about 3000 employees in four job categories, namely technicians, engineers, order processors, and billing representatives. Engineers were the highest paid; therefore, customers attended by the engineers were billed the highest. Technicians were paid about one-fourth of what was paid to the engineer. Therefore, customers attended by technicians were billed modestly. The order processors received calls from customers who then decided whether to send an engineer or a technician to attend the customer. Once the customer was attended by either of the two, the billing representative called the customer to inform him about the charges that he/she needed to pay.

As the customer was not able to explain the exact technical nature of the problem and the order processor was not

competent in this regard, the order processor was unable to decide whether to send a technician or engineer. Often he sent an engineer when the problem just required a run of antivirus or reboot. This resulted in not only demotivating the engineer but also let the billing representative bill a higher amount to the customer than what the actual should have been. The customers felt that they were overcharged and that the service charges were too expensive.

Similarly, a technician was sometimes sent in place of an engineer. When the technician was unable to complete the task, the customers were disappointed. They expected a trained engineer to resolve the technical issues but had to be content with sub-par services with repeat visits and over billings. Moreover, the technician scheduled visits by engineer and the billing representative charges the customer both for the technician as well as engineer. This led to loss of time and payment of additional expenses on customer's part.

The billing representative claimed his innocence over the matter stating that as he/she was charging the customer as authorized by the sales department. The job was clerical in nature and the job description of these employees required them merely to follow stipulated orders.

The order processors on the other hand claimed that they allocated an engineer or a technician to the best of their understanding of the issue. They claim innocence over this entire engineer vs. technician debate. The engineer and the technicians, on the hand, thought that they had no role to play in deciding who had to go where and when.

Impact

The customers started complaining about the poor service that they were getting from the Company. They criticized the company for sending mere technicians for complex jobs and engineers for minor repairs. They also complained about the high rates charged by the engineers and did not respond to the bills sent by the billing representatives. This reduced the number of customers and led to a decline in revenues.

Questions

1. How should Bajaj resolve the issue?
2. What is the importance of clear cut communication to employees?

QUOTE

Effective communication is the life blood of all organizations. With the inroads technology has made in our working lives, the challenge before us is to ensure communication stays relevant and timely. Successful organizations need to deliver consistently, and communication is a powerful means to that end.

—Reshma Zaheer, COO, TT Logistics & Cargo Pvt. Ltd.

Chapter 2

THEORIES OF INTERPERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand that communication is not merely common sense and that it is based on a strong theoretical foundation.
- Obtain a deeper understanding of communicative events. This is especially useful for researchers and scholars.
- Explain the psychological underpinning of communication and behavioural science.
- Integrate communication with current trends, especially computer-mediated communication.

“Theories are maps of reality. The truth they depict may be objective facts “out there” or subjective meanings inside our heads. Either way, we need to have theory to guide us through unfamiliar territory.”

E. Griffin¹

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the sharing of information through the use of signs and symbols. It involves sending, receiving, coding, decoding, and interpreting meaning. It permeates all levels of human interactions. Communication can be analysed at different levels of interaction. These are:

- Intrapersonal communication (how individuals communicate)
- Interpersonal communication (how two individuals interact and ultimately influence the other)
- Group communication (the dynamics of team communication)
- Organizational communication (the formal and informal structures required for effective communication in organizations)

Many fields stress the importance of using communication theory to understand the nuances of human behaviour. For example, empirically, the uses of perspectives of applied communication (*applied communication* is the relationship between communication theory and its application in real life) are tested to prove behaviour changes as a result of a particular communication campaign. Critical studies are also conducted to understand the basis of a communication action.

POINT	Communication is contextual. Hence, theories have no place in the teaching of business communication.	Theories establish a basis for action. They can predict the direction of communication.	COUNTERPOINT
	Theory is often considered impractical, unrealistic, and even speculative.	Most theories have been derived from practice. A theory is an “explanation of reality.” Theories are to be viewed as accumulated experiences and are to be supplemented with practice.	
	At the workplace, practical experiences are given more weight.	Theory and practical experience are complementary. What matters to an employer is how an individual deals with situations in a stated context.	

This chapter briefly introduces the origins and highlights of communication theories and demonstrates their relevance to the real world. The chapter does not seek to provide an exhaustive account of the development of communication theory. Only theories that are relevant to organizational contexts have been discussed. Language, meaning, and messages are the central themes in communication theory and are also the primary focus of this chapter.

ORGANIZATION OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Communications professor George Gerbner described three main branches of communication study:²

- **Semiotics:** *Semiotics* is the study of signs and symbols and how these combine to convey meanings in varying social, cultural, and business contexts.
- **Media effects:** *Media effects* is the study of behaviour and interaction through messages. It focuses on measuring, predicting, and explaining the impact of messages on people's perceptions, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes.
- **Message production:** *Message production* is the study of large-scale organizational communication systems and socio-political institutions.

Just as there is no single theory to explain human behaviour, there is no single communication paradigm that explains the influence of communication, language, message, and meaning on perception, behaviours, attitudes, and outcomes. Communications researchers have increasingly sought to connect and integrate effects across levels of analysis—from the “micro” to the “macro.” The study of communication and mass media has led to the formulation of many types of theories:

- **Structural and functional:** *Structural and functional theories* believe that social structures are real and function in ways that can be observed objectively.
- **Cognitive and behavioural:** *Cognitive and behavioural theories* tend to focus on the psychology of individuals.
- **Interactionist:** *Interactionist theories* view social life as a process of interaction.
- **Interpretive:** *Interpretive theories* uncover the ways in which people actually understand their own experiences.
- **Critical:** *Critical theories* are concerned with the conflicts of interests in society and the way communication perpetuates domination of one group over another.

Experts suggest six criteria or properties of a strong theory:

- **Theoretical scope:** *Theoretical scope* is the range of the theory and how widely it applies to most situations.
- **Appropriateness:** *Appropriateness* is how well the theory's epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions relate to the issue being examined.
- **Heuristic value:** *Heuristic value* is how well the theory serves as a model for further research in the area.
- **Validity:** *Validity* involves how accurately the theory depicts the real world and how consistent its arguments are.
- **Parsimony:** *Parsimony* is how simply the theory explains phenomena and how easy it is to understand.
- **Openness:** *Openness* deals with how flexible the theory is and how it accommodates other theories in existence.

ATTRIBUTION THEORY

The *attribution theory* was first proposed by F. Heider³ and modified by Jones, Kannouse, Kelley, Nisbett, Valins, and Weiner as a theoretical framework.⁴ The core essence of the theory is that people attribute the results of their (or others') actions to certain internal and external causes. *Internal causes* are the causes intrinsic to the person, such as their attitude, motivation, traits, or persona. External attribution is inherent in the situation. Thus, people can choose to blame others or themselves for their misfortune and failures, or they can choose to blame the situation they are in. People can adopt defensive or offensive strategies when faced with a failure or loss. They can defend themselves against a perceived “personal attack” by others, or they can launch an offensive against them. People also have a tendency to absolve themselves of blame or guilt while blaming others.

Exhibit 2.1 explains this theory along with the interpersonal semantics used with reasoning. In communication, the language of attribution is important to understanding the motivation of people. Weak phrases reveal a lack of confidence (e.g., “I am weak in this subject...”) while a strong phrase (e.g., “...the weather played truant...”) implies that the person is self-confident.

ARGUMENTATION THEORY

According to van Eemeren, Grootendorst, and Snoeck Henkemans⁵, argumentation is defined as a “verbal and social activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge.”

This is a non-cognitive and “non-truth conditional” semantic theory that takes linguistic utterances as its domain, especially the use of “but” and “even”. These utterances are used either as premises or conclusions in arguments. This theory generally precludes the cognitive processes of decoding and inference that help to translate a mental proposition to a fully propositional representation.

The argumentation theory describes how people argue (see Exhibit 2.2). It describes an argument as “movement from accepted data through a warrant to a claim.” Thus the three main elements of an argument are: data, warrant, and claim. The dependent construct is the claim or the conclusion, and the main independent constructs are the data (facts and opinions) and the warrant (advancement of data). These lead to a claim or a conclusion.

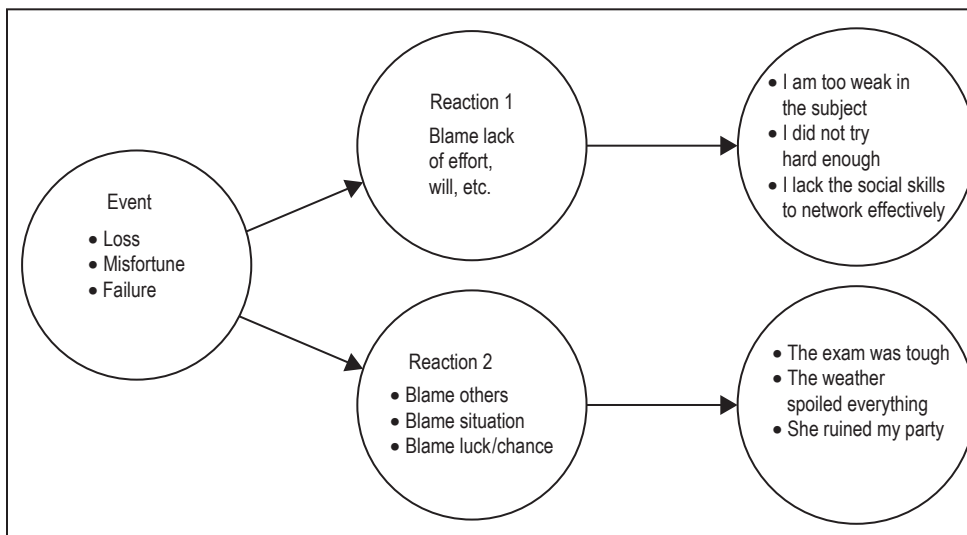
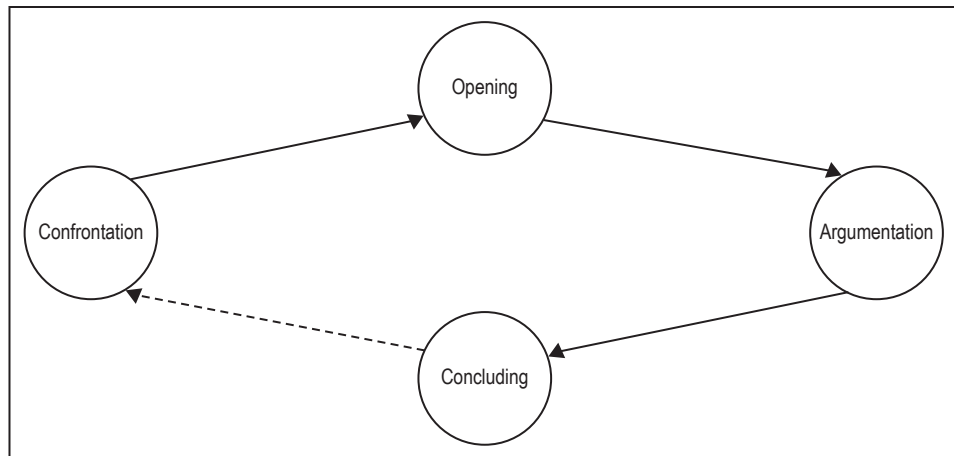


Exhibit 2.1
An Illustration Depicting
Attribution Theory in Action

Exhibit 2.2
The Process of Argumentation



The *warrant* is described as the leap that advances data into a claim. Warrant, according to Toulmin, is “incidental and explanatory, its task being simply to register explicitly the legitimacy of the step involved and to refer it back to the larger class of steps whose legitimacy is being proposed.”⁶ Experts suggest three additional components: backing, rebuttal, and qualifier. *Backing* is the evidence or support for assumptions in the warrant. *Rebuttal* recognizes the conditions under which the claim will not be true. And finally, the *qualifier* is the probability or level of confidence of the claim.

Van Eemeren and R. Grootendorst identify various stages of argumentative dialogue:

- **Confrontation:** Confrontation is the explanation of the problem, the type of disagreement between the opposing parties.
- **Opening:** Opening is the presentation of evidence, interpretations, and rules.
- **Argumentation:** Argumentation is the substantiation of the problem, further clarification, interpretation, and association with events.
- **Conclusion:** The concluding part includes adhering to limitations of time and conditions imposed by the arbiter, agreement on the issue, and a desire to carry it forward.

Schellens explains three types of arguments:⁷

- **Regularity-based argumentation:** Regularity-based argumentation is used in support of a descriptive statement about something that is happening in the present or future, or has happened in the past. The proposition can be factual or descriptive and is based on events that have occurred with regularity. For example, the argument that we must support the anti-corruption movement as it is a scourge that destroys a country.
- **Rule-based argumentation:** Rule-based argumentation is used in support of a normative statement about the value of a situation or process. Arguments are given for the validity or invalidity of rules and procedures or are based on norms about certain situations or processes. For example, the argument that office norms state that all speakers must stay at the guest house.
- **Pragmatic argumentation:** Pragmatic argumentation is used in support of promoting desired behaviour. A position on the desirability of a given action, behaviour, or measure is advocated on the basis of its merits and demerits. For example, the argument that you must resign if you feel humiliated at the office.

To summarize, it would be right to say that argumentation is a verbal activity, most often in simple language. Though people use words and sentences to argue, state, deny, and explain, non-verbal communication plays an important part too. It is also worthwhile to remember that argumentation is an activity of reason and is mostly a social activity, directed at other people. It is always related to a standpoint. Merely having a difference of opinion is not sufficient for

argumentation. People must differ on a particular standpoint for argumentation to happen because the goal of argumentation is to justify one's standpoint or to refute someone else's.

ADAPTIVE STRUCTURATION THEORY (AST)

Adaptive structuration theory has been adapted from the structuration theory associated with Giddens's institutional theory of social evolution.⁸ It explains the adoption of computer technologies by organizations and the resultant social impact of these structural changes. The structuration theory suggests that the adoption of new technologies is not absolute: it is strongly influenced by the users and the contexts in which users use these technologies. Thus group interaction structures, technology, and the organizational environment are interlinked in the process of technology adaptation. These are accomplished through actions that bring forth the intent of the technology initiatives, the usefulness of these initiatives, their instrumental uses, and even user attitudes. The more these actions are aligned with the initial intent of the technology, the greater the possibility that the team's decision-making processes would yield a successful outcome. Adaptation involves modifying existing structures to achieve alignment. Thus AST emphasizes not only the technical, but also the social aspect of technology.

The main principles of AST are:

- AST deals with the evolution of groups and structures in organizations.
- AST views groups as dynamic systems that constantly interact within themselves and create a sort of structure.
- The structures and the systems are in a state of flux; they evolve over a period of time and develop norms and rules of behaviour (this evolution is also known as the structuration process).

CLASSICAL RHETORIC

Classical rhetoric combines the theories of argumentation as well as persuasion. The works of three ancient Greek philosophers, Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, constitute the elements of the classical theory. These philosophers recognized that language was an influential tool and that the primary political skill of the people in those times lay in effective oratory and persuasion.

The classical rhetoric theory provides a theory of composition and communication for both oral and written discourse as well as persuasion. The principles of rhetoric include invention, arrangement, syllogistic logic, and proof through ethos, logos, and pathos. These concepts have been refined as well as redefined in tune with changing social as well as business milieus.

Ethos is the use of an appeal to credibility by the speaker. The speaker's credibility is reflected in a number of ways such as age, experience, status, position, and reputation. The acceptability of the speaker's ideas and influence is perceived to be more if the audience believes that the speaker has a high credibility. An effective way to create ethos in a short period of time is by building a rapport and highlighting one's achievements to the audience. Conversely, a good speaker may lose ethos with the audience merely by a disparate remark, condescension, and insulting behaviour.

Pathos is the use of emotional appeal to influence the audience. Emotions may range from fear to love. Speakers use similes, metaphors, and adjectives to stimulate the senses of the audience. It is generally perceived that emotional appeals affect the right brain of the audience, who would like to take a balanced approach to decisions.

Logos is the use of logical appeal in an argument. Facts, figures, graphs, charts, examples, illustrations, evidence, and statistics are presented to the audience to influence their left brain. Effective use of logos helps make a judicious decision; it also positively affects the speaker's ethos.



Contagion theory postulates that people are influenced by group behaviour and tend to act and behave in ways similar to their group members. They feel and express emotions almost mirroring those of the group.

The basic principles of rhetoric are that rhetoric considers both form as well as content as important components of influence, and the emotional impact is as important as the content. The former addresses not only the “how” of communication, but also the “what.”

CONTAGION THEORY

Derived from emotional contagion, *contagion theory* postulates that people are influenced by group behaviour and tend to act and behave in ways similar to those of their group members. They feel and express emotions almost mirroring those of the group. Thus body language characteristics such as facial expressions, posture, and gestures are synchronized to match with group members.

Contagion happens in situations involving crowd fear, disgust, negotiation, and persuasion. The theory thus explains attitudes and behaviours of members in networks to which they are linked. Contagion theory is related to a number of theories that relate in some way to the social construction process, such as structural theory, symbolic interaction, gate keeping, network theory and analysis, and hypodermic needle theory. Factors such as frequency of contact, multiplicity of contact situations, strength of the relationship, and asymmetry can shape the extent to which others influence individuals in their networks.

Networks are increasing in importance and, therefore, the relationships between members and networks can be explained by these theories. Applications are very broad, since organizations, governments, and certain interest groups all depend on networks.

Organizational employees bound by a common network may, for instance, share similar attitudes towards recently introduced computerized access systems for attendance and security.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE THEORY

Typically individuals seek consistency in their beliefs and opinions (cognition). When an inconsistency occurs (dissonance), it must be reduced, eliminated, or managed. Dissonance occurs in situations where an individual has to choose between two incompatible beliefs or actions. Human beings are sensitive to inconsistencies between what they believe or value and any action or behaviour to the contrary. Consequently, they justify the dissonance to themselves and to others. The greater the dissonance, the more they are motivated to resolve it at the earliest.

The strength of the dissonance depends on two aspects: the type of dissonance and the importance that is attached to the belief in question. Sometimes, when there is a dissonance between attitude and behaviour, the attitude changes to accommodate the behaviour.

Dissonance is managed, reduced, or eliminated in the following ways:

- Discounting the dissonant belief
- Adding more supporting beliefs
- Changing the dissonant belief to bring about consistency

Exhibit 2.3 explains the process of dissonance clearly. It shows how a specific manner of dissonance happens when an individual buys an expensive gadget only to discover that it's not Wi-Fi-compatible.

ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL

The *elaboration likelihood model* (ELM) is a theory of persuasion that was advocated by R.E. Petty and J.T. Cacioppo⁹ in the early 1980s. It postulates that audiences have a different level of involvement when communicating, which is why they receive messages in different ways. People in the audience who are eager about the message will be persuaded by the

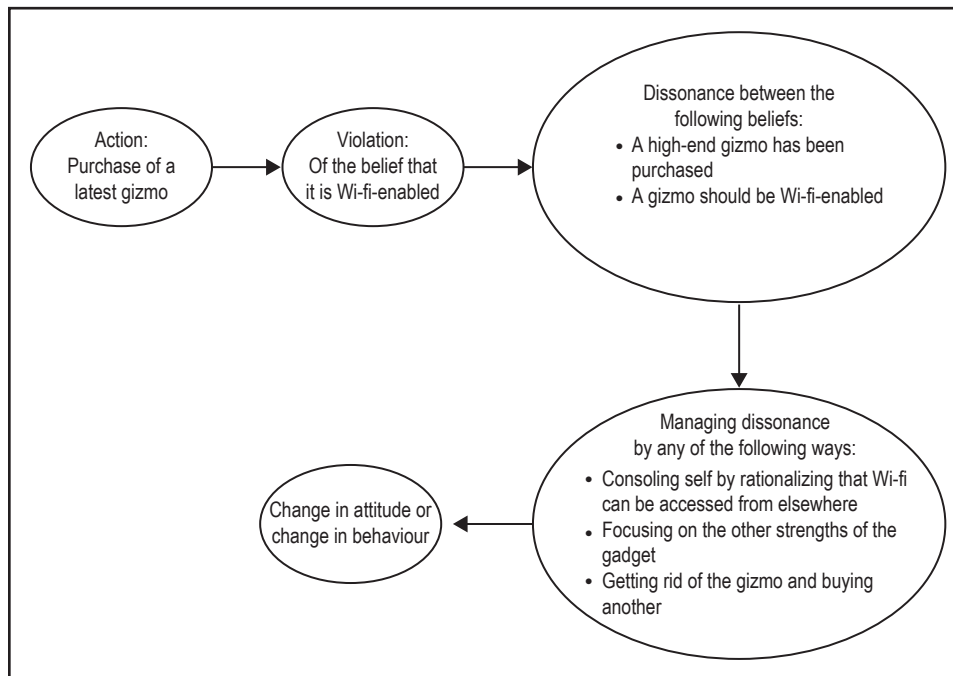


Exhibit 2.3
The Process of Dissonance—An
Illustration

“central route to persuasion”, that is, being persuaded by the actual content of the message. Conversely, dull, unenthusiastic, and uninterested audiences may be persuaded by indirect means or the “peripheral route to persuasion”, namely, being persuaded by factors not pertaining to the actual content of the message. Several factors influence the thought process of the recipient:

- **Involvement of the audience:** A highly involved audience will process the message centrally and act accordingly.
- **Ability of the audience to comprehend the message:** Words incomprehensible to the audience will not enable them to centrally process the message. Persuaders would then need to apply peripheral appeals.
- **Motivation of the audience:** A highly motivated audience will support the message/messenger much more than a less motivated one.

The ELM theory asserts that there two routes to persuasion; in reality, these are degrees of persuasion. At times the central route of persuasion may not yield results—the participant may be indifferent, unhappy, and dissatisfied. In that case, the alternate persuasion route may have to be adopted. It includes aspects such as authority, liking, reciprocity, and so on. Both the routes require some processing of thoughts by the intended recipient. Thus listeners can engage in both central processing as well as peripheral processing simultaneously.

ENACTMENT THEORY

Organizations are composed of complex systems where individuals interact in many ways. These interactions are often unplanned. Various events occur at different levels in the organization; these constitute enactments at the macro as well as micro level, where ideas and thoughts intersect, assemble, and influence each other to enable organizational learning, knowledge-sharing, innovation, and change. According to Karl Weick, enactment has results because people are conscious about initiating, building, and maintaining relationships.¹⁰

Enactment theory provides a rationale for differentiating between routine behaviour and scripted behaviour. Moment-to-moment interactions influence each other to generate novel outcomes. Theorists suggest that these exchanges by individuals can be coded into discrete information packets and that each of these discrete information sets have a beginning, middle, and end. Each packet may have elements of both verbal and non-verbal communication, with symbols and affective content.

As individuals in organizations move from self-centered activity to group-focused activities to garner collective interest, they behave in either of the following ways with respect to an espoused course of action: initiating, accepting, negotiating, questioning/synthesizing, rejecting, imitating, or ignoring/defecting.

- **Initiating:** Initiating might involve simple acts of communication such as sharing information, advocating action, or undertaking a discussion.
- **Accepting:** Accepting participants may accept the enactment of another by agreeing to an idea or certain points of discussion. It implies acknowledgment and validation. It is essentially a passive act, where the participant accepts the idea and there is tacit knowledge-sharing.
- **Negotiating:** Negotiating involves participants reaching a compromise when there is a disagreement. This could be with respect to the terms and conditions of work, team performance, and so on.
- **Questioning/Synthesizing:** Participants may seek answers to questions that they put forward to clarify other micro-enactments. They may question assumptions, beliefs, ideas, and notions. This approach is akin to transformational learning.

- **Rejecting:** Participants may reject micro-enactments. They may refuse to agree to proposals and ideas, and may refute certain actions. Even if one participant in a team disagrees on some point, it can lead to poor team performance and conflict.

FRAMING

Framing means exercising control over content that has to be communicated. Accordingly, content is framed keeping in mind the desired interpretations. It is akin to packaging wherein certain aspects of the content are deliberately projected to the exclusion of others. The concept is generally attributed to the work of Erving Goffman.¹¹ Framing consciously seeks to draw the attention of the audience towards a particular rhetoric and its meaning embedded in a particular sociological, organizational, or even political context. It is similar to setting an agenda for others to get inspired and construct meanings from. Framing is not a slogan, as a slogan is rather populist and temporary in nature.

Framing is essentially related to the media. The media selects the news that has to be projected and frames it around certain core issues, and the audience then interprets what is provided. Thus the media plays the role of a gatekeeper of information for the general audience. The audience formulates their perceptions about the event based on the cues provided by the media.


In an organizational context, framing is a skill that leads the audience to consider one meaning over another. It is a valuable leadership trait. According to G.T. Fairhurst and R. Star, framing consists of three elements: language, thought, and forethought.¹² Language is the means of expression. It is used to bring alive the message or the rhetoric. Metaphors, analogies, and similes are ways in which an expression can be made memorable. To use language, people must have *thought*. Thought emerges from reflection and hindsight. Leaders must also learn to frame spontaneously in certain circumstances. This requires the skill of foresight or forethought. They must be able to visualize framing opportunities. For example, the “Green Revolution” was anything but a revolution. It was a sustained campaign to boost agriculture in India. The term “War against Terror” is similar. These phrases elicit widely shared images and meanings.

Experts suggest the following ways to improve framing skills:

- **Metaphor:** A metaphor gives an idea a new meaning by comparing it with something else.
- **Stories (myths and legends):** Myths and legends involve framing a subject by recounting an anecdote in a vivid and memorable way. For instance, some managers tell and retell stories of how teamwork helped pull their organization through in a tough time.
- **Traditions (rites, rituals, and ceremonies):** Traditions are used to define and reinforce organizational cultural values. An example may be certain activities (some humorous and some serious) traditionally done during annual strategic planning conferences.
- **Slogans, jargon, and catchphrases:** Slogans and catchphrases are used to frame a subject in a memorable and familiar way.
- **Artifacts:** Artifacts illuminate corporate values through objects that strike a chord with employees. An example may be a current best-selling product compared with an outmoded product from an earlier time.
- **Contrast:** Contrast is to describe a subject in terms of what it is not.
- **Spin:** Spin involves talking about a concept in a way that gives it a positive or negative connotation.

GROUPTHINK

Groupthink is defined as the tendency to seek consensus within groups such that the possibility of dissension within the group is minimal. The concept was developed by Janis Irving in 1972. It implies that the group considers cohesiveness and solidarity as more important than



Communication Bytes 2.1

Groupthink might be overcome by the following methods:

- Participants must be encouraged to speak their mind in a forum.
- Leaders must not state a preference upfront. This creates an unhealthy bias in the team.
- Sub-groups should be set up to examine all issues.
- Expert guidance should be taken.
- There should be integration with other functional areas.
- Fresh ideas should be encouraged.

the discussion of facts relevant to the situation. At times the group leader makes his or her wishes known to team members, who take care not to contradict the leader. The theory aims to sensitize the group towards the perils of groupthink.

The disadvantages of groupthink are:

- It limits discussion to selected alternatives.
- It fails to analyse the proposed solution in a balanced way.
- It does not encourage the opinions of experts or experienced professionals.
- It uses information selectively.
- Contingency plans are not formulated.

Groupthink is important during the decision-making process. For example groupthink can appear in meetings, conferences, and even governments.

INTERPRETATIVE AND INTERACTION THEORIES

The interpretative and interaction theories encapsulate many approaches to communication. Essentially a situational-response activity, communication is viewed as a process of exchange of information (interaction), thoughts, and ideas through symbols where the process of interpreting is emphasized. This is framed with respect to the cultural, social, linguistic, situational, and other contexts.

LANGUAGE EXPECTANCY THEORY

The *language expectancy theory* examines the effects of linguistic variations as well as language intensity on persuasive messages. The theory is credited to M. Burgoon, S. B. Jones, and D. Stewart, who analysed the impact of linguistic strategies on persuasion.¹³ They claimed that strategic linguistic choices can be significant predictors of persuasive success. In 1995, Burgoon provided a detailed formulation of the language expectancy theory. The theory predicts the expectations that recipients have from the rhetoric of someone's persuasive message. The theory was enriched by the addition of the impact linguistic strategies had on the message. Theorists claimed that the strategic linguistic choices made by someone can help predict the success of the persuasive message. People form idealistic versions of what constitutes competent communication. Based on this, they develop expectations from the language used by the speaker in the persuasive message. Expectations developed by the recipient as a result of the adroit use of language are a function of culture, social norms, and preferences.

The language expectancy theory assumes that changes in the direction desired by an actor (the speaker or the originator of the message) occur when positive violations of expectancies occur. Positive violations occur when:

- The enacted behaviour is better or preferred to the behaviour that was expected in the situation. Change occurs because enacted behaviour is outside the bandwidth in a positive direction, and such behaviour prompts attitude or behavioural change.

- Negatively evaluated sources conform more closely than expected to cultural values or situational norms. This can result in overly positive evaluation of the source and change promoted by the actor.

Negative violations, resulting from language choices that lie outside socially acceptable behaviour in a negative direction, produce no attitude or behavioural change in receivers.

For instance, faced with a financial crisis, firm XYZ has issued an advisory to employees, urging them to quit on their own (see Exhibit 2.4). However, not many employees responded to the message. The corporate office then used linguistic strategy to influence the employees. Employees received messages (e-mail, newsletters, letters, face-to-face meetings) that varied in intensity and style. Employees receiving messages with high-intensity language as opposed to low-intensity language complied relatively easily with the employment advice.

By carefully adjusting the message and its features, professionals can obtain further compliance beyond that produced by educating people and creating favourable attitudes and self-efficacy expectations. Highly intense language may be a good general strategy in prevention messages.

NETWORK THEORY AND ANALYSIS

The study of sociograms, sociometry, and group networks is credited to John Barnes.¹⁴ The *network theory* examines how relationships influence behaviour. The theory investigates how the social structure surrounding a person, group, or organizations influence beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour. It acknowledges that various pushes and pulls characterize the social structure of a group and determine its attitudes. Network analysis is aimed at determining the impact of these pressures.

A communication network consists of individuals linked by communication flows. These include information-sharing flows, decision-making flows, relational flows, or brainstorming among the individuals in the group. Communication network analysis studies the interpersonal network or linkages between groups and individuals within a specified context. The focus, thus, is essentially on the relationships between people rather than the characteristics of people or groups. A network analysis maps these relationships to further improve information sharing, decision-making, and other communication-dependent activities. Studies by Caroline Haythornthwaite revealed the important role relational ties played in task performance.¹⁵

The technique of network analysis is important, as it goes beyond a mere structural analysis. Rather, it uncovers the informal relationships that employees operating in a network share. A typical network analysis reveals the stars, gatekeepers, and isolates in a network. It also reveals the media commonly used by employees, the communication styles, information load, and the possibilities therein of better communication strategies.

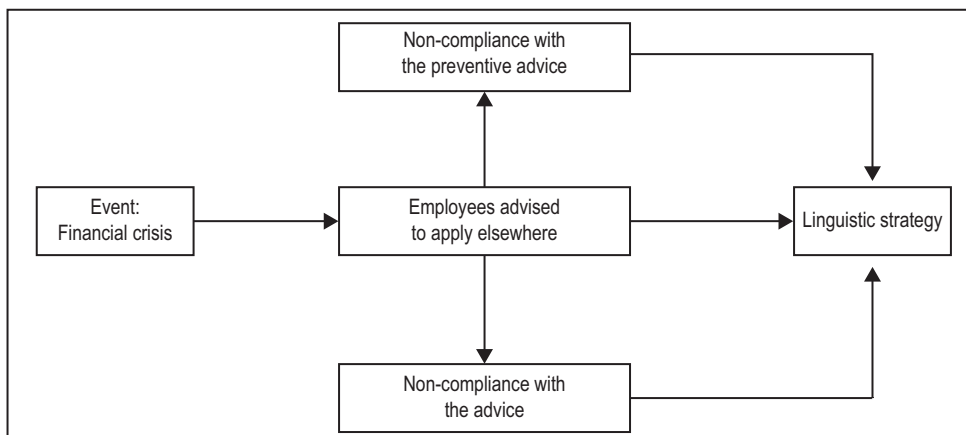


Exhibit 2.4
Linguistic Strategies Deployed
by an Organization to Influence
Employees

MODEL OF TEXT COMPREHENSION

The *model of text comprehension* explains the process of understanding written texts. It deals with both the bottom-up word recognition processes and the top-down comprehension processes. Comprehension calls for a number of socio-cognitive processes. According to the model, the reading of the text starts with the identification of different words (the process of integrating the linguistic information to graphical or visual representation). Reading skill has to be supported by the reader's knowledge of words, and his or her representation of orthography, phonology, morphology, and meaning. The decoding process occurs almost simultaneously with the assimilation and interpretation processes. Readers construct models as they read the text. Kintsch and van Dijk assume that readers of a text build different mental representations of the text.¹⁶ Thus, two levels of representations are involved—the text model and the situation model. The text model is a semantic representation. As the text is not fully explicit, much of it is extracted on the basis of prior knowledge. The situation model helps the reader to identify the problem and the underlying issues, generate possible solutions, and recommend courses of action.

PRIMING

Priming in psychology is described as an increased sensitivity to a particular stimulus due to a prior experience. It is different from memory in that memory relies on directly retrieving information stored in the brain, whereas priming is concerned with retrieving information outside the conscious awareness. Priming relies on implicit memory. Research has also shown that the effects of priming can impact the decision-making process.¹⁷

Priming in the organizational context refers to providing a framework to the audience on which they would base their inferences. It is, in effect, a part of agenda-setting. The audience is given a prior context on the basis of which they can make decisions. While the agenda tells us about the issue(s) at hand, priming elaborates on the issues and tells us whether they are good or bad.

MEDIA RICHNESS AND MEDIA NATURALNESS THEORIES

The *media richness theory* guides researchers to focus on task equivocality and the capacity of a medium to convey information.¹⁸ According to this theory, exchange equality improves if media choice is segregated on the basis of tasks to be performed. Accordingly, face-to-face communication has been deemed to be a richer medium for tasks involving brainstorming, decision-making, and problem solving, while e-mail is considered a rich communication medium for tasks that are routine in nature, such as information exchange.

Daft and Lengel present a media richness hierarchy, arranged from high to low degrees of richness, to illustrate the capacity of media types to process ambiguous communication in organizations. The criteria are the following:

- The availability of instant feedback
- The capacity of the medium to transmit multiple cues such as body language, voice tone, and inflection
- The use of natural language
- The personal focus of the medium

Face-to-face communication is the richest communication medium in the hierarchy, followed by telephone, e-mail, letters, notes, memos, special reports, and, finally, fliers and bulletins. From a strategic management perspective, the media richness theory suggests that effective managers should make rational choices matching a particular communication medium to a specific task or objective and to the degree of richness required by that task.

Researchers have questioned the validity of the media richness theory. Fulk, Schmitz, and Steinfield consider the selection of a medium to be influenced by social norms rather than



According to the media richness theory, face-to-face communication is the richest medium of communication.

a specific fit between task and medium.¹⁹ In other words, a manager's choice of a particular media for a certain task is governed by organizational constraints rather than the optimal fit.

In contrast, the *media naturalness theory* (propagated by Kock²⁰) merits attention on two counts. First, it proposes that communication in organizations can be understood by understanding biological and evolutionary factors. Second, it says that people do manage to overcome obstacles presented by media that is *low on naturalness* (such as e-mail). The theory implies that people actively seek to improve the quality of exchange. Kock has compared computer-mediated communication (CMC) and face-to-face interactions, and found that people do adapt to communicating through different technologies as they become familiar with them.

Previous research on the interpersonal effects of CMC reveals inconsistencies. In some cases CMC has been found to be impersonal, task-oriented, and hostile. Other reports show warm personal relations, and still others show gradual adjustments in interpersonal relations over time. Past research results are also difficult to compare as their research methods reveal inconsistent approaches. These inconsistencies include the treatment of time limits on group development, the ignoring of non-verbal behaviour in face-to-face communication, comparison groups, and other measurement issues.

REDUCED SOCIAL CUES APPROACH

Malcolm Parks and Cory Floyd²¹ used the term “reduced-cues perspective” to refer to theories that stress the richness of face-to-face communicative cues and present face-to-face communication as the basis for investigating all other communicative modalities (e.g., Daft and Lengel²²; Kiesler, Siegal, and McGuire²³). According to the reduced cues theory, the

sensory stimulation of face-to-face communication is important for an optimal communicative experience. Computer-based interaction was considered to be low on cue transmission; hence, it was thought to be an ineffective medium of communication.

In fact, most early research held a rather pessimistic view of online communication. Relationships formed online were considered to be shallow and impersonal due to the reduced cues in these media. Due to the absence of contextual, visual, and aural cues, computer-based communication was deemed to be of poor quality. The reduced-cues perspective viewed CMC as an inappropriate modality for expressing oneself and receiving personal feedback.

SOCIAL PRESENCE THEORY

The *social presence theory* as presented by Rice, Short, Williams, and Christie²⁴ argued that individuals' awareness of others is important for an optimal communicative experience. Accordingly, a medium that affords the greatest social presence to the users contributes more to the communicative experience. Social presence implies not only the physical presence of a partner, but also the communicator's awareness of the presence of an interaction partner. For instance, e-mail affords a low sense of social presence in comparison with instant messaging. According to Short, increased presence leads to a better perception.

SEMIOTICS

Early work on communication theory was related to the study of language and how it generates meaning. *Meaning* was said to be embedded in the words themselves. Ferdinand de Saussure, a French linguist working in the early 1900s, was one of the first to develop a semiotic theory. Working in the same domain and at much the same time was Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher and logician, who developed models that were related to, but somewhat different from those of Saussure. Saussure developed the concept of language as a system of signs where the words were used to signify objects. It was through the signs that language systems were supposed to apply to real-life situations.

SENSE-MAKING

Sense-making is essentially a socio-cognitive activity that institutionalizes brainstorming about a current situation or event. The event is reconstructed by the actors or the participants in a fairly systematic manner. They present thoughts on the following perspectives:

- Why did the event occur?
- Was it handled well?
- Could it be handled in a better manner?
- What threats and opportunities exist in the future in this context?



Information Bytes 2.1

Semiotics is the theory of the production and interpretation of meaning. Its basic principle is that meaning is created by the effective use of signs and symbols in relation to other signs. These are deployed in space and time to produce texts or scripts, the meaning of which was derived through "sense-making." There are two major traditions in European semiotics: Saussure's semiology and Peirce's semiotics. Saussure's approach was a generalization of formal structuralist linguistics; Peirce's was an extension of reasoning and logic in the natural sciences.

Social semiotics examines semiotic practices specific to a culture and community for the making of various kinds of texts. It also looks for meanings in various specific cultural and situational contexts.

Language, gestures, and actions use signs that are construed in relation to more than one system of sign relations. An image is interpreted both visually and linguistically. Therefore, it becomes important to study how different sign systems are physically and semiotically integrated in texts and multimedia productions of various kinds.

- What does it portend for the future?
- What are the projected outcomes for the future?

Individuals and groups try to make sense out of an existing (ambiguous) event or situation such that it yields greater positive value in the future. They do so because they might be dissatisfied with the current scenario or want to improve the system.

Some principles of organizational sense-making are:

- It is a collaborative process. There is sharing of information so that a “shared awareness” is created about an event or a situation.
- There must be dissatisfaction with the status quo to initiate a sense-making exercise. In other words, it is retrospective in nature.
- The group moves through an “awareness–understanding–decision-making” process to formulate objectives and hypotheses, generate alternatives, discuss feasibility, and plan assessments of the desired action.
- Identity construction and image projections are central to sense-making for reflection. “Who are we?”, “What do we stand for?”, and “What do others think about us?” are some of the important considerations for redrafting organizational identity.
- It is an ongoing, continuous process. It never stops.
- Certain cues are not visible or are not observed. Hence, these cues need to be extracted from the experiences of groups and individuals. Emotions and power plays are important considerations in a sense-making exercise.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Formulated by Herbert Blumer, *symbolic interactionism* is a sociological process that emphasizes interaction.²⁵ It is based on the principle that people act on those beliefs, values, and messages to which they can attach some meaning. The meaning is derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation.

The theory asserts that people interpret messages and process meaning in their minds before a response (see Exhibit 2.5). Thus, there is a stimulus in the form of an interpretation (“What does the situation mean? What past experiences do I have that can affirm my inferences?”). This, in turn, is followed by a response. Symbolic interactionism is used to assess interaction in a particular environment. The study of the concept of meaning is important, as it explains many barriers of assumption, prejudices and culture.

The principles of this theory are:

- Human beings are pragmatic actors who adjust their reactions to the behaviours of others.
- This process is continuous. People do not always conform, but may respond proactively to the world around them.
- One should focus on easily observable face-to-face interactions rather than institutional or societal structures.
- One should build negotiation skills as opposed to socialization skills. This is because relationships are constantly evolving and in a state of flux.
- Human social behaviour is seen as a scripted role, and people are seen as actors who are enacting a part.
- People react to other people and situations based on what meaning they attach to them. Meaning manifests in the form of symbols, signs, and stories.

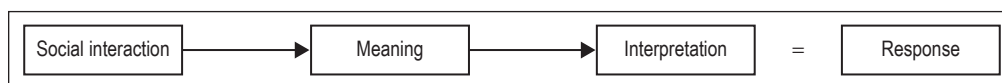


Exhibit 2.5 How People Interpret Meaning and Respond to People and Situations

- By engaging in a mental thought process, people construct a reality using these symbols. They then imaginatively rehearse their lines before expressing them to others.
- The medium of expression is language. People engage in speech to clarify or act on the meaning.
- People arrive at a self-concept or self-image based on their perception of the situation.
- There is the illusion of a social order even when people do not share similar concerns.

For instance consider the case of Rohit. Rohit was new at work. He had yet to understand the ways of his supervisor. One day he received an e-mail from his supervisor asking him to prepare the minutes of the previous meeting “ASAP.” Rohit took “ASAP” at face value. He thought that it meant “as soon as possible,” and, accordingly, let the day pass. His supervisor was furious at not getting the minutes by the end of that day. He had intended for Rohit to send him the required data within an hour of receiving the e-mail. The miscommunication resulted from the different meanings Rohit and his supervisor attached to “ASAP.”

SPEECH ACT PHENOMENA

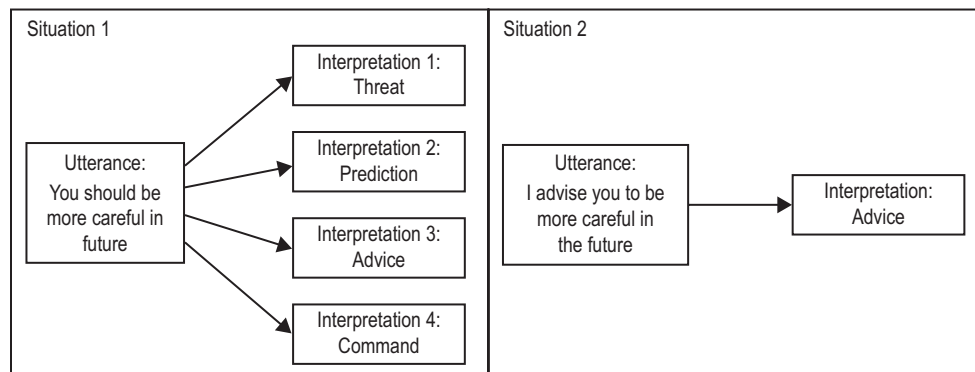
A *speech act* is the vocal action of a speaker when making an utterance. According to John Searle, to understand language one must understand the speaker’s intention and that language should be treated as a form of action.²⁶ Searle refers to statements as speech acts. The speech act is the basic unit of language used to express meaning, an utterance that expresses an intention. For instance making tea is an act; asking someone to make tea is a speech act. It involves the uttering of words in its most basic form. The following examples will make this clearer.

- “Make tea for me just like you made it last time. It was quite good.” This statement is a propositional act making references.
- “Today, you make the tea. Let me see if you know how to make tea.” This statement has an illocutionary force and is said with a particular intention.
- “Every young lady must know the basic skill of making tea. You will feel a sense of achievement if you can make a good cup of tea.” This statement is a perlocutionary act that has a definite impact on the mind of the sender/receiver.

The *illocutionary force* is considered a true speech act and includes informing, directing, and so on, while *perlocutionary acts* are those speech acts that impact the feelings or actions of the recipient. Searle identified five illocutionary/perlocutionary points. Accordingly, all humans, when they speak, do so by asserting, directing, commiserating, expressing, and declaring.²⁷

Understanding speech acts helps to communicate effectively with others. Semantics, grammar, logic, content, context, culture, and force are necessary to give a speech act shape and meaning. The example given in Exhibit 2.6 is of an utterance that is open to many interpretations. The exact meaning of the utterance can only be known by the force with

Exhibit 2.6
Utterance and Their Many Interpretations



which the statement is made, as well as by audio-visual cues provided by the sender. However, speech acts must emphasize the intent of the act as a whole. Without the speaker's intention, it is not possible to classify something as a speech act.

In Exhibit 2.6, the speaker says, "You should be more careful in future." The utterance is focused; the language is in the action (I advise...); and the intent is clear. Thus there is a difference between speech acts and acts of speech.

UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION THEORY

The *uncertainty reduction theory* put forward by Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese²⁸ asserts that people try to reduce their uncertainty about others by gaining more information about them. This information is used to predict the behaviour of the other person. People try to reduce their uncertainty, especially in those situations where they hope to build a positive and long-term relationship. People adopt the following different ways to extract information about others:

- **Observing:** Observing is to study individuals in neutral or natural settings.
- **Inquiring:** Inquiring is to ask about the person from others.
- **Asking:** Asking the concerned person directly is another way of extracting information.

The uncertainty reduction theory recognizes that reducing uncertainty is the basic purpose of communication. Seven axioms constitute the essential tenets of uncertainty:

- As verbal communication increases, the level of uncertainty decreases.
- As non-verbal expressiveness increases, the level of uncertainty decreases.
- The greater the uncertainty, the more the information-seeking undertaken.
- High levels of uncertainty lead to low levels of self-disclosure.
- Uncertainty leads to increased level of reciprocity.
- Similarities decrease uncertainty and vice versa.
- A high level of uncertainty causes a decrease in liking; a low level of uncertainty causes an increase in liking.

There are three stages to obtaining information about the other person. These are:

- **Entry stage:** The entry stage is when information about demographic variables is obtained. This information-gathering stage is characterized by high adherence to communication norms and conventions. It is formal and tentative in nature.
- **Personal stage:** The personal stage is when the actors begin to share attitudes, beliefs, and feelings. They tend to communicate more freely with each other. Communication is less restrained and freer.
- **Exit stage:** At the exit stage, the actors decide on future interaction plans. They might continue the relationship or choose to end it.

SUMMARY

- Communication is an interdisciplinary field. It draws from diverse disciplines such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, and others.
- There is a large body of literature on communication. This chapter does not present critiques of the theories; it merely explains the theories to present a contextual background to the business reader.
- Theories such as the social presence theory, reduced cues theory, or media richness theory present views related to computer-mediated communication; conversely, theories such as the elaboration likelihood model and persuasion theory explain the role of influence in communication.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. “Structural functionalism is a broad perspective in sociology and anthropology that interprets society as a structure with interrelated parts.” Interpret this statement in light of cross-cultural communication.
2. Explain the difference between speech acts and acts of speech. Give examples to prove your point.
3. Describe the ways people extract information about others and why.
4. What is the value of sense-making in organizational communications?
5. Distinguish between illocutionary force and perlocutionary acts in task performance.
6. “A medium that affords the greatest social presence to the users contributes more to the communicative experience.” Critically analyse this statement.
7. What are the criteria used to assess media richness according to Daft and Lengel’s theory of media richness? Compare this theory to the reduced cues theory.
8. Give three examples of regularity-based argumentation, rule-based argumentation, and pragmatic argumentation in professional situations.
9. How do Indian companies use social semiotics to reach out to the rural population? Explain with examples.
10. What is the difference between setting an agenda and priming?
11. What are the characteristics of argumentation? How is argumentation different from confrontation?

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Explain the persuasion route taken by the actor in each of the following situations:
 - To convince the doctor about the efficacy of the newly launched drug, medical representative Y explained in a presentation the features and benefits of the same.
 - To persuade his best manager to stay on in the company, the regional manager promised him a promotion in the next few months.
 - Manager X asked her senior, Y, to counsel Z as she felt that Z liked Y and would listen to his advice.
 - Manager Z warns all staff members that one day’s salary would be deducted if they continued to flout attendance norms.
2. Read the following extract of a business meeting and answer the questions that follow.

A: I firmly believe that Garima is right. She does have a point that we should not diversify the brand into shampoos.

B: Tell me the basis of your logic first. Garima is more conservative when it comes to extensions in any case. We need to take *risks*. I hope that you do understand that.

A: Still, Garima has never been wrong. She has 11 years of experience...

B (interrupting A): Yes yes, but in handling electronic brands.

9 I think that you are biased against her just because she was promoted before you.

B (again interrupting harshly): You know, you are crossing the line. I have never let professional issues affect my work ethic.

A: I still feel that you are unnecessarily trying to sap the equity of the brand.

B: Oh you never listen to me! (walks off)

 - Explain this type of argument according to the types presented in the argumentation theory.
 - What stage of argumentative dialogue is depicted in the example?
3. Interpret the following utterances in as many ways as possible using the speech acts theory.
 - Utterance 1: Do it better next time.
 - Utterance 2: Her report is better than yours.
 - Utterance 3: With me you work according to the adage, “better late than never.”
4. The phrase “grabbing eyeballs” has become quite a buzzword. With reference to the theory of framing, discuss how has this phrase been used in the corporate world. Use examples from the real world.
5. Compare two advertisements each of any two competing brands (Coca-cola and Pepsi, for example). What persuasive appeals can you observe in each of these advertisements? How can the speech act theory be applied in audio-visual advertisements?

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Refer to <http://www.cw.utwente.nl/theorieenoverzicht/Theory%20clusters/Organizational%20Communication/AST_theory.doc/> How can the adaptive structuration theory help in analysing the structures that actually emerge in human actions as people interact with new technologies?
2. Refer to <<http://www.pitt.edu/~perfetti/PDF/Intro.%20Advances%20in%20text%20comprehension-%20Verhoeven.pdf>> Why does the author consider learning from an even more extended problem?

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Chapter 3

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the complexity of interpersonal communication.
- Understand key issues about relationships that influence interpersonal communication.
- Evaluate your own and other peoples' interpersonal communication.
- Apply your knowledge and understanding of communication to everyday work interactions in order to help improve the effectiveness of communication at work.
- Identify issues that may contribute to difficult encounters at work.
- Respect the other person's individuality during interactions and communication.

“Words are just words,
and without heart they
have no meaning.”

Chinese proverb¹

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication involves building and sustaining relationships with seniors, supervisors, peers, subordinates, workers, clients, and customers to promote a healthy work environment. It encompasses both professional as well as personal communication. It is a two-way process.

Healthy interpersonal relationships serve useful functions. These are:

- Promoting effective coordination between two or more people or groups
- Facilitating teamwork and collaboration
- Motivating individuals to put in extra work
- Creating a supportive working climate characterized by loyalty and trust

Unhealthy interpersonal relationships are characterized by conflict, manipulation, negativity, distrust, and discord. According to various researchers, the repercussions of unhealthy interpersonal relations may include:

- Low morale and lack of motivation
- Unwillingness to put in extra effort
- Decreased loyalty
- Increased absenteeism
- High turnover
- Poor productivity
- Groupthink
- Silo mentality

DEFINING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

The term “interpersonal” can be defined as “between persons” or “involving personal relationships.” Though interpersonal communication includes oral, written, and non-verbal forms of communication, the term is generally applied to spoken communication that occurs between two individuals or groups at a personal level. It can be in a synchronous form (for example, face to face) or an asynchronous form (instant messaging, chat, e-mail, and so on). Staff meetings, project discussions, performance review meetings, conferences, seminars, sales visits, client meetings, and recruitment interviews are some of the forums where interpersonal communication can occur. To understand the interpersonal communication process, it is important to revisit the two-way process of communication explained in Chapter 1. Exhibit 3.1 explains this notion further.

The communication process starts when the sender has an idea, and then transmits the idea to a receiver through a channel or media. The receiver interprets the message and sends feedback to the sender indicating that the message has been received and action has been taken on it.

AN EVOLVING MODEL FOR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

The diagram provided in Exhibit 3.1 has to be slightly modified for interpersonal communication. Exhibit 3.2 illustrates this.

Exhibit 3.1 The Process of Communication

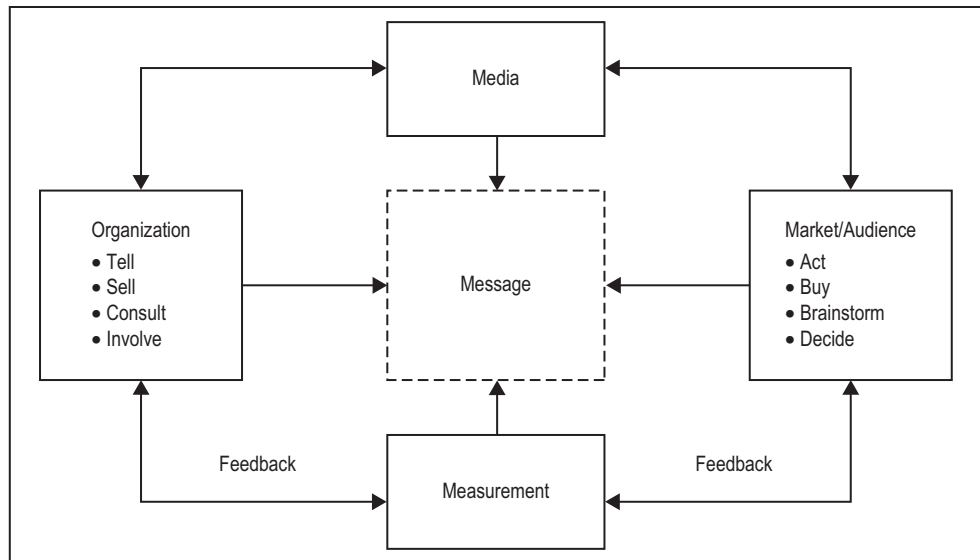
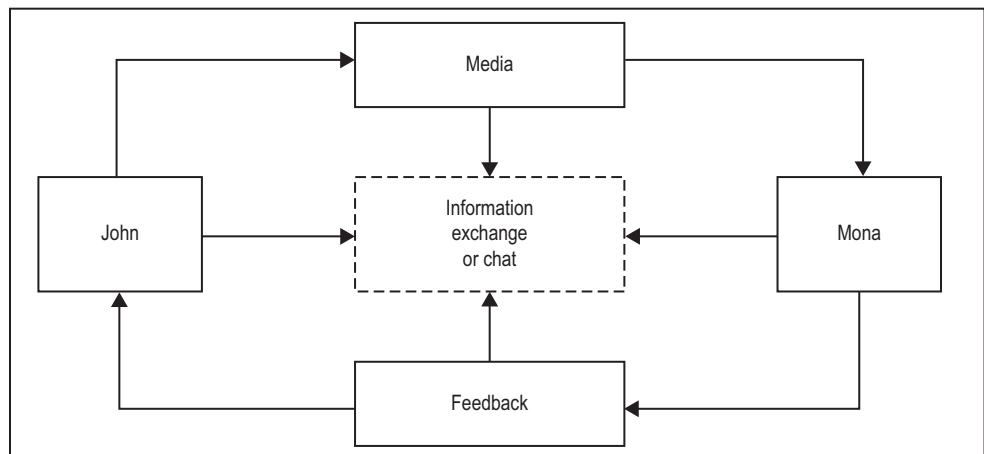


Exhibit 3.2 The Process of Interpersonal Communication



When John and Mona chat or engage in communication with each other, they are either sharing a personal concern or a professional concern, gossiping, or trying to be friendly with each other. Unfortunately, communication is not perfect and errors (note the dotted line in Exhibit 3.2) creep into the process, as discussed in Chapter 2. This can happen when one or both participants have malicious intent, are not expressive enough, are poor listeners, interpret the message wrongly, or fail to react as intended.

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

The following characteristics are associated with interpersonal communication:

- **It is inevitable.** One cannot avoid communicating. If not verbally, then non-verbal signals convey signs and symbols that indicate one's personality and thought process. Effective communicators understand that in professional communication, it is usually not intent that is appreciated (as it is invisible) but rather the behaviour that is exhibited by the person.
- **It is irrevocable.** Words once spoken cannot be taken back. In professional communication, this can create a multiplicity of problems as one of the parties may "leak" information or shared confidences to others.
- **It is open to misinterpretation.** Owing to the complex nature of communication (multiple contexts, multiple communication styles, multiple backgrounds), interpersonal communication is open to misinterpretation. Hence, confirmation and feedback are essential. Trust and reliability are the other ingredients of successful interpersonal communication.
- **It is highly contextual.** Communication does not take place in isolation. It operates in the *psychological context*, where participants in the interaction bring their attitudes, values, and beliefs into the transaction; the *relational context*, where participants interact on the basis of how well they know and relate to each other; the *situational context*, which defines the psycho-social "where" or the backdrop of the communication; the *environmental context*, which deals with the physical "where" of the communication (e.g., the classroom, the city, the season); and the *cultural context*, where the participants may miscommunicate if they fail to observe each other's cultural norms.

BARRIERS TO INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

There are certain intrinsic and extrinsic factors that act as barriers to successful interpersonal relationships.

The *intrinsic factors* are:

- **Ego:** Feelings of perceived superiority over others inhibit good relationships. People are wary of egoistic, aggressive personalities. People are also wary of passive and subdued personalities.
- **Personal attitude:** Some people are averse to building any form of relationship other than the purely professional. They shy away from meeting people to "chat" unnecessarily. They do not involve themselves in any social interaction.
- **Stress:** When people are stressed, they choose to remain aloof and withdrawn. This results in isolation and decreased interaction with others.

The *extrinsic factors* that may act as barriers to communication include:

- **Position:** Feelings of inferiority/superiority due to rank, prestige, status, and authority may have an adverse effect on interpersonal relationships.
- **Distance:** People separated by geographical and spatial distances are unable to interact with each other. However, with the advent of technology, people are also building relationships via e-mails and telephones.



When people are stressed, they tend to remain aloof and withdrawn. This results in isolation and decreased interaction with others.

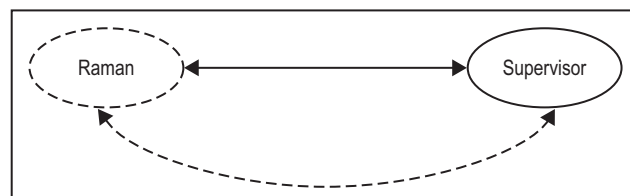
- **Culture:** People from one culture may not like to mix informally with people from another culture. This prevents development of healthy interpersonal relationships.
- **Technology:** Technological inventions have led to more people sending e-mails rather than personally communicating a message. This may inhibit face-to-face communication and the development of interpersonal communication.

A psycho-social analysis reveals the role of “perceived dependence” on the development of interpersonal relationships. For instance, consider Exhibit 3.3, which shows the relationship between employees and supervisors.

As shown in Exhibit 3.3, the relationship between Raman, an employee, and his supervisor can have any one of the following characteristics:

- **Respect:** Raman is a good follower. He genuinely believes that he should form a personal relationship with the supervisor. This is reciprocated by the supervisor as well.

Exhibit 3.3 Interpersonal Relationship Between Supervisor and Subordinate



- **Fear:** Raman fears that if he does not do a certain task, he might face repercussions from his supervisor in the future.
- **Ambition:** Raman has a certain career strategy strategic in mind. He hopes to be in his supervisor's good books.

On the other hand, the supervisor also strives to maintain a level of interpersonal relationship with Raman. This can be attributed to:

- **Morale:** The supervisor may believe that reciprocating such relationships improves the morale of employees and motivates them to perform in a congenial environment.
- **Grapevine:** The supervisor encourages the interpersonal relationship as she feels that it will help her become familiar with the grapevine in the organization.
- **Personal agenda:** The supervisor may also aim to utilize the services of Raman for personal work.

Exhibit 3.4, on the other hand, shows a different type of interpersonal communication. Here, Debbie and Soma are peers. They work together in the same department and believe in maintaining a good interpersonal relationship with each other.

This belief can be attributed to any or all of the following:

- **Respect:** They genuinely believe that it is important to be pleasant. They respect each other for their contributions and achievements.
- **Reciprocal exchange:** They have a specific strategic intent. They are pleasant because it serves their purpose to be so. They may hope for reciprocal behaviour in the future.
- **Facade:** Debbie and Soma hope that by being nice to each other, a facade of group cohesiveness is maintained to the external world.

Exhibit 3.5 shows an external relationship between John and a client or customer, Harry. There is a one-way arrow towards Harry, which denotes that John is dependent on Harry rather than vice versa. John is a sales professional and truly believes that the customer is king. He likes to keep his clients happy. This can be attributed to the following:

- **Value:** John values the client. Harry has been loyal to the company. John feels that he must maintain the relationship by rewarding the client from time to time with new company schemes, special discounts, offers, freebies, and so on.
- **Gain:** John hopes to accrue future gain from the client by way of referrals, continued business, and goodwill. On the other hand, Harry may like to maintain a personal relationship with John to keep abreast of trends, new schemes, and the like.

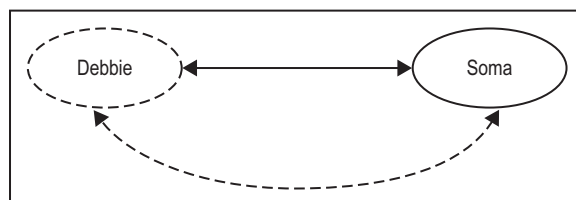


Exhibit 3.4 Interpersonal Relationships Between Peers

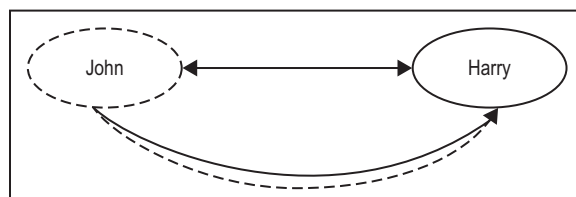


Exhibit 3.5 Interpersonal Relationships Between Clients and Employees

POINT	Communication is simple common sense, as everybody communicates in a similar manner in organizations.	Communication is complex because everybody has a different style of communication.	COUNTERPOINT
	One should communicate according to what one feels is appropriate.	One should communicate according to what the audience (listener) expects.	
	Diplomacy and tact are forms of manipulation.	Diplomacy and tact are not forms of manipulation; they are forms of persuasion if used ethically.	
	People should not communicate positively with those they dislike.	Communication is essential, even with people one does not like but must work with.	

RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL SEMANTICS

Interpersonal semantics is concerned with “verbal exchanges” between people. In communication, we explore relational development through the process of interpersonal semantics that people use when they engage with each other. Central to the concept of interpersonal semantics is the “Johari window,” developed by American psychologists Joe Luft and Harry Ingham in the 1950s.

The *Johari window* is a simple and useful tool for self-awareness training, personality development, interpersonal communication, team development, group dynamics, and intergroup relationships. It is also known as the disclosure/feedback model of self-awareness. It represents a person’s (or team’s) attitudes, beliefs, skills, and experiences in relation to others from essentially four perspectives called windows or quadrants. Each of these quadrants represents information in terms of it is known or unknown by the individual or team in question and whether it is known or unknown by others.

The rationale behind the Johari window is that people have the innate ability to adopt four approaches to interpersonal relationships with respect to themselves:

- Ability to disclose a lot of information about themselves
- Ability to not disclose any information about themselves
- Ability to receive feedback in a constructive way
- Ability to resist any feedback about themselves

This is always in relation to others (that is, how others perceive the individual in question). The Johari window addresses the following questions:

- What do others know about that individual?
- What is unknown by them?
- What do others not know about the individual that they should know?
- What do they know about the individual that the individual should know?

Exhibit 3.6 illustrates the Johari window further.

Exhibit 3.6 The Johari Window

Open (Known to self and known to others)	Blind (Unknown to self but known to others)
Facade (Known to self but unknown to others)	Unknown (Unknown to self and unknown to others)

As evident from Exhibit 3.6, the Johari window has four quadrants. Each of these is discussed in this section.

The Open Area or the Arena

The *open area* is what is known by the person (as well as others) about himself or herself. It includes physical, psychological, or behavioural traits that everyone is well aware of. Usually this form of information is known when:

- The individual discloses these facts about himself or herself to others, who then may pass on the information to others.
- The individual behaves in a particular manner that is visible to all.

In organizational communication and even in some personal communication, mature individuals are careful to divulge only “useful” information about themselves, which may help to build up an image or a perception in the minds of their audience. Thus they choose to communicate in a selective manner that is not detrimental to their self-interest. Believing in the maxim that “perception is reality,” these individuals carve an image conforming or not conforming to organizational demands.

Examples of interpersonal semantics in this case are:

- “I am very fastidious about report writing.” (to a subordinate)
- “I love bungee jumping.” (to peers)
- “I hate conflicts.” (to team members)

The Blind Area

The *blind area* considers traits that are unknown by the person about himself or herself but are known by others. It includes physical, psychological, and behavioural tendencies that the individual is unaware of. This occurs when:

- The individual is not receptive to feedback, and others start withdrawing from him or her.
- The individual ignores comments about himself or herself.
- Others deliberately keep the individual in the dark.
- Others fear the individual and hesitate to be honest around him or her.

Examples are:

- A thinks himself to be meticulous and systematic, but the others think A is unnecessarily fastidious and slow.
- B thinks she is an able leader, but others consider her to be authoritarian and arrogant.
- C thinks he is careful with budgeting, but others think he is a miser of the worst order.

Here are some examples of interpersonal semantics:

- “I do not want to listen to unnecessary gossip. Do I make myself clear?”
- “I am the team lead, and the team lead is the most efficient of all the team members. Don’t you know the boss is always right?”

The Facade

The facade is what is known to the person about himself or herself but is unknown to others. The person keeps up a facade to deliberately mask an undesirable trait or a past action/event. This happens when:

- The individual feels that the trait is not important for others to know in the current context.

- The individual feels that it is a personal failing and that he or she would be better off if others did not learn about it.
- The person has a hidden agenda.
- The person has manipulative intent.

Some incidents can be considered as examples of a facade:

- Seema is a team leader, but she has a tremendous fear of public speaking—no wonder she always nominates one of the other team members to present on her behalf in the guise of developing leadership skills among employees.
- Ajit goofed up on a major project in his previous company. As result, he was asked to leave the organization. Now into his sixth year in his current job, the memories of the event still rankle. He did not tell anybody about the incident; it was hushed up nicely. But Ajit knows that his confident demeanour is a facade that can slip at any moment.

Examples of interpersonal semantics are:

- “Rajat, why don’t you attend the meeting and give the presentation? I personally feel that all of you are getting good leadership training from my side.”
- “This project is a team project. All of you will be responsible for its completion and success.”

The Unknown Area

The *unknown area* is what is unknown to oneself and to others. These could include certain hidden talents, exemplary behaviour in a crisis, extraordinary skills that have not been tested, and even a negative tendency. This happens when:

- The person has poor self-awareness.
- The person has low self-esteem and a passive persona.
- The person is not a risk taker and therefore fails to recognize hidden qualities.
- Others do not pay much attention to the individual.

The following incidents can be taken as examples:

- X was a reticent manager who rarely spoke up at meetings, discussions, and seminars. Consequently, he was a lone ranger until the day he had to give an impromptu presentation to an international client when the senior manager reported sick. Everyone was amazed at the ease with which X handled the questions fielded by the client, who was a tough customer. X was articulate and forceful, something that no one anticipated from him. Indeed, even X was taken aback at his own skill. If it had not been for the crisis, he would never have spoken up at such an important client presentation.
- Sheila, a management trainee, always preferred desk jobs as she felt that field work was not suited to her personality. Meeting clients, soliciting deals, and making presentations made her nervous. However, during the induction module, she was posted to a field job for two months. It was here that she got a surprise: clients consistently praised her for her assertiveness, persuasion skills, and her excellent relationship management.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE JOHARI WINDOW

The aim of management is to develop the “open area” of an individual or a team because an open-minded individual or team is receptive to others’ ideas. Such individuals can also work well with others and are free from mistrust, confusion, conflict, and misunderstanding. Their role is to facilitate feedback and disclosure among teams and group members. They also have a responsibility to promote a culture of openness and transparency.

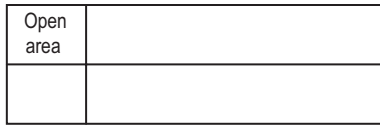


Exhibit 3.7 Open Window of a New Manager or Team

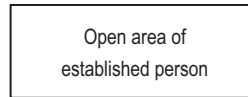


Exhibit 3.8 Open Window of an Established Manager or Team

Exhibit 3.7 shows the open window of a new manager or team, while Exhibit 3.8 illustrates the open window of an established manager or team. Established teams and individuals have a larger open area than new teams or members. This is because established individuals have more experience and knowledge compared to newcomers. Moreover, a new member in a team will be observing other team members. That person is new and, thus, more restrained in his or her communication.

The open area can be developed horizontally by offering feedback to the new member. It can also develop vertically when new teams or members share information about themselves. This process is showcased in Exhibit 3.9. To make new teams or team members more comfortable, others can ask new members to disclose more information about themselves.

In Stage 4, the new member has evolved considerably. The individual has sufficiently enhanced the open area by adequate disclosure and feedback. Consequently, there has been a decrease in the size of the “blind” area as well as the “unknown” area of the individual. The member is self-aware, mature, and willing to experiment to explore the hidden aspects of his or her personality. By sharing information about themselves, team members create a commonality that enhances team productivity and effectiveness.

The blind spot, as shown in Exhibit 3.10, is what is known about a person by others in a group but is not known by the person himself or herself. The goal is to reduce this area by soliciting feedback about oneself. As this area decreases, the open area automatically increases. The team leader has the responsibility of promoting an environment of non-judgmental feedback. Individuals will then feel safe to disclose and encourage sensitive feedback.

The facade, which has been illustrated in Exhibit 3.11, is the area where individuals keep certain traits or behaviours to themselves and do not disclose them to others. Generally, extracting this information is not an easy process, as the extent of disclosure is dependent

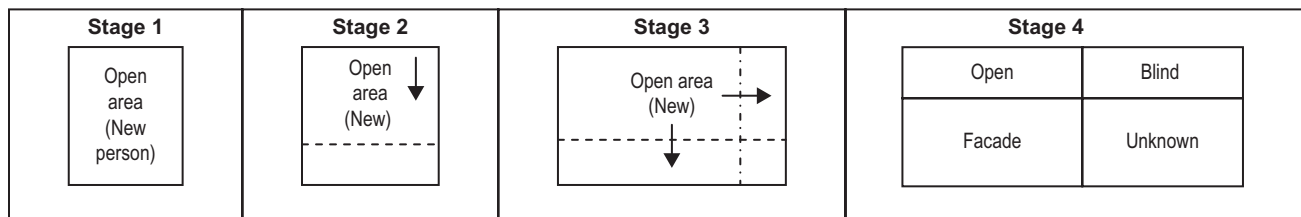


Exhibit 3.9 Stages 1–4 in Open Disclosure About the Self

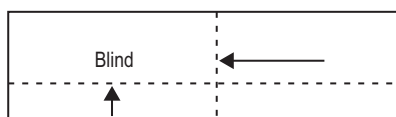


Exhibit 3.10 Soliciting Feedback to Reduce the Blind Area

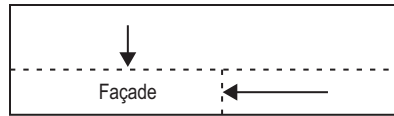


Exhibit 3.11 Disclosure about Oneself to Reduce Façade in the Workplace

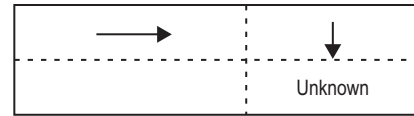


Exhibit 3.12 Soliciting Feedback to Reduce the Unknown Area

on the discretion of the individual. An open organizational climate promoted by the leader or manager has a great impact on disclosures of such kind. A self-aware individual with a mature mindset is less likely to hold back organization-specific information in an open environment.

U, or the unknown area, indicates feelings, aptitudes, and latent abilities that are unknown to the person as well as to others in the group (Exhibit 3.12). The leader or manager can prompt the person to discover these abilities, for which an appropriate and encouraging atmosphere has to be created. Managers can help employees deal with inhibitions and fears.

JOHARI WINDOW, TUCKMAN MODEL, AND TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Tuckman’s “Forming-Storming-Norming-Performing Model of Team Development” (1965)³ has been used to link group dynamics with interpersonal communication that takes place among members of a group and between two groups. Exhibit 3.13 illustrates this model.

Forming

“Forming” is the first stage of team development. This stage is characterized by a high level of dependence on the leader for guidance and direction. Members may or may not know each other. Communication is essential, therefore, to acquaint group members with each other and align them with the team goals. Exhibit 3.14 illustrates this in more detail.

Storming

“Storming” is the second stage of team development. This stage is characterized by competition and strife among the team members. Communication thus plays an important

Exhibit 3.13 Tuckman’s Model of Team Development

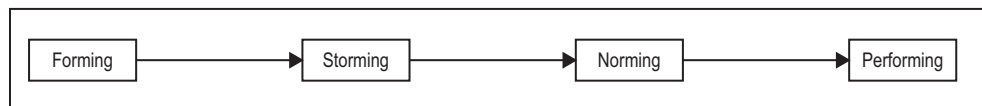


Exhibit 3.14 Communication in the Forming Stage of Team Development

Member communication	Team leader communication
Receiving instructions from the team leader	Giving directions
Listening to the team lead and others	Informing others about processes and procedures
Asking the team a few questions relating to purpose, objective, and external relationships	Answering questions
Interacting with others in the team	Interacting with top management, clients, and others

Member communication	Team leader communication
Using hurtful words, argumentation, and debates	Listening to a coterie of influential persons or a particular individual
Indulging in gossip or backbiting	Failing to explain the team goals in a proper manner
Keeping secrets from each other	Too much empty talk and no action
Meeting the leader in isolation	Failing to report to higher-ups and clients
Failing to listen to instructions	Taking absolutely no feedback from others

Exhibit 3.15 Communication in the Storming Stage of Team Development

role in idea development, articulation of team goals, and facilitating productive interaction. Exhibit 3.15 explains how “storming” results in poor communication, if not managed effectively.

Norming

“Norming” is the third stage of team development. This stage is characterized by generating agreement and creating consensus. Communication is vital for agenda-setting and creating norms—written as well as unwritten—for interaction. Exhibit 3.16 illustrates this further.

Performing

“Performing” is the fourth stage of team development. This stage is characterized by a fully functioning team. Communication is geared towards updating each other on team progress and reporting. Exhibit 3.17 examines the key features of the performing stage.

Member communication	Team leader communication
Plan norms for interaction and write down goals	Meets frequently to assess work according to guidelines
Give and receive constructive feedback	Brainstorms; asks for opinions and ideas from members
Share ideas	Periodic feedback; coaches members
Chat informally	Corresponds with clients on a regular basis

Exhibit 3.16 Communication in the Norming Stage of Team Development

Member communication	Team leader communication
Communicating frequently with each other	Needs to give very few instructions; delegates authority
The team members meet frequently among themselves	Intervenes to resolve personal/ interpersonal issues
Use feedback from clients and each other to make changes	Uses feedback from the subordinates
Reports to the team leader	Reports to higher-ups or clients

Exhibit 3.17 Communication in the Performing Stage of Team Development



Families with high levels of communication, sharing, healthy exchange of ideas, and joint decision making create well-adjusted children who develop high emotional competence in the later stage of life.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Drs John Mayer and Peter Salovey were the first to use the term “emotional intelligence” (EQ).⁴ The term was used to describe a person’s ability to understand his or her own emotions and the emotions of others and to act appropriately based on this understanding. In 1995, psychologist Daniel Goleman popularized this term with his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*.⁵

The principal thesis of the concept is that it is the stable-minded individual, the emotionally intelligent person, who excels in every sphere of life. EQ moves away from the narrow view of intelligence as a genetic given and focuses on eight types of intelligence that an individual acquires on the basis of personal experience. The definition of *emotional intelligence*, according to Goleman, includes five areas: knowing one’s emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships.

Now that we have discussed the concept of emotional intelligence, let us discuss how emotional intelligence relates to communication.

Here is a scene with which most people are familiar: Dhiraj says or does something that Dick interprets as a personal attack. Dick retaliates with hurtful words or actions. Dhiraj, having meant no harm in the first place, is puzzled. Since the provocation is extreme, Dhiraj may also retaliate. The situation escalates, even though there is no real reason for the conflict. This is the result of a failure to understand the first bit of communication. In most cases, communication, or lack of it, is the root cause of conflicts.

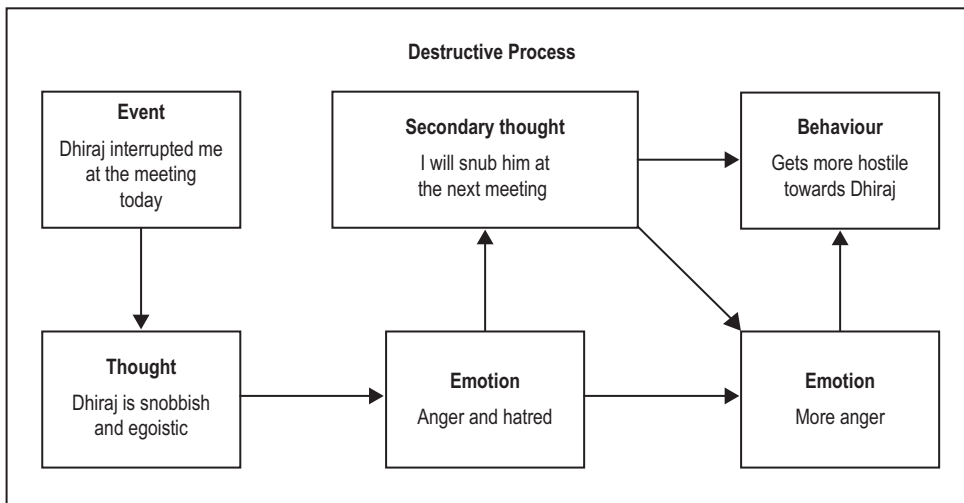


Exhibit 3.18 Destructive Interpersonal Communication

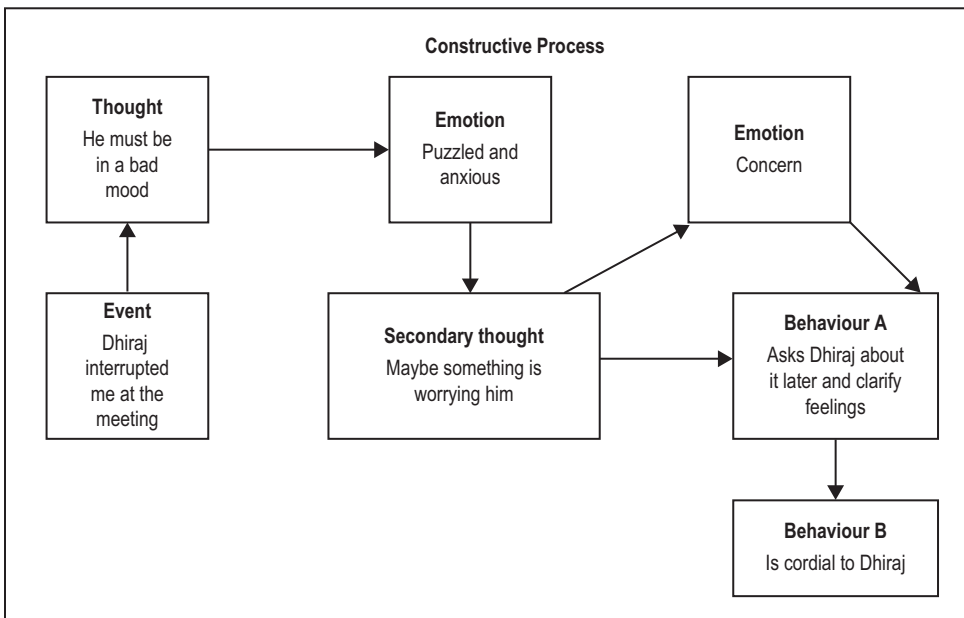


Exhibit 3.19 Constructive Interpersonal Communication

Destructive and constructive communicative situations can be compared with the help of Exhibits 3.18 and 3.19.

In Exhibit 3.18, a destructive process is shown. Here, Dick is highly annoyed with Dhiraj after being interrupted rather rudely in a meeting. Obviously, he is taken by surprise as he had not anticipated the interruption. The emotional response is strong. He gets angry and the more he thinks about it, the more the desire for revenge creeps into his mind. In this situation, his response is to become more hostile towards Dhiraj.

In Exhibit 3.19, the initial provocation is the same, but the emotions reflect surprise, anxiety, and concern rather than anger. Dick has known Dhiraj for some time and has a fairly good relationship with him. Consequently, the response to this situation is either to talk to Dhiraj directly in order to clear the air or to continue behaving as though nothing had happened. This has been termed by experts as a “constructive-knowing the audience-building a bridge-collaborating-process.” This is also indicative of high on emotional intelligence on the part of the individual involved.



Communication Bytes 3.1

Higher emotional intelligence is significantly associated with higher social skills. Those with higher emotional intelligence are more cooperative and professional. Research reveals that unhealthy communication patterns in childhood affect the growth of emotional intelligence. Children in families that discourage conflict, self-expression, and assertiveness may not develop the essential skills of expressiveness and receptiveness—two key ingredients of successful communication. This also hampers the development of emotional intelligence. Families with high levels of communicativeness, sharing, healthy exchange of ideas, and joint decision-making create well-adjusted children who develop high emotional competence later in life. These adults value open exchange of ideas and, hence, their open area or arena is wide enough to build positive interpersonal communication with others.

GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

It's always easy to communicate with people one likes, but sometimes people have to communicate with people they dislike. One of the essential qualities of an effective communicator is the ability to get along with everyone. This is even more important in the workplace where one must work with others to get things done, and a healthy (if not too friendly) relationship helps. The following tips might be useful in maintaining a healthy interpersonal relationship with others:

- It is always good to check one's assumptions. For instance, if one hears a disturbing rumour, it is important to consider whether the person concerned actually behaved offensively, or if this just is the opinion of an indirect source. Did you actually talk to the person about this offensive behaviour? If you clarify, it might turn out that certain remarks were taken out of context. In any case, it is not wise to rely on hearsay. Forming ideas or assumptions based merely on hearsay may destroy a relationship before building it.
- Do not assume that people have ignored you. They might simply not know you enough to interact with you. They might never have been introduced to you or they might even have some sort of bias against you. It is always a good idea to walk up to the person concerned and introduce yourself. This will also let you check whether the person really isn't interested in any sort of interaction with you.
- Sometimes a request is refused; do not take this personally. Do not assume that people are "out to get you" or have a personal agenda against you. Instead, go back and examine whether the request was valid in the first place. The request might not have been accepted due to financial issues, time constraints, or other valid reasons. However, do make sure to find out why the request was denied so that you do not repeat the mistake.
- Typecasting people is perhaps the biggest barrier to communication. It is easy to form opinions against people who are always too loud or incompetent or uncultured. However, it is prudent to take a minute and pause, and consider that people may also have typecast you. No one is perfect and one should accept the imperfections of others.
- If certain people are better at something, it is always healthy to learn from them rather than cultivating a competitive attitude. In the workplace, it is wiser to be perceived as an ally than as a threat.
- Trust your own judgement rather than that of others. Listen to your well-wishers, but ultimately act on the basis of your own experience. Adopt a neutral attitude and free your mind of pre-conceived notions before you start communicating with someone.



Information Bytes 3.1

There are many reasons that might lead to a prejudice or bias against certain people. Some of them are:

- We may believe that they said something about us behind our back.
- They had ignored us earlier.
- They denied us something we had asked for.
- They are the “type of people” we dislike.
- We perceive them to be our closest competitors.
- “Everybody” thinks that they are trouble.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STYLES

A communicator can choose a variety of styles to communicate. Effective communicators understand that there are some styles that are more effective in certain situations than others. There are essentially six main styles of interpersonal communication used in business settings:

- **Command and control style:** The controller/director style is generally a one-way form of communication. The communication is more in the nature of commands, orders, instructions, and other directives. The communicator uses the influence of their position and power. Managers employing this style are not receptive to feedback. They may also employ various methods to manipulate the target. This type of communication is most effective during a crisis, but when used indiscriminately, it can alienate employees.
- **Cooperative style:** A more egalitarian, two-way communication style, the cooperative style encourages employee involvement, participative decision-making, and collaboration. The purpose of communication is to share and cooperate rather than to direct, command, and control. The leader acts as a supporter to the people working with him or her.
- **Systematic style:** The systematic method is rule-bound and schedule-specific. It has been found to be useful for project planning and implementation or when working with strict schedules. It is usually used in conjunction with other styles.
- **Inspirational style:** The leader assumes a dynamic style of communication to motivate people to act. Using words of inspiration, the speaker seeks to instil confidence among group members.
- **The passive style:** This is typically an example of a laid-back style. The leader is content to let employees have the centre stage. The leader shifts responsibility to the team for the task. This method is suitable when the team is capable and knowledgeable but can backfire when the members are seeking authority and guidance from the leader.
- **The avoidance style:** Sometimes, managers choose not to communicate. They avoid any form of social contact or interaction with the team members and may indicate an unwillingness to contribute to decision-making. This style is appropriate when the manager chooses not to speak on issues that may not concern him or her, but for issues that directly concern the team, project, or performance, speaking up is important.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION UNDER STRESS

Stressful communication can be defined in this context as communication that happens under threat, during a crisis or a personal conflict, or when engaged in conflicts with superiors, subordinates, and peers. Years of emotional maturity may suddenly disappear when faced with a complex situation, which is why these are often described as the real test of physical as well as mental endurance.

Fight or Flight

In terms of physiology, people tend to respond to stress in two ways: to get away from the stressful situation or person, or to “fight it out.” In general, whatever the initial mental predisposition, it is always better to face a problem rather than run away from it. Exhibit 3.20 lists the various modes of communication one can choose in a stressful situation.

Forms of communication in conflict situations include:

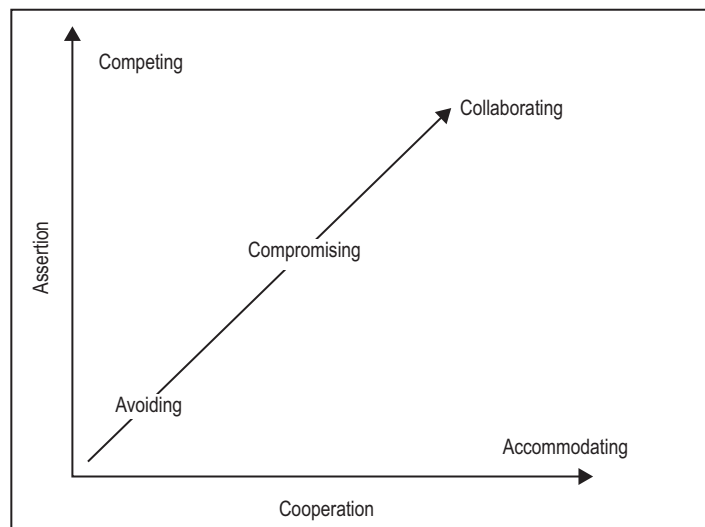
- **High assertion–low cooperation:** This form of communication is high on assertiveness and low on cooperation. An example is the following utterance: “I’ll tell you who’s the boss here, and I will not listen to any arguments!”
- **Moderate assertion–moderate cooperation:** This form of communication is moderate on cooperation as well as assertion. An example is the following comment: “If you say so, I will come to work during the weekend even though my parents will be visiting me during that time.”
- **High assertion–high cooperation:** This kind of communication is high on assertion as well as cooperation. An example is the following: “I do apologize that I cannot come in this weekend to finish the work. However, I promise that I will come early and work late on Monday and Tuesday to complete the pending task.”
- **Low assertion–low cooperation:** This kind of communication is low on both assertiveness and cooperation. An example is the comment: “I would humbly like to suggest with your permission that this task is beyond my jurisdiction.”
- **Low assertion–high cooperation:** This method of communication is low on assertiveness and high on cooperation. The following utterance illustrates this: “With all due respect, I will be in the office till midnight in order to complete this assignment. I am here to serve the company.”

Bases for Selecting a Conflict Communication Mode

There are certain factors that go towards selecting a specific mode for a certain situation. Whether one chooses *collision* or *cooperation* depends on the following factors:

- **The importance of the relationship:** When we value a relationship more, we tend to avoid, accommodate, or compromise on a matter.
- **The importance of the issue:** If the issue is closely allied with the value system of the person, he or she might feel the need to use a competing or collaborative mode to get

Exhibit 3.20 Ways to Communicate in Conflict Situations



the point across. If the issue is trivial to the individual, it might be better to avoid or compromise on the issue.

- **The importance of the potential consequences:** People avoid conflict if they anticipate potential losses of job, goodwill, promotion, plum assignments, and so on. They generally engage in a conflict when they feel that they are ready for the consequences.

Conflict Resolution and Communication

Exhibit 3.21 illustrates a communication continuum where deference is the least abrasive form of communication, assertion is skilful communication, and aggression is a violent and severe form of communication.

The following example might explain this point further:

Manager to X: “X, submit the report to me latest by 4 pm today. Is that clear? Not a minute’s delay, mind you.”

Now, X might give any one of these three responses:

- **First:** “Yes, of course sir!” (Knowing perfectly well that 4 pm is a tough deadline to meet.)
- **Second:** “Sir, that is a tight deadline. However, I will do my best. If there is no emergency as such, can I request the deadline be moved to tomorrow at 11 am? I will be able to put together the last-minute reviews that I had conducted on our brand by then.”
- **Third:** “Sir, I told you at the beginning that I would not be able to do it by then. I have entrusted it to my team member Ravi, who will follow up on it. You should give us healthier timelines for projects so we can be better prepared for them.”

Obviously, it is the second response that is most suitable. Even if the manager rejects the request to move the deadline, at least X has tried to put forward their point of view. Research reveals that managers prefer assertive people to deferential or aggressive ones. Exhibit 3.22 lists information about various kinds of communication in a nutshell.

In addition to the deferential, assertive, and aggressive styles described in Exhibit 3.22, there is yet another style of interpersonal communication called the *passive aggressive communication style*. In this style, the individuals appear to be passive on the surface but in reality are scheming and manipulating in a subtle, indirect way.

These people are incapable of dealing with the object of their resentment. Therefore, they adopt indirect measures to subtly undermine the target of their real or imagined resentments. Essentially hypocritical, they manipulate others to get the desired end. They may be smiling at someone, but in reality may be plotting against that very person.

They tend to be sarcastic, deny problems, appear cooperative while being resentful inside, and have facial expressions that do not match the emotions they are feeling. They may even use subtle sabotage to get even.

They tend to use words such as, “I don’t know anything about this,” when in reality they do know but are unwilling to cooperate. Another example is, “The boss should not have said this to you. What else did he say?” while in reality planning to report the conversation back to their supervisor.

Being Assertive

From this discussion, we can conclude that assertiveness is a desirable trait to have, particularly when we need cooperation from others. Even if one wants to say “no,” there is a certain, preferable way to communicate it. It is good to postpone a negative response and delay saying “no.”

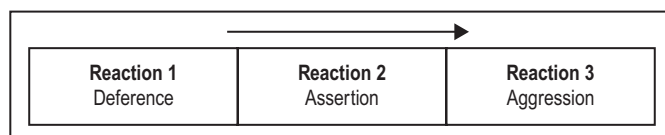


Exhibit 3.21 The Communication Continuum

Styles/Description	Deferential	Assertive	Aggressive
Characteristics	They avoid expressing their feelings, do not respond overtly, and allow others to infringe on their rights. They generally have poor eye contact with people, have a slumped posture, speak softly, can't say no, and are always apologetic. They also fail to stand up for their rights.	These people clearly state their Opinions without violating those of others. They are respectful, have relaxed body language, and always maintain proper eye contact with people. They generally have a firm voice, speak in a measured manner. They express controlled emotions and value themselves and others. They respect the time of others, listen well, stand up for their rights, and clarify issues with others directly in a calm manner.	They express their feelings openly and advocate freely for their rights. They typically have a harsh tone, quick walk, loud voice, and a stance that leans back. Their eyes staring at a person violate the privacy of others as well as dominate, humiliate, criticize, and blame them. They are generally loud, demanding, and attention-seeking and tend to interrupt other people. They are poor listeners.
Impact	As a result of their characteristics, these people feel left out, depressed, confused, and resentful. They generally over-commit themselves and suffer from a loss of self worth.	These people create a positive environment around them. They have a mature outlook and people generally trust them. Their credibility is high.	These people create a positive environment around them. They have a mature outlook and people generally trust them. Their credibility is high.
Interpersonal Semantics	"Everybody ignores me." "You never understand me." "Nobody listens to me." "I am sorry to take up your time but..." "Would you be upset if we..." "It's only my opinion but..."	"Let's sort this thing out." "Tell me about your problem." "This is what I believe is the truth..." "Let's give a fair hearing to everybody." "I believe that..., but tell me, what do you think?" "I would like to..."	"I know everything." "I will get my way, no matter what." "It's all your fault." "I am always right." "You're not worth anything at all." "Don't ask questions—just do it." "That's stupid."
Organizational effect	These people are not considered for important projects, not given any responsibility, and not consulted on issues.	They are liked and respected by all, and are often consulted on various organizational matters.	If these people are leaders, they are highly disliked and immensely unpopular. If they are managers, then they are isolated.
Causes	Causes for this kind of behaviour can be low self-esteem, a repressive family background, or unfavourable past experiences.	Causes for this might be high self-esteem, confidence, independence, and a non-judgmental attitude.	Causes for behaving this way might be low self-esteem, past experiences, and the feeling of being powerless. These people might just be imitating their aggressive bosses who were successful. This kind of behaviour might also stem from feeling cornered or threatened.

Exhibit 3.22 Communication Styles: Descriptors

One can also paraphrase to get more time. If one follows a negative response with a good enough reason for refusing something, it often softens the blow.

There are three steps to being assertive:

- Step 1:** This step involves listening effectively. At this stage, one shouldn't interrupt the speaker and should listen with a calm mind to what the other person has to say. It is not a good idea to "jump the gun" and use defensive strategies at this stage. By listening well, one is able to understand the real issues. It also neutralizes the sender's argument to an extent.
- Step 2:** This step involves presenting one's views in a rational manner. There is no apology involved, but instead, phrases like: "I agree with you, however..." or "You may be right; nevertheless..." help to make one's stand on the issue clear.
- Step 3:** This step helps to ultimately resolve the issue by mutual consent. It suggests an action plan or an agenda for the resolution.

Exhibit 3.23 illustrates the three steps to being assertive.

Six Ways to be Assertive

Experts suggest a number of ways to exercise assertion. These techniques are:

- Basic assertion
- Empathetic assertion
- Broken record
- Fogging
- Discrepancy assertion
- Outcome assertion

Basic assertion: saying it bluntly. Basic assertion essentially involves statements that clearly reflect one's needs, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions. These usually begin with "I" and express appreciation, annoyance, dismay, satisfaction, and so on. One has to be simple, specific, and brief. The following utterances are examples of basic assertion:

"I liked the presentation that you made yesterday."

"I feel that we need to offer more courses on business communication."

"The cost will be around 400 rupees."

"I was hurt when you contradicted me in front of everybody in the meeting."

Empathetic assertion: saying it softly. Empathetic assertion involves statements that recognize the other person's feelings but at the same time assert one's own thoughts. There are two inherent dangers to this approach. First, the word "but" is used a lot; however, it may sound insincere, especially when overused. Second, empathetic assertion might be used to mask aggression. For example, in the sentence, "Kabir, I appreciate the extra time you spent on the project, but the rule says that increments will only be given after a year of service," the "but" may seem to devalue the phrase "I appreciate the extra time you spent on the project" and make it appear insincere and false.

Broken record: saying it repeatedly. A "broken record" is essentially a phrase repeated a number of times (much like a broken record) during a conversation to drive home a point. Used often by small children, it is a successful technique to get the thing one wants by asking repeatedly for it. It particularly tends to happen when people are too wrapped up in their own thoughts to pay attention to what the other person is saying. The broken record technique of assertion makes sure that the message gets across without whining, begging, and cajoling. In terms of semantics, the same phrase is repeated over and over again in slightly different ways. An example is the following utterance: "The project deadline cannot be postponed at any cost beyond 18 July. I need to submit the details to the client, and after 18 July, we will be tied up with the government project. What I can promise is that I can complete the written formalities before, but the project as such cannot be extended beyond 18th July."

Fogging: agreeing unexpectedly. Fogging, in essence, is agreeing with the offending statement. When somebody behaves offensively and expects the recipient to retort sharply or at least with aggression, the recipient does a volte-face by agreeing with a small portion of what the sender is saying. This is akin to a fog that suddenly overwhelms the person and takes him or her by surprise. The following examples illustrate this:

Taunt: "You make such lame excuses every time that it's becoming a habit with you!" Response (Fogging): "You know what? You're right. These excuses are so simple that it's easy to feel that they are not genuine."

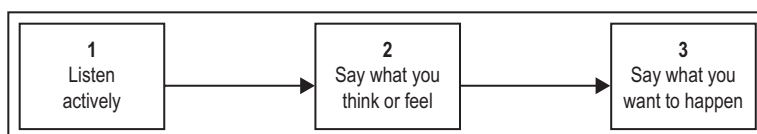


Exhibit 3.23 Steps to be Assertive

Newly benched software engineer: “This whole company stinks. It has no policies in place. They can’t bench a software engineer just like that!” Personnel Manager (Fogging): “Yes, I understand that this must be a bit of a shock to you. We will try to help you in any way we can.”

Discrepancy assertion: expressing the contradiction. Discrepancy assertion is a dialogue that asserts that a person has been given certain instructions and is doing something else. It conveys in a non-threatening manner the contradiction in the messages. The person seeks clarity rather than being bogged down by uncertainty and confusion. It enables the recipient to clear the misunderstanding before the issue blows out of proportion. The speaker is assertive without blaming anybody. An example is the following quote: “When I took over as the senior administrative assistant, I was told that my responsibilities include overseeing financial concerns too. Today I got a memo stating something quite to the contrary. I would like to be clear as to what exactly is required from me and how this affects the first agreement?”

Outcome assertion: “or else” communication. Outcome assertion is essentially a dialogue that conveys something assertively, but at the same time is not outright harsh. It is not a threat per se, but forces the receiver to take things seriously. It is used to underline the authority of the sender. An example is the following statement: “If you are late again, I have no option but to report it to the chief manager. I would rather avoid that.”

SUMMARY

- Healthy interpersonal relationships minimize conflicts, manipulation, negativity, distrust, and discord.
- Interpersonal communication is inevitable, irrevocable, open to misinterpretation, and highly contextual.
- Johari window, with its emphasis on feedback and disclosure, adequately explains interpersonal semantics and its role in communication with oneself and others.
- The constructive process of interpersonal communication with its emphasis on emotional intelligence is a mature way to control one’s reactions to events and people.
- There are six different styles to choose from when communicating with supervisors, subordinates, and peers.
- There are a number of interpersonal communication strategies to adopt, ranging from avoidance to cooperative communication, depending upon one’s relationship with the other person, the context, and the consequences of the conflict.
- The preferred communication style is assertiveness, which can be learnt by following the three-step method.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Why do you think it is important to be assertive at the workplace? Discuss various ways to be more assertive.
2. Elucidate the importance of the Johari window in understanding oneself and others.
3. Between compromising, collaborating, and accommodating, which is a better technique for handling conflicts? Why?
4. When does the avoidance technique of conflict management bring results?
5. What do you understand by the term “interpersonal semantics”? What form of interpersonal semantics is typical of the initial stage of group formation?
6. What are the possible consequences of being unnecessarily deferential at the workplace?
7. “Seek to understand yourself and then understand others.” How far do you think this statement is relevant in maintaining and sustaining interpersonal relationships?

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Study the three windows in Exhibit 3.24. Each characterizes extreme ratios of soliciting and giving feedback. Think about how a person described in each window might appear to you in a small group. Now write down what each window signifies. Which window represents the “ideal” and why?

Open	
Open	
Open	

Exhibit 3.24

2. Identify the communication style of each person described in the following section. Give reasons for your choice.

- Sanjay can quickly tell what’s going on in any situation and is not afraid to speak out about what should be done. He doesn’t follow the latest fads, but wears clothes that are practical. When you first meet Sanjay, you notice he is friendly. Later you realize he hasn’t told you much about his personal life. You go out for lunch with Sanjay. He orders a baked dish but the dish is served nearly raw. He shouts for the waiter, and complains loudly. The waiter apologizes and takes the dish back to be cooked but Sanjay doesn’t want to wait. He demands to see the manager and tells her that in the future he’ll eat elsewhere. You both grab something at a drive-through and are back at the office in time for Sanjay’s next meeting.
- Raghav is a really nice person. He’s open to new ideas and always willing to listen. On his desk are lots of photos with family and friends, many of them taken at Goa. Raghav usually dresses in soft, warm colours, and hates to wear a coat and tie. You go out to lunch with Raghav and he orders some chicken, well-done. When he cuts into it, however, it’s not cooked enough and is tough. He doesn’t say a thing to you and continues to eat. The waiter comes by and asks, “How is your dish, sir?” Raghav hesitantly replies he’s sorry to say he likes his dish a little more tender. “Would you like me to take it back?” the waiter asks. “Only if it’s not too much trouble,” Raghav replies.
- Gayatri is a rather complicated person. She cares a lot about what others think of her, but she is sometimes callous about the feelings of others. So she’s both sensitive and insensitive. It can be confusing! There is no confusion about one thing though—Gayatri is an excellent planner. She gathers all the data and can foresee potential problems. She researches ways to avoid them at little cost to the company. At her desk, Gayatri displays her framed college degree and a list of company policies. You go out for lunch with Gayatri, who orders something well-cooked.

However, when it comes, it’s not cooked to her taste, so she requests the waiter to have the chef cook it for exactly two and a half minutes more.

- Priya is a popular person. She gets into many situations where she is the one to confront problems because she knows how she thinks and feels about many issues. Priya speaks her mind but doesn’t like to alienate others in the process. So she tries to make them feel good about themselves as well as her. Priya has a large closet full of clothes with lots of colours, textures, and bold designs. At her desk is a blown-up photo of her and the company president having fun at last year’s Diwali party. You go out to lunch with Priya and the food she orders is not cooked to her liking. She calls the waiter over immediately and asks for another plate. The waiter replies that it would take at least forty to forty-five minutes. She quickly decides to try something else. “Bring me the South Indian special instead!”, she says.
3. What communication style would you choose to adopt for the following situations? Also indicate disclosure strategies that you might follow in some of them.
- Advising an errant trainee who has not submitted the work on time.
 - Presenting to an off-shore client. The client is impressive and well reputed.
 - Presenting an idea to your rigid supervisor.
 - Presenting an idea to your flexible supervisor.
 - Discussing the budget for a plan proposed by you in a meeting. Your team consists of three supporters, two hostile attendees, four neutrals, and the chair.
 - Consoling an employee when her mother passes away.
 - Handling a fire breakout in the plant.
 - Addressing the media at the launch of a new brand.
 - Gossiping about the supervisor.
4. A professor pointed out certain areas in Kabir’s presentation that could be improved. However, Kabir insisted that he could not improve as he was not good at expressing emotions. Which area in the Johari window does Kabir need to focus on? What area does he currently belong in?
5. Give an appropriate and an inappropriate response to the following conversations/situations in the space provided.
- a. Professor to student: “Sharma, you need to write the report again.”
- Passive response: -----

Assertive response:-----

Aggressive response:-----

- b. Client to manager: “You must improve your bank’s customer service. I have been waiting long enough to get my complaint registered.”

Passive response:-----

Assertive response:-----

Aggressive response:-----

- c. Situation: There is a meeting scheduled at 3 pm and for some reason you may not be able to attend it. What will you tell your supervisor?

Passive response:-----

Assertive response:-----

Aggressive response:-----

- d. A colleague asks for a certain favour when writing her report. She has been consistently using your help. This time, however, you would like to refuse. What would you say?

Passive response:-----

Assertive response:-----

Aggressive response:-----

- 6. Identify the most probable communication style of the following people. Mention one basis for your conclusion.
 - a) Hillary Clinton (Secretary of State, United States of America)
 - b) Aamir Khan (Indian actor)
 - c) Kiran M. Shaw (CEO, Biocon)
 - d) Shashi Tharoor (Indian politician)
- 7. Refer to <http://images.businessweek.com/ss/09/04/0415_india_most_powerful/index.htm> Identify the dominant communication styles of the individuals in the photographs. Can you draw some sort of a conclusion about communication styles in relation to the professions of each of the persons on this list?

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Refer to <<http://www.newconversations.net/emergency.htm>>. What nine steps are the article suggesting when faced with an interpersonal conflict?
2. Refer to <<http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/34565>>. What three aspects is the author suggesting to communicate with co-workers effectively?
3. Refer to <<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/display.asp?id=8629>> and study the article by Eugene S. Kim, Kawpong Polyorat, and Dana L. Alden (2002) titled *The Effect of Interpersonal Communication Style on*

- Miscomprehension and Persuasion of Print Advertisements*, in “Advances in Consumer Research (Volume 29).” How do cultural variables such as individualism versus collectivism and high- versus low-context culture affect the individual’s tendency to express meanings directly or indirectly in conversation?
4. Differentiate Leadership communication from Followership communication as revealed in this article (visit: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemyatt/2012/04/04/10-communication-secrets-of-great-leaders/#433dd7461e06>)

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ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.whosehome.com/communication.html>, accessed on April 18, 2011.
2. J. Luft and H. Ingham, "The Johari Window: a Graphic Model of Interpersonal Awareness," *Proceedings of the Western Training Laboratory in Group Development* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA, 1955).
3. B.W. Tuckman and M.A. Jensen, "Stages of Small-Group Development Revisited," *Group of Organizational Studies* (1997) 2:419–27.
4. P. Salovey and J.D. Mayer, "Emotional Intelligence," *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality* (1990) 9: 185–211.
5. D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995).

CASE STUDY 1

Matching Work Styles with the Superior

Summary

ABC Ltd. is a recent entrant in the oil and natural gas sector having a monopoly to conduct City Gas Distribution business in a metro city. The company had initially outsourced most of its operations but has recently started hiring people. Most of the employees were fresh recruits from college and had no prior experience. Even the senior members of the organization had little or no experience outside the organization. The company had recently standardized their method of recruitment. A recent issue had, however, threatened to disrupt operations.

Introduction

Mr Lucas was a senior manager in the organization and had been working here for the past nine years. He had a reputation of being a strict, to the point of being rude to his subordinates. He was the only one from his batch with the

designation of a manager. All others had been promoted to higher positions. Certain managers with three to four years less experience have now become managers and at par with him. Mr Lucas believed in the concept of instilling fear in the minds of his subordinates as a means of extracting the most out of them. However, the new breed of recruits believed in the modern school of thought of 'connecting' with the subordinates for effective management. There was a big gap in the two thought processes.

Mr Ballack had recently joined the organization and had been working for just over one year. He had a good track record. He had been recognized as a 'Star Performer' by his current manager, Mr Klinsmann. Mr Ballack enjoyed a good rapport with Mr Klinsmann and had been highly efficient under his guidance. Mr Klinsmann was due to get married soon. Owing to the high work load and pressure associated with his position and the fact that he would be away for leave, the senior management decided to transfer Mr Lucas to Mr Klinsmann's position.

Problem

Mr Lucas was completely opposite in his approach in comparison to Mr Klinsmann. Mr Ballack was highly motivated under the leadership of Mr Klinsmann and was putting in extra hours in his work with impressive results. Mr Ballack was disappointed to see Mr Klinsmann getting transferred but did not change his work style. Mr Ballack used to work in shifts.

The morning shift timing was slightly flexible depending on the manager. Mr Klinsmann was comfortable with a morning shift timing of 7:30 AM whereas other managers used to call their subordinates at 7:00 AM. Mr Ballack was not aware of this. In the initial days, all the engineers reported at 7:30 for the morning shift and Mr Lucas did not seem to have a problem with that.

One day, at around 7:25 AM, Mr Ballack received a call from Mr Lucas. Mr Ballack was driving at that time and was on his way to the office to report for the morning shift. He picked up the phone; Mr Lucas asked him about his current location. Mr Ballack replied, "Sir, I am about to reach office". Mr Lucas shouted at him, "It is almost 7:30 and you still haven't reached office. You are supposed to reach office by 7:00, this is not acceptable." Mr Ballack was taken aback. He replied in a calm tone, "Sir, I, and my other colleagues,

have been reporting at 7:30 AM since the beginning itself, as was the understanding with our earlier manager." Mr Lucas lost his temper completely after listening to this. He told Mr Ballack to go back and not report to office. After listening to this, Mr Ballack got stern in his voice and replied, "Sir, if you wanted us to report at a different time, you should have informed us about it and you should have informed us much earlier." After saying this, he kept the phone down. By this time, he had already reached office. So, instead of signing himself in, he just had a glass of water and left for his home.

Impact

After the incident, Mr Ballack and Mr Lucas did not see each other eye to eye for a few days. Mr Ballack would not go out of his way to increase his work schedule. His productivity decreased drastically. The work started to suffer since a lot of responsibilities had been given to Mr Ballack, owing to his reputation as a hard worker.

Question

What barriers to communication can you identify in this case?

CASE STUDY 2

Inexperienced Employee: Communicating with Two Demanding Bosses

Summary

The case refers to the communication problem faced by inexperienced professionals in their daily lives. In a busy work environment an employee is generally working on multiple projects. Miscommunication or mishandling of any of these projects could have dire consequences. The case projects the communication gap that arises in verbal and email communication. There is also a scenario where the presentation skill of the employee causes miscommunication. In scenarios like these it is always advisable to:

- Clarify doubts – One should not feel hesitant to ask for clarifications or else there will always remain certain amount of ambiguity.
- Conduct 'Sanity checks' – Whenever a task or a deliverable is finished it should be cross checked from an experienced/senior member. Getting a feedback would provide a different perspective on the work completed.
- Use email after a telephonic conversation – Generally there are long duration team calls that take place in a working environment. It is always advisable to follow it up with an email containing a brief summary of the

telephonic discussion which can be used as a reference for future.

Introduction

The protagonist of the case was Edward who had just completed his graduation from a reputed engineering college and had got an opportunity to work with Greenwich & Co. Greenwich was a British management consulting firm which had operations in 100 countries across the globe. Greenwich generally hired consultants from Ivy League B-schools, including Kellogs, Harvard, and Wharton. Greenwich offered consulting services across verticals such as Finance, HR, Food sector, Telecom, and others.

The total revenue of the company was \$2 billion in 2014-2015 and a growth rate of 5%. Recently the company had acquired two new firms – Vista and Richardson & Co. – to strengthen their analytics division. Greenwich consultants required a lot of data analysis which was done by its subsidiary arm Greenwich information Center where Edward has been selected as an analyst. The major responsibilities of an analyst were to conduct market research and gather information from internal as well as external sources. Their output was generally in the form of excel spreadsheets or Power Point presentations.

Alexandra Ciric, Edward's Manager – A financial service expert, Alexandra had been with the firm for the past eight years with an unparalleled experience. She was the heart and soul of the financial sector in the firm and was a very busy person. She was extremely hard working as well as a little short-tempered. She tended to get frustrated if the work was not completed according to her expectations. She worked out of the Shanghai office.

Mark Presco, Edward's Manager – Mark had recently joined the firm and it's been just one year. He was very candid personality but could be very demanding at times.

Problem

Edward has been in the firm for almost three months but was under utilized. The amount of work done by him was very low and he felt frustrated at times. He ultimately decided to call Alexandra to share his problem.

A short transcript of the conversation is as follows:

Edward: *Hey Alexandra! I was wondering when I would be getting staffed on a project. It has been three months and I have not been able to work on anything. The mid-year reviews are also around the corner.*

Alexandra (interrupting him in between): *Edward, I am in India right now for a client visit. Don't worry you will be assigned to something very soon. Meanwhile, can you please write all your queries and send a mail? Thanks.*

Meanwhile Mark, the manager of retail banking division, offers Edward a project which would require his capacity of more than half a day for five weeks. Edward explains the situation to Mark about a possible assignment from

Alexandra. But Mark convinces Edward that his project would be a very good opportunity for him to get visibility on the floor.

Edward gets an approval from Alexandra but is told to give priority to her work whenever it is given to him.

Impact

While working with Mark Edward devotes his full time to the project and develops a liking for the work. After four weeks Alexandra unexpectedly mails Edward about an urgent client deliverable needed to be completed by the end of day. Edward is in the final stage of completion of his work with Mark. He feels that he will be able to complete both the tasks at hand but at the end of day he is left with two hours for the deadline of Alexandra's project. He hurriedly completes a presentation and mails directly to his manager.

The presentation was a washout. Both Mark and Alexandra were left dissatisfied with the project submission by Edward.

She pointed out the figures across the years were almost constant and such small change did not really count as decreasing rate. She also expressed her anguish over the formatting of the presentation. The series label and category names had not been mentioned. Mark also lashed out on Edward for not finishing his task.

Question

How do you think Edward should have communicated to both Mark and Alexandra?

CASE STUDY 3

The Autocratic Boss

Summary

The case illustrates how the attitude of an autocratic boss affects the productivity of the workplace. This case illustrates the communication problem that is quite predominant in a conservative working environment such as India.

Introduction

Mr Victor worked in a leading IT firm, ABC Consulting Limited, as the Project Lead. He was occupying a critical position in the given domain for long time. He was well known among the clients for his excellent delivery of the projects. He had received many accolades from his clients appreciating his extraordinary performance. He had been working in the onshore location for the past few years and had returned to the offshore office a few days back.

Problem

While working onsite, Victor was known to be rude to his offshore peers when a delivery was due. His rudeness was disliked by his subordinates and peers. Since he was quite popular among the clients, the senior management could not do anything about his behaviour. His attitude towards his peers and subordinates was known to almost everyone in other projects. Because of this, no one agreed to work under his supervision. The senior management, therefore, decided to put two freshers under him who were unaware about the aggressive side of his nature.

Priya was an aspiring professional who had entered the firm with high hopes and expectations. She was glad that she had been assigned to a critical project right at the beginning of her career. She was assigned to work with Mr Victor's along with Balaji, another fresher. She performed the task assigned to her sincerely. But Victor was always finding faults with her, no matter how perfectly she completed her

task. He always insisted that she had to focus more on the quality of her work. Appreciation was not all forthcoming, even if Priya did a good job.

Victor was quite aloof and unapproachable; it was impossible to meet him and discuss issues with him. She sincerely wanted to improve the quality of her work and was not sure what Victor expected from her. This demotivated her tremendously and she ceased to demonstrate interest in her work.

This increased the communication gap between Victor and Priya. Victor assumed that Priya was least bothered about the seriousness of the work. Being a perfectionist to the core, he found this attitude intolerable.

After a few days, Priya fell sick. Victor assumed that Priya was finding excuses for not performing the task. He called her up and fired at her without considering the fact she was unwell. This offended Priya further. She later raises this issue to senior management and expresses her discomfort

to work under Victor. She refused to work under Victor in future, whereas she had been one of the critical resources in the project.

Impact

Being a critical resource, it was difficult for the management to find a replacement for her position. Moreover the management was sceptical that even if they did find a replacement, would the new person survive under Victor? This was a serious issue as the management could not always keep replacing employees. This also affected client-side relationships as well.

Questions

1. How should one deal with an autocratic boss?
2. What is the role of management communication in this case?

INTERVIEW

What is the value of effective communication according to you?

Effective communication is a basic prerequisite for achievement of organizational goals. Communication leads to a better team as well as individual performance as it presents “one version of truth” for all.

Why is communication so critical?

It is critical for the organizations to ensure that their goals and strategies are understood well and keeps everyone on the same page of organizational dossier. Effective communication fosters trust within the organization amongst all level of organizational team, uplifts the team spirit and leads to a positive well-rounded growth for the employees and the organizations. With communication, associates get to understand their jobs better and feel more involved in them.

To summarize, communication is the link between knowledge and information; possession of knowledge is of no use until it is converted into information which is achieved by effective communication. The quote – “Knowledge is power” should be modified to “*applied knowledge is power*” and application of knowledge requires effective communication.

Do you follow any writing style guidelines? As in reports, proposals, e-mails, etc. Is your organization strict with respect to Business writing?

Nothing stipulated, just maintaining a formal style for organizational communication.

Kamal Atal,
Regional Vice President Finance,
Hyatt International South West Asia.

Chapter 4

ANALYSING TRANSACTIONS: THE UNITS OF COMMUNICATION

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Be aware of your communication style and that of others.
- Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy interactions.
- Understand that people essentially operate from three ego states.

INTRODUCTION

Human personality is multifaceted. The Freudian concepts of *id*, *ego*, and *superego* represent factions that frequently collide with one another to manifest themselves in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. This theory influenced Eric Berne, who formalized his theory of transactional analysis based on the dimensions of personality. The credit of imparting a “unit” to communication belongs to Berne. He defined *transaction* as the fundamental unit of social intercourse and *stroke* as a fundamental unit of social action.

Thus, transactional analysis is the method of studying interactions among individuals. With this definition, Berne defined the basic unit of analysis. In his book *I’m OK You’re OK*, Thomas Harris claimed that with transactional analysis, a new language of psychology had been found.²

As Berne pointed out, when one is analysing transactions, it is important to look beyond words and concentrate on how the message is being conveyed. This takes into account the non-verbal signals that identify the ego state from which the person is communicating. The importance of non-verbal communication was also emphasized by Mehrabian³, another prominent scholar. According to Mehrabian, when an individual is speaking, 7 per cent of the listener’s attention is focused on the actual words, 38 per cent on the way the words are delivered (tone, emphasis on certain words, and so on), and 55 per cent on facial expressions. This indicates the degree of importance the listener places on non-verbal communication. At least initially, it can be said that the listener forms an impression based on the non-verbal cues that the speaker uses to influence the audience.

The theory of transactional analysis can be incorporated in the teaching of business communication in the classroom. This tool can help students understand themselves and others better, as well as appreciate the individual strengths and weaknesses of others. With its help, students also learn to adapt their communication styles with those of others, becoming more proficient communicators in turn.

“The unit of social intercourse is called a transaction. If two or more people encounter each other... sooner or later one of them will speak, or give some other indication of acknowledging the presence of the others. This is called transactional stimulus. Another person will then say or do something which is in some way related to the stimulus, and that is called the transactional response.”

Eric Berne¹



Communication Bytes 4.1

Eric Berne and Sigmund Freud approached communication differently. While the Freudian approach involved questioning patients about themselves, the Berne approach called for direct observation during the time a transaction took place.

THE ROLE OF INTONATION

Intonation is the vocal emphasis that one places on words. The meaning of a phrase is then extracted from the emphasized words. See the following example, in which the italicized version represents the speaker's actual meaning and thoughts, while the terms in bold signify the words that the speaker stressed.

- **Did** he give you a thousand rupees?
Did he finally give you the money?
- Did **he** give you a thousand rupees?
Was it Mr Brown who gave you the money, or was it somebody else?
- Did he **give** you a thousand rupees?
*Did he put the money in your hand or did he just deposit it in your bank account?
How did he manage to get the money?*
- Did he give **you** a thousand rupees?
Of all people, why did he give you the money?
- Did he give you **a** thousand rupees?
Did he give you one thousand rupees, or more?
- Did he give you a **thousand** rupees?
Did he give you a hundred rupees or a thousand rupees?
- Did he give you a thousand **rupees**?
Was the money in Indian currency?

STROKES

Berne defined a stroke as the fundamental unit of social action. A *stroke* is a sign of recognition or an acknowledgement. Inspired by the work of René Spitz, a pioneer in the area of child development, Berne introduced the concept of strokes in transactional analysis. Spitz observed that infants deprived of cuddling, touching, and hugging (in other words, infants who did not receive any strokes) were prone to emotional and other difficulties. Berne included positive contact such as smiles, nods, and handshakes as strokes. He also postulated that any stroke, be it positive or negative (which would include frowns, curled lips, and so on), is better than no stroke at all.

THE THREE EGO STATES

The core of transaction analysis is the identification of the three ego states behind each and every transaction. Berne defined an *ego state* as a consistent pattern of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding, consistent pattern of behaviour. The development of the concept of ego states has its genesis in a counseling session wherein Berne was treating a 35-year-old lawyer. The lawyer constantly referred to himself as a little boy. In later sessions, he would keep asking Dr Berne whether he was talking to the lawyer or the little boy. This greatly interested Berne, who saw a single individual display “two states.” Berne referred to these states as “Child” and “Adult.” He also identified a third stage, namely, the “Parent” stage, which depended on how the child was exposed to parents. Berne later discovered that these states were present in all patients, and it was more or less a universal phenomenon.

It is significant that the descriptions of the ego states do not correspond to the dictionary definitions. They are also considerably different from the Freudian concepts of the id, ego, and superego states. It may be also noted that biological conditions are irrelevant to these ego states and that individuals shift from one ego state to another in transactions. Berne called these states *phenomenological realities*, as they were observable and practical, in contrast to the Freudian states, which were theoretical and unobservable.

The three distinct states are called:

- The parent state
- The adult stage
- The child stage

The Parent State

The parent state is produced by the “playback” of recordings in the brain of imposed external events perceived by the person before one’s complete understanding of one’s surroundings. This might include events from approximately the first five years of one’s life. It includes thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behavioural patterns based on messages or lessons learned from parents and other parental or authoritarian sources. It includes words like “should” and “should-not;” “ought” and “ought not;” “always” and “never;” and also prejudiced views (not based on logic or facts) of things such as religion, dress, traditions, work, products, money, raising children, and companies. The parent state also includes nurturing views (sympathetic, caring views), critical views (fault-finding, judgment, condescending views), and other forms of parental authority. This includes expressions such as “do not...,” “you had better...,” “you should...,” “you ought not to behave...” These are accompanied by facial expressions adopted by parents. Thus, this state is comprised of the taught-concepts.

The Child State

The child state is the response to sensory experiences. These are usually in the form of feelings like wonder, fear, exclamation, surprise, glee, and so on. They are attitudes and behavioural patterns based on impulses and feelings that one experiences as a child. This state, thus,



The child state is the response to sensory experiences. It includes feelings like wonder, surprise, and glee.

POINT			COUNTERPOINT
	Transactional analysis is purely a psychological concept with limited application in business.	In business, managing people is extremely important. Hence it is wise to know the psychological underpinnings of communication.	
	The three ego states are fixed.	The three ego states change with time, context, audience, and individual maturity.	
	Transaction analysis is descriptive.	Transaction analysis is predictive. It helps to predict responses and reactions and plan one's communication.	

is comprised of the felt-concepts. Some phrases one might utter in the child state include the following: “Wow! The cake looks really yummy!” and “Isn’t my PowerPoint presentation looking good?”

The Adult State

The adult state develops after the child state and the parent state. The adult state helps in retrospection, construction of reality, analysis, and feedback. Thus, only those taught-concepts and felt-concepts are accepted that are applicable and appropriate to the present situation. The adult state allows the child or parent to validate external as well as internal data. Thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behavioural patterns are based on objective analyses of information. The adult state is comprised of the thought-concepts of life. Such statements might start with phrases like “I feel that this . . .” and “Let us discuss the matter before arriving at a conclusion . . .”

ANALYSING TRANSACTIONS

Transactional analysis involves the identification of the ego state that directs the transaction stimulus and executes the transaction response. There can be nine types of interaction between the three states of parent (P), adult (A), and child (C). Among these three states, the initiator of the transaction is called a transactional stimulus or the agent, while the response is called the transactional response. The nine kinds of interaction are:

- Parent ↔ Parent
- Adult ↔ Adult
- Child ↔ Child
- Parent ↔ Adult
- Parent ↔ Child
- Adult ↔ Parent
- Adult ↔ Child
- Child ↔ Parent
- Child ↔ Adult

Complementary Transactions

Appropriate and expected responses make up healthy transactions and are called *complementary transactions*. According to Dr Berne, communication will happen if the transactions are complementary. In a diagrammatic representation, the transactions make a parallel line.

Some examples of complementary transaction are:

- The supervisor (parent state) asks the new recruit whether he was feeling comfortable and the latter (child state) replies in the affirmative.

- The nervous new recruit (child state) asks the supervisor about the ways he would like the report to be presented and the boss (parent state) guides the new recruit.
- The child (child state) asks her mother to give her food, and the mother (parent state) readily complies.
- The critical parent (parent state) advises his teenage son against smoking cigarettes and the son promises to remedy the addiction (adult state).
- Seema (child state) says to her colleague: “You know the boss really praised my work in front of everybody! I was thrilled.” The colleague (adult state) replies, “Oh that’s wonderful! I am so happy for you!”

Crossed Transaction

The transactions that yield unexpected responses are called *crossed transactions*. These are represented by crossed lines. They are the cause of most difficulties and roadblocks in business, personal, and social situations.

Some examples of crossed transactions are:

- A wife (child state) asks her husband, “How am I looking?” The husband (adult state) replies, “Oh, I think you should remove the makeup. It’s rather excessive, isn’t it?”
- Parent (parent state) advises a young child to always plan her study schedule. The child (adult state) replies that planning is useless and doesn’t yield results.
- Manager (child state) exclaims, “Isn’t my PowerPoint presentation for the conference looking good?” to a subordinate. The employee (Adult stage) replies, “I feel that the colours are too bold and you should reduce the number of slides.”

Duplex or Ulterior Transactions

Transactions that seemingly look adult but have hidden or implied meaning behind them are called *duplex* or *ulterior transactions*. They have a double purpose, which is why they are called duplex transactions. Diagrammatically, these are represented by broken arrows. For example, the statement, “The boss is especially always pleased with you” is a loaded one. The word “especially” carries a double meaning and the speaker probably thinks that their supervisor is partial towards the person referred to in the statement.

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS AND BUSINESS

In order to succeed in business, it is imperative to be a good psychologist. It is important to be sensitive to people and perceptive about situations. Seasoned professionals, especially those working in the service, sales, and communication areas rarely rush into presentations until they know the kind of people they are dealing with. They understand that people are inherently different from each other and that one must earn others’ trust before a product can sell. People who are successful in the communications field naturally possess excellent communication skills and instinctively know how to influence and persuade people. Their mind absorbs information, events, and experiences much like a camcorder.

Effective transactions result in a good rapport. Rapport serves two functions, namely, making interactions enjoyable and building a personal connection. In some cases, it facilitates greater disclosure and loyalty as well. Transactional analysis, thus, offers an insightful method to remove dysfunctional and inappropriate behaviour and focus people’s energies on providing positive strokes. It aims to eliminate the use of toxic language, reduce the games people play, and make people aware of honest communication at the levels of the parent (values), the adult (rationality), and the child (emotions).



Effective transactions result in great rapport. Rapport serves two functions, namely, enjoyable interactions and personal connection.

HOW TO MANAGE CONVERSATIONS

In the article “The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why” by Deborah Tannen,⁴ the advice is to hone one’s awareness of different linguistic styles, to develop flexible approaches to meetings, performance reviews, and mentoring, and to adjust one’s style to those with whom one is interacting. Dr Tannen defines *linguistic styles* as the way in which people say what they have to say. Like the turn-taking phenomena where one person speaks and the other listens. Linguistic styles include tone of voice, speed of speaking, pitch and inflection, directness or indirectness, word choice, pacing, pauses, and the use of such elements as jokes, innuendo, humour, stories, questions, and apologies. According to Tannen, language not only communicates ideas but also negotiates relationships. It is through language and its effective use that we establish a rapport with the other person. Her research concluded that people in powerful positions are more likely to reward linguistic styles similar to their own. Tannen also illustrates eight different kinds of speaking—this includes sharing credit (using “we” rather than “I”), asking questions (without any inhibitions), and being indirect (speaking indirectly while directing others, especially subordinates).

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

One way to understand transactional analysis is by conducting a structural analysis, that is, the analysis of individual personality. It is a method of analysing a person’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviour based on the phenomena of ego states.

When interacting with others, people take certain specific psychological positions and conclude any one or more of the following:

- I am smart.
- I am nervous.
- I do not know anything.
- I am a loser.
- I know nothing.
- I know everything.

When thinking about others, people may conclude any one or more of the following:

- Everybody likes me.
- They all believe in me.
- They trust me.
- They are jealous of me.
- They are mean.
- They should not be trusted.

From this, there emerge four life positions:

- **I am good but you are not:** The person who thinks this is over-confident, aggressive, brash, and willful to the extent of considering other people to be less capable, competent, and strong.
- **I am good and you are good too:** A person who thinks this is assertive, confident, mature, and capable and considers that others might share these same qualities. Thus, there is mutual respect and understanding.
- **I am not good, you are not good:** The person who thinks this is passive, shy, unwilling to take risks, and not confident enough. He or she considers others to be the same way.
- **I am not good but you are:** The person who thinks this is passive, shy, unwilling to take risks, and not confident enough, but considers others to be supremely confident, more capable, stronger, and more powerful.

Once a position is taken, people seek to keep their world predictable by reinforcing it. Games are played from this life position and scripts are acted out, along the lines of what has been shown in Exhibit 4.1.

UNDERSTANDING EGO STATES

There are various methods one might use in order to understand the various ego states.

Child State

The following questions/ideas might prove helpful in determining if one is in the child state:

- Think of something you did as a child that you still do now.
- Think of a reaction of yours that was quite childlike in retrospect.
- Consider if you have acted unreasonable or stubborn recently.

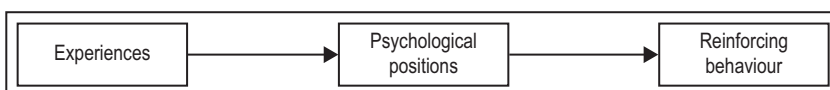


Exhibit 4.1 Changes in Life Positions



Information Bytes 4.1

The game “Why Don’t You, Yes But...” is a favourite in the corporate sector. Here is how it goes:

A leader calls a meeting and invites suggestions from the attendees. As soon as he or she is given a suggestion, he or she responds with, “That is a good idea, but it won’t work because...” In this manner, each suggestion is met with an elaborate excuse. This goes on until the leader comes up with a chosen idea that is proclaimed as the best decision.

The team has really no option but to agree; the leader, for his or her part feels that he or she has done their bit for promoting participative decision-making.

Parent State

In order to understand whether one is in the parent state, the following questions might be considered:

- Do you use words like your parents did?
- Do some parental messages reverberate in your mind?
- Are you by nature maternal, paternal, or authoritarian?

Adult State

In order to understand whether one is in the adult state, the following line of thought might be helpful:

- Think of situations where you gathered evidence and then reacted.
- Think of situations where you prevented yourself from making a hasty judgment.
- Think of situations where you controlled your feelings and acted in a mature manner.

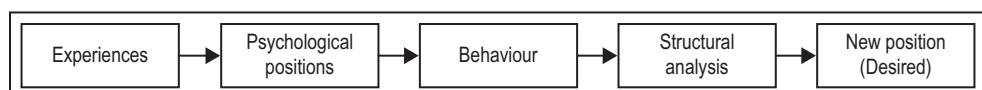
Structural analysis leads to a process of self-discovery. This helps us to change positions, look for new experiences, and capture them in our memory. A transactional analyst with a strong adult ego state can help another individual strengthen their adult ego state by discarding fixated material from the past and updating the content of the parent and child ego states. The content of the ego states can be updated throughout life with new feelings and ideas based on current reality. The “changed mind” changes the personality structure and is observable in the person’s behaviour. Exhibit 4.2 explains this in a nutshell.

CERTAIN HABITS OF INEFFECTIVE CONVERSATIONALISTS

Despite the best of intentions, people develop habits that they are not really conscious of. Some of these avoidable habits include:

- Talking nineteen to the dozen and not giving others a chance to speak is one such habit. Others see people who do this as colossal bores and gradually that person is left all alone.
- There are certain people who receive (ideas, information, feelings) but do not give. They disclose little, acknowledge rarely, and their compliments are few and far between. This leads to conversation becoming one-way and monotonous. One does not know where one stands with such people and what interests them. In the absence of any reciprocal response, people gradually withdraw from such people.
- Sometimes listeners steal the topic from the initiator of the conversation. This means that the original speaker does not have a chance to discuss what he or she wanted to. These people are generally ignored because they are not good listeners.
- There are also people who give unsolicited advice whenever a problem is presented. Their utterances frequently begin with phrases like “Why don’t you...,” “When I had

Exhibit 4.2 How to Arrive at the Desired New Position



this problem...,” “You must...,” and so on. People generally avoid such advisors because they are unable to provide the empathy people are looking for. This, in turn, makes the listener feel inadequate.

- Certain people make the mistake of talking confidently about something, even though they are ignorant about the situation. They underestimate the listener’s competency and fool themselves into believing that they know much about the topic, situation, or event at hand. This results in people doubting the worthiness and credibility of the person.
- Some people also have the habit of interrupting others before they finish speaking. This results in the original speaker being annoyed. Assertive speakers may request the person to let them complete their sentences.
- Sometimes people indulge in direct disagreement while communicating; this is a characteristic trait of aggressive personalities. Phrases like “I do not agree with you” or “You are wrong” might be used by this kind of a person. Generally other people tend to avoid speakers like this. Even healthy discussions might be avoided to minimize unpleasantness.

SUMMARY

- Transaction analysis offers a frame of reference that most people can understand and observe in their lives.
- Research in the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, and psychiatry corroborates much of the theory propounded by Berne in transactional analysis. Many of Berne’s concepts and techniques are applied by psychologists, counselors, educators, and consultants in their respective fields.
- That transaction is a unit of measure of interpersonal communication (what people do and say to one another) is well established; it also provides a contextual basis to communication, making it more scientific and practical.
- Berne’s observation that the brain functions like a tape recorder to preserve and if necessary repeat experiences in a form recognizable as “ego states” is significant as it explains the reasons why people communicate the way they do.
- Transactional analysis is a tool of self-awareness that helps bring about positive changes in one’s life by fostering healthy interactions. It is also a tool to help one better relate to others. More importantly, it helps uncover the complicated masks that people often wear when dealing with others. It helps people be more comfortable with themselves and others.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Transactional analysis is said to be “an easily understandable yet sophisticated psychological theory about people’s thinking, feelings, and behaviour.” Analyse the benefits of transactional analysis to a management professional in light of this statement.
2. In what ways do you think the theory of transactional analysis is different from the Freudian concept of psychological states?
3. Enumerate the ways in which transactional analysis can operate as a communication model.
4. “It is better to give negative strokes than no strokes at all.” Define strokes. Explain the validity of this statement.
5. Give examples to illustrate how transactional analysis can help to explain communication breakdowns.
6. “Transactional analysis demonstrates how interpersonal communication can be influenced by intrapersonal communication.” Using examples, explain how crossed transactions differ from complementary transactions.
7. How can a person’s role or roles influence their self concept?
8. How and why do individuals present different aspects of themselves when communicating with others?

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Indicate the probable communication transaction style ego states in each of the instances described. You can select from the following options:
 - Free Child
 - Critical Parent

- Nurturing Parent
- Adult

Instance 1:

Manager to new recruit: Can you please repeat the instructions that I just gave you? Have you understood

what I am saying? Is there anything you don't understand? I want the instructions to be followed exactly as I have dictated.

Instance 2:

A: Why didn't you tell me earlier that you will not be able to do the work assigned to you?

B: I told you that this work is difficult for me.

A: See Bhaskar, you have to do whatever you are told to do.

B: In that case, you can go to hell! You are not my senior in any case.

C to A and B: Why don't we seriously resolve this issue? Apparently there is some misunderstanding.

Instance 3:

A to his Manager: You always listen to B and not to me! This is not fair!

Manager: This is ridiculous A. You know I am fair and impartial; I have evidence that indicts you.

Instance 4:

Recruiter: Describe one incident that shows your leadership skills.

Candidate A: See, here are my testimonials. I was the football captain of the school. These pictures will give you a clear idea of my excellent leadership skills.

Candidate B: I believe that leadership is learned in more ways than one. More rhetoric does not make a leader. Leadership is action. There are two instances that depict my leadership skills....

Instance 5:

Child: Mummy, please look at the picture!

Parent A: It's not wise to disturb somebody while they are sleeping.

Parent B: Be quiet and do your work.

Parent C: Oh wonderful! You paint beautifully.

Parent D: See even I can paint as well as you can!!

2. Read the following situations and answer the questions that follow:

Situation 1:

Vivek Sharma is a sales representative marketing high-end servers to institutions. He represents a well known multinational firm. Today, he has a meeting with a large account, a client with whom the company has had a long-standing relationship. The company is planning to install three new servers in the client's new facilities and Sharma's firm is one of the important vendors. He is quite confident of "cracking the deal," as he puts it. Sharma reaches the venue exactly on time. Here is a transcript of the meeting that follows.

AP: (the client's purchase manager): Oh hello Mr Sharma! Come in, come in. Take a seat. You're from ABC Limited, aren't you?

VS: Yes, thanks. You see, we have been your suppliers for high-end servers for the past 5 years.

AP: Oh, you were the ones who supplied us with those servers?

VS: Yes. There were absolutely no complaints about them. That is why I believe you should opt for us as the preferred vendors for your new servers.

AP: Well, I can say that you're wrong there. Our log shows that there were no less than seven issues with those specific servers, and reports reveal that we had a great deal of downtime. Please check your records.

VS: I can assure you that our records are in place. You must be confusing us with some other firm. Please check with Mr Sahai of your company. We were dealing with him before this.

AP: Confused? Oh no. I assure you that our records are in place. I do not know what arrangement you had with Mr Sahai, but right now I am heading the department and...

VS: Oh, we did not have any arrangement as such...

AP: Well, all I have to say is that we faced a lot of service issues with your firm and we would like this to be sorted out before any further discussion. Do get me in touch with a senior manager and I would like to renegotiate terms with ABC Limited before we arrive at a concrete deal.

Questions:

- Did the meeting go as planned? What do you think went wrong?
- Comment on the ego states used by VS and AP.
- Suggest alternate transactions for the dialogue in the given passage.
- How is transactional analysis useful for sales professionals?

Situation 2:

It's time for the annual performance review. Sarvesh Bahri is the HR manager who is interviewing the new management trainee, Krishna S. The time has come for the confirmation of the new trainees, and this interview is important for Krishna. Here is the transcript of the appraisal interview. (SB is the HR manager and KS is the trainee.)

SB: Come in Krishna. Please be seated. How have you been? I have not seen you since you joined. I conducted your campus interview, didn't I?

KS: I am good, Sir. It's a pleasure to meet you. Yes, I recall that you conducted my selection interview. I really enjoyed being interviewed by you. I still remember

your question on the Industrial Disputes Act. You really got me there...

SB: Oh, you do? Well, I have your reports here from your branch head, and he has indicated a few areas where improvement is needed...

KS (interrupting him): Improvement...? Well, whenever I worked with him he always encouraged me. In fact, he praised my handling of the press conference just the other day.

SB: Let me complete my sentence, Krishna. Unless we know our weaknesses, we cannot work on them and improve.

KB: But surely he must have mentioned some good points too.

SB: Of course! He has praised your sincerity, professional attitude, and dedication to our organization. However, having said that, the areas to improve are punctuality, timeliness in submissions, and interpersonal relationships.

KB: Interpersonal relationships? But I have good relationships with everybody. They all like me.

SB: But the manager informed me that you tend to be self-centered and arrogant at times.

KS: That's not fair, Sir. I'm sure Vishakha must have had a hand in this. She isn't particularly fond of me. And for no reason at all!

SB: Well, Krishna, there is no need to blame anybody. As you know, relationships are very important and perception becomes reality after some time. Well, that's about it. I will give you my feedback on this soon. Take care. Bye!

Questions:

- If you were Krishna, how would you have handled the interview?
- Analyse the ego states in the transactions that took place in the given situation.
- How is knowledge of transactional analysis useful in a performance appraisal interview?

Situation 3:

The campus recruitment process has begun and all the students of this leading business school are on tenterhooks. Lateral placements are the ones that are being keenly contested, with most experienced professionals looking to "crack" them, as the popular lingo goes. Abhijeet Bhatia is one such candidate. An engineer by qualification, he worked with Indian Oil Company, a public sector enterprise, for nearly four years before joining the post-graduate course in management. He is scheduled to appear for an interview with McKinney, a private consultant firm, for the much coveted position of an Associate Consultant. The first round of interviews

has been scheduled for today. Only one interviewer is present. His name is Peter Ulmann and he is a Harvard alumnus. Here is the transcript of the interview. (PU is the interviewer and AB is the student.)

AB: Sir, may I come in please?

PU: Oh sure. Take a seat.

AB: How are you Sir?

PU: Call me Peter, Aabhii-jeet. Did I pronounce your name correctly?

AB: Actually, it's Abhi-jeet.

PU: So, tell me Abhijeet...what is it that attracts you to our firm?

AB: Well, for one, the firm has a reputation of being a very good employer. Moreover, the nature of the job and the offer of posting in London are also quite attractive.

PU: What do you know about the reputation of the firm? I thought the previous question would make you tell me something about yourself.

AB (fumbling): Well, I was going to say that Sir...um... Peter. It's just that I have heard a lot about the firm. Everybody feels it's a good place to work.

PU: You still haven't answered my question.

AB: Which question would that be Sir...um...Peter?

PU: Well, forget it. So, you have worked in the public sector, right?

AB: Yes.

PU: I have heard about the culture of public sector companies in India. What were your experiences?

AB (warming up): Sir, the reason I opted for an MBA was because I wanted to work in a private firm where personal capabilities are given due recognition and there is less bureaucratic red tape.

PU (interrupting him): So, you felt stifled working in IOC? Any bad experiences?

AB: Plenty. I was the supervisor at the shop floor, and the unionism was very difficult to handle. In addition to that, the system followed in the company was one of command and control. It wasn't my type at all.

PU: Let's change tracks here. Tell me about some of your strengths.

AB: Quick decision-making, knowledge about the subject, and ability to quickly grasp the basic issues.

PU: Well, Abhi-jeet...it was nice to meet you. You will hear from us soon. Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

AB: Well, Peter...what's the job profile like?

PU: We have already communicated that to your placement officer. I am sure you would have already seen it.

AB: Thanks Peter.

Questions:

- Critically comment on the process of the interview. Do you think AB could have done a better job?
- What could have been appropriate transactions on the part of AB? Which ego states were involved?
- What interview tips can you give AB as far as transactions are concerned?

Situation 4:

10 am meetings are a routine feature at Interlay Corporation, a sales firm. The usual agenda consists of a review of the sales visits, sharing experiences, discussing strategies, and so on. Lasting for about an hour, the meetings are led by the branch head, Sanjiv Gupte. The team comprises five to six professionals. They are AB, CD, EF, GH, and IJ. SG is leading the agenda. Here is the edited transcript of one such meeting.

SG: Hello everybody. Welcome to the meeting. Where is AB? He should be here.

All: Hello Sanjiv.

EF: AB, our star performer, is always late. Haven't you noticed?

SG: Well we can grant some liberties to our star performer. Here you are AB! Come in quickly! We were just talking about you...

AB: I bet.

SG: Now let me set the agenda right away. First, the expense for sales calls has shot up considerably. I want to discuss this. Second, client XYZ has expressed displeasure at our service and maintenance. No, do not interrupt me, EF and GH. Let me finish what I have to say. Third, team cohesiveness is a big issue with me. I propose to invite Professor Vaidyanathan from my alma mater to deliver a talk on team building and innovation the day after tomorrow.

AB: Wow!

EF: Oh no! That theoretical stuff they teach you at fancy MBA schools! Surely we don't need that Sanjiv!

IJ: Day after tomorrow is a Sunday; I can't possibly come to work on that day.

SG: Sorry guys! The meeting's been fixed.

(Collective groans are heard. Only AB does not say anything.)

EF: Now can I say something about the service and maintenance issue?

SG: No. Let's proceed in order. First, let's talk about the expense factor. The entertainment allowance has been exceeding the stated budget. I want an explanation for this. The outstation allowance has also been high and the mobile expense bill has shown a tremendous increase. Any ideas here, guys?

CD: This is not something extraordinary, Sanjiv.

SG: I did not say so, CD. Your bills are the highest.

CD: That is what I am saying, Sanjiv. I think we discussed last time that whenever we are looking for new clients, the mobile bills and other expenses are bound to shoot up. It is more of investment. After my 12 years of service to the company, I can hardly be accused of pilfering.

SG: Nobody's accusing you...I am just talking generally.

CD: But just now you said...

SG: Well, forget it. But do keep track of these expenses as they lower bottom lines and consequently the incentives.

EF: Can I say something now? Do I have permission?

SG: Go ahead.

EF: The client in question is quite tiresome. Ask GH.

SG: Let's not blame others. Remember, the customer is always king.

GH (mumbles something): Uh...er...um...

EF: Well, I wish that you would just listen to us...

SG: No. You know my stand. The customer is always right. No more complaints.

EF (shrugging): In that case...

SG: All right guys. Buck up team. We've got to beat the competitor! Also, remember Professor Vaidyanathan on Sunday! I am getting late for the next meeting. See you all!

Questions:

- Analyse the transactions as shown in the transcript. What can you deduce about the communication style of each of the participants and the team lead?
 - What roles do meeting chairs play in conducting meetings?
3. You are about to leave for the office. Suddenly you hear a loud shriek. Your small child has hurt himself. You tell the day caregiver to fetch the cotton. You console the child, apply medicine, and sit with him for a considerable time. By this time, the child has gone off to sleep. You give the caregiver some instructions and rush to office.

When you reach your office, your supervisor is waiting for you and gives you a long lecture about the negligence of duty you have expressed by not reporting for work on time.

After going through the given situation, answer the following questions:

- What do you think is the best thing to do under the circumstances?

- Taking into consideration the ego state you are in, how would you have felt as a child if the supervisor had been a parent or a strict teacher?
4. Reflect on the transactions you've had today with your spouse/partner, parent, supervisor, and co-worker. Now answer the following questions:
 - Evaluate the transaction with the help of a structural diagram. Were there any crossed or ulterior transactions? How did you deal with them?
 - What was your psychological position with respect to the person you were transacting with?

WEB-BASED EXERCISE

1. Refer to the following Web site: <<http://www.businessballs.com/transactionalanalysis.htm>> There is a section on the contamination of the ego states. Under what conditions of communication does contamination occur?

FURTHER READING

- Eric Berne, *Games People Play* (New York: Grove Press, 1964).
- Thomas A. Harris, *I'm OK. You're OK* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1967).
- C. Steiner, *Scripts People Live: Transactional Analysis of Life Scripts* (New York: Grove Press, 1971).
- D. Tannen, "The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why?" *Harvard Business Review* (September 1995) 138–148.

ENDNOTES

1. Taken from <http://www.ericberne.com/transactional_analysis_description.htm>, accessed on May 11, 2011.
2. Thomas A. Harris, *I'm OK. You're OK* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1967).
3. A. Mehrabian, *Nonverbal Communication* (Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atherton, 1972).
4. D. Tannen, "The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why?" *Harvard Business Review* (September 1995) 138–148.

CASE STUDY 1

Strike at Omkara Tea Estate: Communicating With Labour Union Leaders

Summary

This is a case study concerning a labor problem in a tea garden which led to a major crisis due to the ineffective communication on the part of the manager. The communication barriers arose because the people working there, spoke different languages. The problem was further fuelled by ego conflicts and poor persuasive appeals.

Introduction

In the Omkara Tea Estate in West Bengal, Mr Madhur Kulkarni was the newly appointed Assistant Manager in place of Mr Gupta. Prior to this, he reported to Mr Sharma who had been working as the manager at Omkara tea estate for the last 10 years. Ms Manjula Chatterjee, a young lady in her

early 20's was Mr Kulkarni's private secretary (PA), and his establishment had about 25 people with most of whom working as the clerical staff.

The tea estate had an annual turnover of about 120 cr and was earning a decent profit after tax. The management had to give out bonuses to its 5000 strong labour class during Durga Puja festival. The usual practice was to discuss the bonus amount with the labour leader at the level of the assistant manager. The assistant manager would brief the amount to the manager who would then discuss it with the top management. The bonus would be distributed to the laborers well in advance of the *puja* festival to enable them to purchase new clothes, household articles, sweets, gifts, etc.

Problem

Being new to the area, Mr Kulkarni had no knowledge of Bengali and the local dialects. The labourers were unable to clearly understand what he spoke because his Hindi

was also loaded with a strong Marathi accent. He also had a habit of speaking at a fast pace and his sentences were often left incomplete.

The manager Mr Sharma used to be too busy with the top management, foreign clients, etc. , and had to travel extensively. While being at the tea estate, he would be surrounded by other managers from the various departments like finance, marketing, and HR who would be busy putting forth several issues. Being second-in-command, Mr Kulkarni had to sit through these meetings and take instructions from the manager on the business.

As Durga Puja approached, the labour leaders as a practice started approaching the assistant manager, who was simply too busy. The labour leaders were noticing restlessness in the labour class and tried to get an appointment with manager but he redirected them to Mr Kulkarni. The assistant manager's PA, Ms Chatterjee tried to talk to Mr Kulkarni about the gravity of the situation; due to her limited knowledge of English and Hindi she could not make her boss understand the gravity of the situation clearly.

Finally she managed to fix up a meeting between the labour representatives and the assistant manager. The meeting took place but it was futile due to the language problem, and the aggressive communication style of the assistant manager himself. This was misunderstood by labourers thinking that the company wanted to avoid paying higher bonus this time vis-a-vis its increased business and profit.

The labor leaders tried several times to meet the manager but he simply use to sent a message saying that they would have to approach the assistant manager and he would get the information from him. The manager did later speak to

him but the assistant manager presented him with his side of the story.

Impact

The labourers got agitated due to delay in the payment and called for a strike leading to a lot of tension. The strike was a major one leading to a halt in the tea leaves picking work. As the management did not take any major steps to address the issue, the labourers stopped the manager's car, forced him to get down and manhandled him. The police was called in to control the situation.

The senior management got worried as such a situation had never happened at the tea estate. The manager briefed the senior management over the phone and explained to them the problem the way the assistant manager had briefed him. There was no copy of the labourers' demands in his possession as it was filed by the PA of the assistant manager as a routine piece of paper as per his directions.

Finally the district magistrate and the superintendent of the police had to intervene. A joint meeting between the top management and the labour leaders was fixed in the presence of the district administration. The charter of the demands was discussed and the management agreed to release the bonus to the satisfaction of the labourers. The labour leaders agreed to return to work. Due to the strike, the tea estate lost a business of about 30 cr which created a feeling of distrust between the management and the labourers.

Questions

1. What do you think was the root cause of the problem?
2. How could this problem been avoided?

CASE STUDY 2

Communicating Change: Engaging the Employees

Summary

This case deals with the problem of the declining sales of a regional magazine of a major publishing house due to the growing popularity of the internet amongst its users. As a result, the top management have decided to go digital and come up with a website that has online journals, articles, links to informational blogs, etc. But this shift requires hiring of more technical people with expertise in the field of the digital media. Due to this, there are rumours of possible downsizing in near future. The employees feel alienated from the company as they have no role to play in company decisions and their view point is not being considered. Moreover, email is the only medium of communication between the employees and the top management, and sometimes it fails to convey the emotions of both the sides. Due to misinterpretation of the cues, the employees react impulsively.

Introduction

Expression Education was a major publishing company in India that had unmatched market presence for several years. It was established in 1994 and continued to expand its market across the nation. The company published a daily national newspaper and several monthly and fortnightly regional magazines. It was one of the pioneers of magazines for children in the age group of 8-14 years.

The company had its head office in Delhi and regional offices in various cities. The top management used to head the main office and the regional managers looked after the proceedings of the regional offices. The employees at regional office were supposed to report to the regional manager who in turn reported to the head office. The organization did not follow a flat structure.

"Nandan-Kanan" was one of the regional magazines published in the city of Allahabad. Its circulation was limited to the state of Uttar Pradesh. The magazine was a fortnightly publication and was meant for children in the age group

of 9-18 years. The magazine featured short stories, general knowledge articles, sports information, career advice, interviews and life changing moments of eminent personalities. The magazine was a big success with around 45% of the market share in its first year of launch. The magazine was considered by the target consumers as a rich pool of useful information that was easily accessible.

Problem

With the advent of social media and increasing rivalry from the online content, the sales of the magazine plummeted. Over the last three years, the subscription and newsstand sales dwindled to around 28% of the total market share. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn had become the latest fad in the market. When information was just a click away, people were turning away from printed media. For several years there had been virtually no competition for “*Nandan-Kanan*” but gradually, the consumer preferences had changed. Printed media was getting wiped out and social media and internet were moving to monopolize the market.

The employees of the regional office were well aware of this market shift and the declining sales. For the last few months there had been rumours that the head office had decided to completely stop the publication of “*Nandan-Kanan*” and go digital. There was also a buzz that the new hiring that was currently taking place in the regional office was to bring in a new wave of innovation and freshness in the digital world to increase the revenue for the company. The downsizing of older employees was also “big news”.

The employees did not like what they were hearing. They were also concerned with the growth of the company and felt that a change was inevitable in the wake of the market shift. But what they did not understand was the logic behind firing experienced workers. The employees were not a part of decision making and their ideas and insights were also not welcomed by the top management. The employees demanded a face to face meeting with the top management but their request was repeatedly turned down. At the critical time when the job insecurity was taking a toll on the attitude of the employees, e-mail was the only means of communication. Most of the mails were left unanswered by the management.

The employees in turn vented out their anger by speaking ill of the company in the media and resorting to a strike. The candidates coming for the interviews were not allowed to enter the campus, and hence, the recruiting process came to a standstill. Some of the aggressive employees even resorted to vandalism in the campus.

Impact

This had a negative impact on the morale of the employees and the image of the company in the general. Even the new hires were demotivated by such an activity. Apart from the loss of face in media, the company also suffered a financial loss.

Questions

1. How do you think the management should have handled the situation?
2. What tenets of communication should be employed in times of change management?

CASE STUDY 3

Change of Guard: Thrusting Change on Employees

Summary

The case is about a family owned, manufacturing based business firm that recently saw its long-time chairman succumb to a chronic disease. The company was now headed by the only daughter of the late chairman who has returned from US, armed with a MBA degree. Most of the employees of the firm are over 45, with at least 25% being over 55 years or more. The new chairman is interested in fresher perspectives and innovative ideas and wants a change of guard at the workplace.

Introduction

Shikha Goyal was the newly elected chairman of the manufacturing firm XYZ Ltd., and has just arrived from the US, completing her MBA degree. She had a vision for the well-known manufacturing firm and wanted to add a new dimen-

sion to the legacy of her forefathers. While she appreciated the work done by many of the employees who had devoted a major part of their lives in the firm, she now wanted to give the firm a new direction. She strongly felt the importance of inducting fresh blood in the decision-making hierarchy. To achieve this goal, she promoted junior employees and interns who were fresh graduates, who had little experience but dollops of enthusiasm.

Problem

Shikha had appointed Mr Nathulal as her deputy who was previously with the firm's sales division. His aggressive marketing skills have proved to be successful. Mr Nathulal now called a board meeting where he proposed a new schedule for the on-going production process which would meet their targets well before time, thus leaving time for the firm to squeeze in few more orders. The original schedule for the orders were for 12 months which were now reduced to around six months with the introduction of a new Enterprise

Management System, which was different from the one, followed by the company for a long period of time.

The employees were now expected to work at least an hour more than what they usually did with the possibility of extended weekends operations if deemed necessary to keep up with backlog. The expectation was that, the employees would continue to give the same effort as they have been giving in the past but now for an extended period of time.

Emphasis was given on written communication to all the employees concerned. In this instance, replacing the more accepted verbal way of communication was prevalent for routine jobs. Strict actions could be taken against non-compliance with the newly proposed working schedule and style. The other members of the board were a little taken aback by the sudden changes in management style but choose not to comment at the moment.

Impact

Mr Nathulal was pleased that the motion got passed unopposed and felt no further need to reach out to the experienced people present in the board to solicit their opinions and viewpoints on the proposed changes. While he was aware of a few glares and grunts directed in his way every time he crossed some of the employees, he attributed it to temporary phenomena due to a “slightly” increased workload.

But gradually he kept noticing lack of feedback and ideas

from the older board members and senior employees, and the manner in which they kept avoiding his gaze whenever he saw any of them. The senior employees now expected a daily schedule to comply with the new schedule and seemed disinterested in doing things other than what they were told to, which they normally would be doing anyway before the new production plan was implemented. Mr Nathulal glanced through the performance reports sent by each senior employee over the last week or so and was surprised to see that the once ‘Golden Boy’ of the company, Mr Natwarlal was lagging behind in sending his reports; even his production schedule seemed to be skewed. He called Mr Natwarlal and gave him a terse and belittling speech regarding the implications of not following the protocol. Within two days of this incident he got the resignation letter of this once-prized employee.

Rumours were rife that many senior employees were now switching over to other manufacturing firms, some even choose to work with the direct rivals in the focus markets. Also there was now a marked increase in the absentee list, accompanied with high turnover.

Questions

1. How should the issue have been dealt with ideally?
2. What would you now advise?

QUOTES

Effective communication means that people working in the organization should:

1. *Always try to be aware of the various levels of people around them and their motivation level for better communication.*
2. *Keep in mind the bigger picture of the organization for appropriate messaging while aligning with the goals of the organization.*
3. *Be aware of the words used in the conversation.*
4. *Understand the culture of the team, the organization, and various other levels if one is communicating with multiple stakeholders within and across different offices globally.*
5. *Structure your thoughts to draw out the desired response from the audience.*
6. *Set the agenda and context for the audience to respond favorably to the idea proposed by you.*

—Siddhartha Todi
 Manager, Risk Analytics (Insurance and Reinsurance)
 Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT)

Chapter 5 | THE LANGUAGE OF PERSUASION

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand people's values, beliefs, and attitudes in the context of persuasion.
- Appreciate the difference between influence and persuasion.
- Understand tools that help analyse complex business situations and bring about persuasion.
- Write persuasive documents.

“In making a speech, one must study three points: first, the means of producing persuasion; second, the language; third, the proper arrangement of various parts of the speech.”

Aristotle¹

INTRODUCTION

Persuasion is a kind of human communication designed to influence others by modifying their attitudes, values, or beliefs. However, persuasion is different from influence. While influence is a desired change in mindset, persuasion involves acting on that changed mindset. Persuasion is, thus, an *intended* action or behaviour.

The following preconditions must exist for persuasion to occur:

- There must be a goal. The sender must have a purpose when he or she attempts to persuade others.
- There must be a desired outcome. The sender must motivate the recipient to commit to a desired course of action.
- The outcome must be voluntary. There must be an element of free will on the part of the recipient. Coercion is not persuasion.
- The sender must have a planned strategy to execute the persuasion process. A series of communication activities should be followed to bring about the persuasion process.

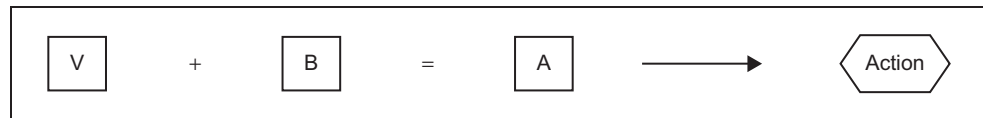
ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, VALUES, AND BEHAVIOUR

It is generally presumed that attitude influences behaviour, and that most organizational strategies are aimed at uncovering the prevailing attitudes of customers, employees, stakeholders, and other recipients. Attitudes are thus relatively stable predispositions to respond positively or negatively towards external stimuli. Attitudes are also changeable. They are learned. People do change their perception about people, events, places, and situations. On the other hand, beliefs refer to what people perceive to be true or false. The statement “I believe in miracles” indicates belief in the existence of miracles. Values refer to the right or wrong and good or bad aspects of something. The statement “I value marriage” indicates that the speaker thinks marriage is a good thing.

As mentioned previously, the purpose of persuasion is to attempt to change the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the recipient to induce a desired action. This gain in behaviour or intentional action is the result of persuasion. This can be verbal when the receiver says what the speaker wants him or her to say. It can also be physical—when the receiver does what the speaker wants him or her to do.

THE PROCESS OF PERSUASION

The rational model of behaviour suggests that people are essentially logical and consistent in their approach and that they think and behave in predictable ways. It is represented in Exhibit 5.1.

Exhibit 5.1 The Steps to Persuasion

People support those ideas that are concurrent with their beliefs (B) and values (V). On the basis of their beliefs and values, they develop an attitude (A) or a predisposition towards something. For example, people who hold different beliefs or values on euthanasia will typically have different attitudes towards it. A person who does not think that mercy killing frees an individual of suffering will not favour euthanasia. In other words, a person who values life under all circumstances will not be persuaded to support euthanasia.

There are a series of steps involved in a persuasion attempt.

Step 1: Analyse the Audience

The first step is to understand the needs, motivations, values, beliefs, and attitudes people have towards the proposed idea. This can be done through surveys, by talking and listening to the audience, and through the experiences of others. For instance, proceeding with the example of euthanasia, suppose the persuader concludes that the audience is negatively disposed towards euthanasia, he or she has the following options:

- Attempt to change the belief that mercy killing is wrong under *all* circumstances by showing that there are certain circumstances where it *is* recommended.
- Attempt to alter the value (of life) that the audience attaches to their belief.

The audience has grown up with certain beliefs and values and these are extremely difficult to change over a period of time. However, experts recommend that this can be done in two ways:

- Providing evidence to support the claim.
- Introducing a new value, such as the argument that euthanasia may be beneficial as it values the life of the innocents who take care of the invalid. (The value introduced here is “life of the healthy caregiver”.)

Step 2: Segment the Audience

The second step is to classify the audience into categories and then adopt a methodological approach to each segment of the audience. This is based on a rough estimate of how ego-involved the audience is with respect to a particular belief. A person can be highly ego-involved (non-negotiable stance) or moderately ego-involved (not so strongly opposed). The persuasive purpose will then be determined on the basis of this.

Step 3: Determine Specific Persuasive Techniques for Specific Audiences

Different techniques work for different kinds of audiences. The following methods might prove to be useful in different situations:

- **For a strongly opposed audience:** The speaker can create a little uncertainty in the minds of the audience. This can be done through a provocative statement or a statistic that supports the speaker’s claim. The aim is to make the audience a little less sure of their stance.
- **For a moderately opposed audience:** The speaker may try to reduce resistance to his or her idea and shift the audience towards neutrality. This can be done by urging the audience to look at others’ point of view.
- **For a neutral audience:** The speaker can make an attempt to change the attitudes of a neutral audience as they are not particularly committed to any course of action.
- **For a moderately motivated audience:** The speaker can bring a moderately motivated audience to his or her side by reinforcing existing attitudes and making the audience commit to a course of action.
- **For a highly motivated audience:** The logical approach is to ask the audience to act on the persuader’s claim. The persuader should not spend much time communicating with them.



Information Bytes 5.1

The term “propaganda” first appeared in 1622 when Pope Gregory XV established the Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith. Propaganda generally means convincing a large number of people about the veracity of a given set of ideas. It is different from persuasion. While persuasion is confined to individuals and small groups, propaganda is addressed to a large mass of people. Also, persuasion is more logical in its impact while propaganda often stirs emotional responses in an audience. Persuasion is also more rational and professional, while propaganda has political or social overtones. Propagandists often selectively provide information to sway the audience to act in a desired way; persuaders have to provide all information available to commit the audience to a desired course of action.

Step 4: Commit the Audience to Action

The audience is committed to an action through a verbal or a non-verbal signal that the target gives to the persuader. A commitment is the right opportunity to close, as a committed audience rarely backtracks on their word. In case a commitment is not forthcoming, the persuader can introduce a series of questions aimed at getting a “yes” response. Allowing a minor concession to the target as a last resort before final commitment of the deal may also get the target to commit to the deal, idea, or proposal.

Step 5: Follow Up

Follow up has to be immediate so that the audience acts on the persuasive message. The persuader must ensure that dissonance does not set in by assuring and reassuring the audience of the merits of their decision.

BARRIERS TO PERSUASION

Several barriers exist that can hinder a persuasion encounter. These are described in this section.

- **Low credibility:** The persuasion process is enabled by the high credibility of the persuader, while low credibility can hinder persuasion. Credibility has to be reinforced or proved. Sources of credibility include the reputation of the speaker’s place of work, personal qualifications, and the listener’s experience of the persuader’s qualities (for example, punctuality), knowledge, and personal reputation.
- **Poor relationships:** A healthy relationship between the persuader and the audience facilitates persuasion, while a poor relationship may hinder the process. In business, persuasion is an ongoing process. Even after a persuasion encounter has taken place, the relationship with the audience has to be maintained for future encounters to be profitable. If the relationship is not nurtured, it may wither, and the audience may turn to competitors. Thus, relationship management is important for persuasion to be effective.
- **A mismatch in beliefs and values:** Where beliefs and values are contradictory, persuasion may not take place. A rigid mindset is not amenable to change. An audience with fixed ideas may prefer not to be dictated to unless they desire a particular thing.

POINT	We are persuading when we communicate.	We persuade only when the target is not convinced about their position.	COUNTERPOINT
	Persuading others requires force.	People often persuade themselves. Thus, the persuader need not use force but should supply enough evidence to support the argument.	
	Persuasion is manipulative.	Persuasion is ethical if the target is willing to be influenced. Anything more than that can be manipulative and unethical.	
	To persuade, one requires only logic.	To persuade a target, one requires a mix of logic, emotional appeal, and credibility.	

PERSUASION STRATEGIES AT WORK

Broadly speaking, there are two forms of persuasive appeals. One is an appeal to reason. In these cases, the persuader appeals to the left brain, or the logical aspect, of a person. The persuader prepares arguments to support inductive or deductive logic. The approach is essentially analytical and combines examples, graphs, visuals, statistics, and other forms of evidence to influence the audience.

The other method of persuasion is to appeal to emotion. In these cases, the persuader appeals to the right brain, or the conceptual aspect of a person, through the use of emotions such as love, hate, fear, anger, joy, and happiness. Advertisements are good examples of such appeals. There, the audience has to be influenced in a short span of time (30 seconds) through an impersonal medium.

An unethical form of persuasion is “coercive persuasion.” Coercive persuasion is not persuasion at all as it does not involve free will on the part of the recipient. It includes arm-twisting tactics, torture, forceful compliance, and brainwashing.

Consider the following example. Hari is a manager working as the head of HR at a major corporation. He would like to introduce the concept of flexi-time for women in his rather conservative organization. He wants to persuade the management on this issue. However, if he is to do that, the first thing he needs to do is find out what the management’s attitude is towards this issue. He will have to figure out how to segment the management and how egotistic the involved individuals are. He will have to pinpoint the messages they will respond to. Theorists often talk about determining the latitude of acceptance and the latitude of rejection of a persuasion event. True communication can only occur if the message Hari sends is in the individual’s latitude of rejection or latitude of non-commitment. Based on his analysis, he can influence the management using logical appeal.

Shabnam is a professional in the wealth management department of a successful private bank. Accordingly, she has to influence rich investors to invest in a financial plan charted by the organization. However, before creating a persuasive message, she must understand the members of the audience. She can adopt two routes of persuasion: “centrally routed messages” or “peripherally routed messages.” Each route targets a widely different audience.

Developed by Petty and Cacioppo², the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) depicts persuasion as a process in which the success of influence depends largely on the manner in which the recipients make sense of the message. The centrally routed message technique is the more elaborate, as well as the more complex method of the two and includes arguments, debates, a mass of information, and much evidence. It is designed to bring about a long-term change in the perspective of the recipient and, hence, its impact is permanent in nature. Proponents of the ELM theory assert that the strategy is a success only when the recipient is motivated enough to listen to the arguments of the speaker, has the cognitive capability to process the message in a desired manner, or is impressed with the strength of the arguments. While preparing strong arguments to influence the target, Shabnam should ensure that her persuasion is enough to convince the receiver to commit. In case of weak and neutral arguments, particularly when the recipient’s motivation level is quite low, Shabnam may resort to shortcuts such as giving peripheral cues in order to get the client to commit.

When audience involvement is low, the persuader can use the peripheral route to persuasion. The peripheral route resorts to more superficial means to persuade the target audience. The sender relies on emotional cues to send messages that strike a chord with the audience. Tactical in nature, this is a short-term method to achieve change. Returning to the first example of Hari, if he finds that his company’s management is averse or plain disinterested in his flexi-time proposition, he can turn to the peripheral route for persuasion. For instance, he can show that other companies are doing it, or promise reciprocal exchange, agreeing to support other initiatives of the management if this decision goes in his favour. He can also quote a management expert or an authority figure, or point to the scarcity of important resources if the proposal is rejected and women are forced to leave their jobs. He can also enlist the support of women in the workforce for this initiative.

Robert Cialdini, a well-known social psychologist, identified several cues that signal that a peripheral route has been taken by the sender.³ These are:

- **Authority:** Authority is when force or threat is used to influence the other person.
- **Commitment:** Commitment is when one agrees to do something and then stands by it, even if the original offer is slightly modified.
- **Reciprocity:** Reciprocity is persuading someone by promising to do something in return in the near future. Mutual benefits are emphasized to persuade the target.
- **Liking:** People are easily persuaded by people they like. A common example is that of brand endorsements. A brand endorsed by a popular film personality or a sports icon carries a decisive appeal for its target market. Viral marketing is another example of persuasion by liking. People are influenced more when a well-known authority endorses a plan of action. Many organizations (e.g., Unilever in India) adopted the bottom-of-the-pyramid approach (valuing the low-income and middle-income price-sensitive markets) because the late C.K. Prahlad, a noted philosopher, espoused its virtues in a market like India. People are known to perform even objectionable acts if an authority figure tells them to do so. Hitler's tirade against Jewish people, and the resulting genocide, is one such example.
- **Scarcity:** This is a veiled persuasive attempt that warns of a possible decline in demand if the offer is not taken up. It may cause the person who is being persuaded to accept the proposal. Sales promotions often use this technique to bolster demand.
- **Social proof:** People do things that other people are doing. This is the essence of persuasion by social proof. Social proof is an endorsement by peers or similar groups and organizations. Letters of appreciation also serve as social proof.



People are easily persuaded by people they themselves like. A brand endorsed by a popular film personality or a sports icon carries a decisive appeal to the target market it is intended for.

The effectiveness of a persuasive message is judged by behaviour. Even if the audience or target is positively influenced, persuasion is not deemed to occur if the audience fails to act in the direction given by the sender. Exhibit 5.2 illustrates this further.

For example, in the 2008 U.S. presidential elections, “Joe the Plumber” was shown as representing presidential hopeful John McCain’s agenda. The average person is strongly susceptible to emotional appeals such as these. However, there can be mixed reactions to this form of persuasion.

In the first case, there could be positive evaluation from the target audience. The masses would identify with the common man’s values/beliefs and vote for McCain in the election (behaviour/action). The second scenario could be that the masses identify with the common man (positively evaluate the message), but do not vote for McCain in the election. Thus, even if the message creates a positive affective state, it may yield weak positive changes in attitude, which, in turn, result in inaction.

In the second case scenario, the target audience could perceive the message neutrally. It may be either indifferent to the message or the messenger or be unaware of the cues given to them. If the target audience does not care about the portrayal of the common man or is disinterested in the political affairs of the nation, it can either “go along” with what everyone else is doing (there is no real attitude change) or prefer not to vote altogether.

In the third case scenario, the target audience could strongly disapprove of the message. This can be due to the following reasons: a) it thinks that it is a publicity gimmick to get votes, b) it disagrees with the choice of the symbol (Joe the Plumber was not registered with the Ohio Construction Company), and c) the visuals irritate the audience. In this scenario, the audience rejects the candidate and votes against McCain (behaviour); another alternative could be that though the message has created a negative affective state, it yields a weak change in attitude and the target audience does not vote. Consider the following situation:

David is the CEO of a world-class concern. There are many changes to be brought about in the company to cope with the changed work scenario. The first of these changes is a change in mindset. In recent times, hierarchical models have been replaced by matrix-like work structures where individuals of different ages, genders, departments, cultures, and specializations have to work as a team. In order to bring about such changes, mature handling of people, processes, and other issues is needed. However, David is not sure his team is capable of such behaviour. At the first meeting with his staff, David starts by narrating a short story called “The Eagle’s Quest for Survival.” The story talks about an aged eagle that can either choose to die or to revive itself through a painful process lasting for 60 days. The eagle chooses the latter and emerges victorious after the struggle. David concludes that change is inevitable everywhere. It might be painful, but it is immensely rewarding as well.

Persuasion through storytelling, as shown in this example, influences people through narration. The storytelling approach assumes that people in general are influenced by emotional rather than rational arguments and are fundamentally influenced by the good lessons that a story conveys. This mindset can be found behind visuals that try to tell a story through pictorial and other graphical representations. Successful advertisements focus on a “story” (associating the product with human attributes), rather than the product, to persuade the buyer.

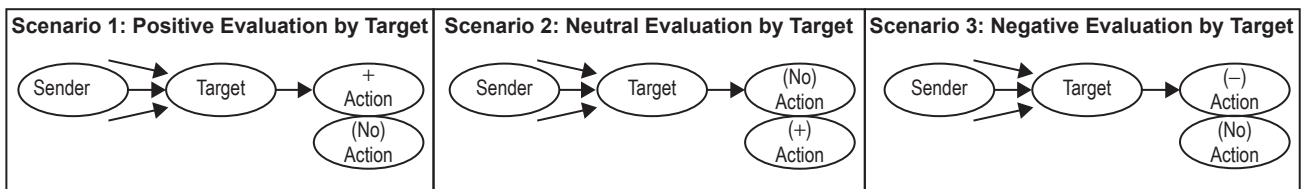


Exhibit 5.2 Various Ways in which a Target Might behave during Persuasive Communication



Communication Bytes 5.1

Experts recommend juxtaposing the rational view with the emotional view to obtain more satisfying results with persuasion. The logical explanation involves the fact that our brains are divided into the left brain and the right brain. While the left brain processes rational arguments, the right brain deals with the emotional aspects of life. Hence, effective persuaders combine the appeal of both the worldviews to influence the target audience. This is also the essence of the 2300-year-old Aristotelian theory on the “art of rhetoric,” which is still relevant in the twenty-first century.

Some preconditions must exist to make this approach successful:

- First and foremost, the target audience must be motivated to listen. It has been found that listening to this form of narrative is strongly correlated to age, seniority, and the position held by the speaker.
- The sender must attune the story to the sensibilities of the audience, paying attention to their culture, context, experiences, and values.
- The narrative must be consistent.
- The target audience must be able to reconstruct “reality” from the narrative and rationally apply it in the real world.

Some of the other popular persuasion techniques that border on the slightly unethical are:

- **The bait and switch:** The bait and switch involves putting forward an inviting offer that never materializes. The target is simply manipulated into believing the persuader’s message.
- **The door-in-the-face approach:** The door-in-the-face approach wants the target to reject the claims of the persuader the first time. After the first rejection, the persuader makes the real offer, which usually gets accepted as it sounds reasonable in comparison to the first offer.
- **The foot-in-the-door approach:** The persuader begins with a small offer (to get a foot in the door), which is usually successful, and then increases the offering.

These techniques are used in pressure selling. Since the market is flooded with competing products, and current as well as prospective clients are largely well-informed, salesmen sometimes use these high-pressure selling tactics to sell their products and meet their weekly, monthly, and half-yearly targets.

RHETORIC

According to Aristotle, rhetoric is the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion. He described three main forms of rhetoric: ethos, logos, and pathos. Aristotle also said that a persuader is essentially a “good man” with the right intentions.

Ethos

Ethos is appeal that is based on the character of the speaker. An ethos-driven document relies on the reputation of the author. It uses trust as the basis of interaction. It includes aspects such as the reputation and credibility of the speaker. Ethos is the level of credibility as perceived by the audience. Persuasive speakers leverage their past successes and their experience and expertise to get others to listen to them.

Having an excellent reputation and high credibility is more than just good, it’s also persuasive. Lying, subterfuge, and hiding facts are not only wrong, but also unpersuasive. The target audience is more likely to believe an honest person than someone who comes across as deceptively smooth. What if the audience does not know the person beforehand? These cues are easy to imitate, but not for long, as the verbal, visual, and vocal cues given by the sender can easily convey the truth to a discerning audience.

The foundations of ethos are wisdom, virtue, and goodwill. To prove dependability, persuaders follow through on their commitments. To show integrity, they will speak the truth. Ethos is charisma as well as character. To portray credibility, position yourself as an expert. Investigate everything about the subject of the persuasion event. Talk as if you cannot be challenged. Show how others look up to you. Use powerful gestures, eye contact, and so on to position yourself.

People buy ideas and products that add value to themselves in terms of self-esteem, social approval, happiness, wealth, and power. In turn they rationalize these internal motivations with logic and facts. Persuaders use many appeals to influence the audience—fear and love being the most prominent. Fear of using the competitor's products, the fear of pain, the need for self preservation, and ego (love of oneself) are some of the popular emotional appeals used to influence others. In fact, building a relationship with the audience is the essence of a successful persuader. When the audience starts visualizing the persuader as a problem solver rather than a peddler of products, they will be more influenced to buy into the speaker's ideas.

Pathos

Pathos is appeal that is based on emotion. Persuasive speakers excite and arouse the emotions of the audience to get them to act. They appeal to the values of the audience and challenge existing beliefs and attitudes. Language plays an important role in conveying emotions as words are the vehicles used to trigger the senses of the audience.

Pathos is argument by emotion. Skilled persuaders play on the heartstrings of targets who they feel are susceptible to emotions. This technique is successful when the persuader takes into account the feelings of the audience and employs them to his or her advantage. Pathos inspires sympathy and “one-ness” with the cause, but the cause and the feeling have to be genuine for both the sides. For example, the statement “You have worked hard for this organization,” where the emotional appeal used is love for, and commitment towards, the organization, might be received differently by different people. If one addresses this statement towards an undiscerning supervisor, the answer might be the following: “Thanks. I really appreciate that. It's nice to think that at least some of my employees appreciate my efforts.” However, a more discerning boss might smile and give the following reply: “Thanks, but I still won't sanction your leave.”

Logos

Logos focuses on arguments, rational appeals, reason, and demonstrable evidence. This technique uses empirical, validated facts to persuade the audience. Pictures, statistics, and data serve as evidence to influence the target. Reason includes accepting truths and providing cause and effect rationale to explain things.

According to Aristotle, appeals to logos most often use a “syllogism” and “enthymeme.” The following argument is an example of syllogism: No reptiles have fur. All snakes are reptiles. Therefore, no snakes have fur. An incomplete syllogism is known as an enthymeme. These are also known as “rhetorical syllogisms.” The following is an example of an enthymeme: Some teachers are strict. Therefore, Prakash could be strict.

Thus, a syllogism leads to a necessary conclusion from a universal true premise, but an enthymeme leads to a tentative conclusion from a probable premise. Syllogisms and enthymemes are examples of deductive arguments where specific conclusions are drawn from accepted truths. On the other hand, the induction form of argument “builds up” from evidence, reason, and logic as in most forms of scientific writing.

According to Aristotle, one rarely finds syllogisms in their purest form and most arguments use enthymemes. The following argument might provide an example: We do not have enough money to pay our workforce. Without a decent salary they wouldn't have any motivation to work, leading to lower productivity levels. Therefore, we should automate most procedures to save important resources so that we can pay our staff well.

As can be seen, this argument is weak and incomplete. Automation involves a cost that has not been taken into account. Also, it is not clear what important resources would be saved. Does the statement suggest having a reduced workforce, implying a layoff or downsizing? In that case, it would actually demotivate the workforce!

AGREE TO DISAGREE REASONABLY

Argument by the stick is no argument. It never persuades, it only inspires revenge. To disagree reasonably, the tools of persuasion are logos, ethos, and pathos. To be logical, speakers must connect what they want with the reasons they gave. For instance if Jerry desires a raise in salary, it must connect with the reasons she gives for the increment. The following example illustrates this.

Jerry: The boss won't give me a raise.

Preeta: Why should he give you a raise?

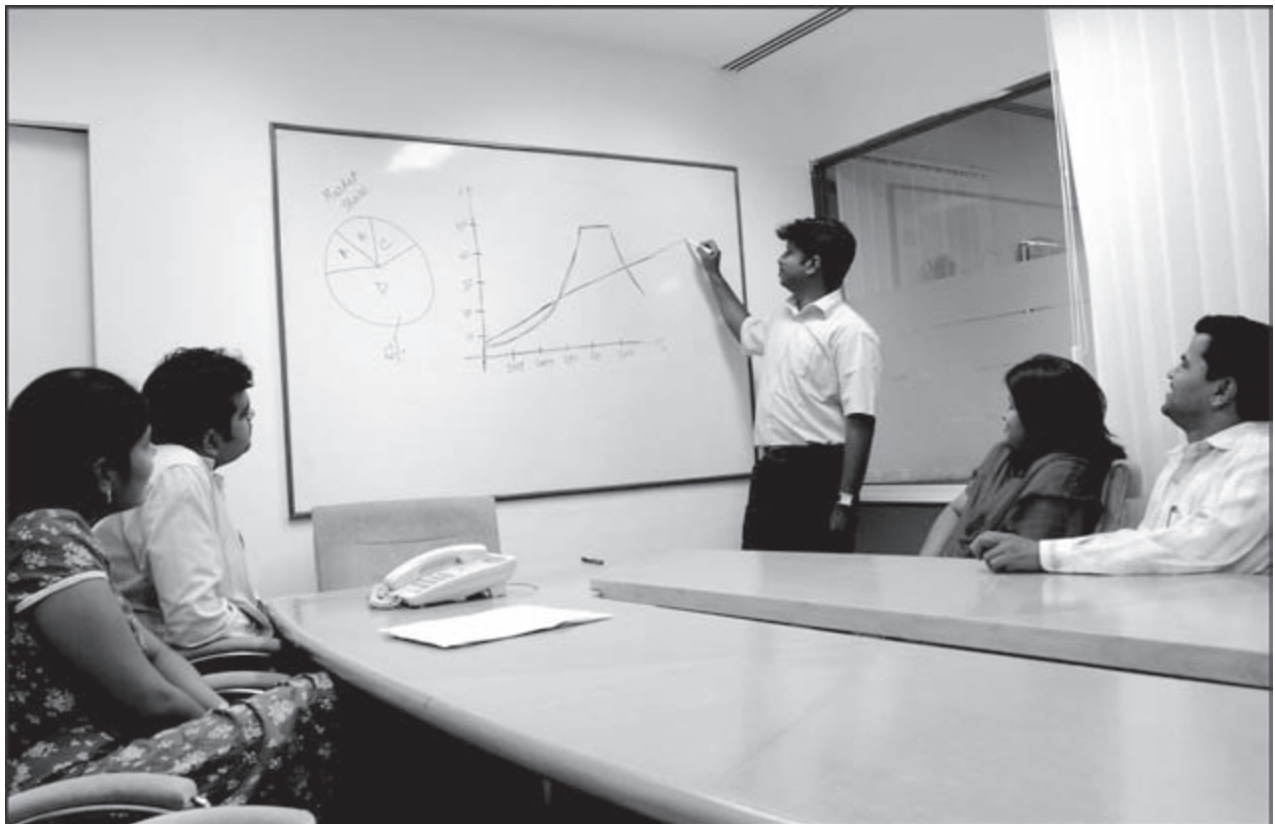
Jerry: Because I have been working for the past ten years in this organization.

Preeta: So the boss should give you a raise because you have been working here for ten years?

Repeating the premise of the argument with the conclusion will force Jerry to think logically and generate more logical arguments to get what she wants.

The following strategies might work if one wants to persuade logically:

- Confirm the facts provided.
- Quote authorities on the subject, whether it is the customer, the media, or the business analyst.
- Use factual statements instead of suppositions. One should always use the words “it will” instead of “it could.”
- Arrange arguments in a sequence. The weakest should come first and one should gradually lead up to the strongest argument.



Using graphs, charts, and other pictorial representations might be helpful if one wants to persuade logically.

- Be prepared with responses to reports contradicting statements.
- Bring up the negative consequences of not being persuaded by the idea/offer.
- Use repetition, alliteration, and other techniques for persuasion.
- Use euphemisms.
- Use graphs, charts, and other pictorial representations.
- Narrate the data and connect with the audience. Don't just rattle off fact.
- Assert ideas plainly. Use the active voice.

Though Aristotle believed that logos should be the most important of the three persuasive appeals, logos alone is not sufficient. A combination of all three elements is essential to be an effective persuader.

SUMMARY

- Modern approaches to management require adept influencing and persuasion skills. This is especially true in current times, characterized by the demise of the command and control form of management.
- Persuasion is visible in different forms in one's personal as well as work life. It is used nearly everywhere—for instance, during presentations, in business writing, when preparing plans and proposals, and so on.
- Persuasion requires the skillful use of elements such as logos, pathos, ethos, timing, context, examples, and illustrations. All must be orchestrated for maximum results.
- Persuasion is not always manipulation. There are ethical as well as unethical means to influence others. Unethical persuasion results in short-lived successes.
- Effective persuaders focus more on the subject than on the message object. They attempt to win the audience first.
- Planning and preparation are essential to effective persuasion.
- When the audience is favourably disposed, the centrally routed persuasion technique is most effective; in case of audiences with negative predispositions, it is safer to adopt peripheral persuasion techniques.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Explain the difference between influence and persuasion.
2. What, according to Cialdini, are the seven ways to influence a target audience?
3. Elaborate on the role of values, attitudes, and beliefs in persuasion theory.
4. How does a persuader motivate a reluctant audience?
5. Explain the merit of the following statement: "The effectiveness of a persuasive message is judged by behaviour. Even if the audience or target is positively influenced, persuasion is not deemed to occur if the audience fails to act in the direction given by the sender."
6. Critically analyse Aristotle's exposition of the ethos, logos, and pathos methods of persuasion. Which technique yields greater benefits in your opinion?

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. You are the CFO of a financial corporation. You have had a bad year, though the severity of the problems was not public until the fourth quarter. At the annual shareholders' meeting, the management team and your performance have been challenged by an active opposition. Justify your company's performance and the current management team against the active opposition. After you have prepared the structure of your argument, assess the following: Is the structure appropriate for the audience and situation? Is the main recommendation, argument, or proposal easily identified? Are sub-arguments made clearly? Are two-sided or one-sided arguments used appropriately depending on audience, purpose, credibility, and context? Is the evidence presented concrete, accurate, relevant, and sufficient? Did unnecessary information clutter the presentation?
2. You are a senior staff member at an airline corporation. You have been asked to examine a set of insurance policies for the airline, and to recommend one of them. Make and support your recommendation. After you have prepared the structure of your argument, assess the following: Is the structure appropriate for the audience and situation? Is the main recommendation, argument, or proposal easily identified? Are sub-arguments

made clearly? Are two-sided or one-sided arguments used appropriately depending on audience, purpose, credibility, and context? Is the evidence presented concrete, accurate, relevant, and sufficient? Did unnecessary information clutter the presentation?

3. Review the scenarios given below and prepare a persuasive response to each of them.
 - Persuade the staff of your micro-credit firm of the merit of using computers for day-to-day business activities. The firm is operating in rural areas and the staff is reluctant to use computers.
 - Persuade the director of your business school to sanction a field trip to the industrial township near your institute.
 - The academic committee of your institution is planning to do away with a popular student club activity. They are hoping to introduce something new and different in place of this activity, which is now in its tenth year of existence. The student council members do not agree to this, however, as the club was appreciated by the faculty, students, and companies alike. As secretary of academic affairs, plan a persuasion strategy aimed at retaining the activity.
4. Consider the following situations carefully and answer the questions that follow them.

Situation 1

A second-year MBA student gives a flawless presentation about the corporate strategy of Dabur. It is logically sound

and traces the evolution of the company from a small enterprise to the behemoth that it is today. The presentation is racy, fast-paced, and pitched just correctly. It is low on ethos while being high on pathos and logos.

Situation 2

A company spokesperson gives a dull presentation, albeit with all the correct facts and figures, accompanied by sound logic. However, it is long-winded, full of slides, and bereft of any real discernible interest on the part of the speaker. It is low on pathos and high on ethos and logos.

Situation 3

A company spokesperson gives an energetic presentation, replete with facts, arguments, and sound logic. It is crisp and strongly pitched. It is low on pathos and high on ethos and logos.

Situation 4

A second-year MBA student gives a presentation on the corporate strategy of Dabur. However, the presentation is too long and rambling, the presenter looks ill at ease, there are too many slides, and the presenter's appeal falls flat.

Which one of these presentations seems most persuasive to you? Do you think that the MBA student in Situation 1 manages to persuade the audience? Or is the spokesperson for the company more persuasive just because she has much more credibility or ethos? Does unpreparedness make a presentation less persuasive? What role does the audience play in such a circumstance?

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Refer to the following link: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subliminal_stimuli>. How is subliminal persuasion different from traditional forms of persuasion?
2. Refer to the following link: <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/625/01/>>. Now enumerate the different forms of persuasion in rhetorical situations.
3. Refer to the following Web site: <<http://dell.co.in/home/laptops?&dgcs=ST&ST=Dell%20website&cid=33221&lid=783243&acd=10599679472341480>>. As a Dell service professional, design a persuasive presentation to the student council representatives of a reputed business school seeking to buy around 400 laptops for new students. What persuasive pitch would you use? What techniques would you adopt to convince the council members to buy Dell laptops?
4. Prepare a statement of purpose as a compulsory requirement for entry to a prominent international business school. The document must be persuasive enough to impress the business school authorities. Visit the following link for the details: <http://www.edhec.edu/jsp/fiche_pagelibre.jsp?CODE=38271431&LANGUE=1&xtor=SEC-261>
5. How are some people so 'incredibly persuasive'? (visit: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonnazar/2013/03/26/the-21-principles-of-persuasion/#4879350d53be>).

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CASE STUDY 1

Performance Appraisal Communication: Personal Vendetta?

Summary

The case discusses how personal dislike and arrogance can have the potential to disrupt professional life. This, compounded by ineffective communication can lead to feelings of frustration, failure and dejection.

Introduction

Sana Malik, 32, was a senior consultant with the Systems Integration service line of Matrix Consulting. She had recently joined the firm and was currently working on her first client project (XYZ) as part of Matrix. Sana had five years of work experience with e-Gate Corporation, a multinational firm which provided IT consulting and was also a global systems integrator. Prior to that, she had also worked with a bank in its data warehousing domain. Although she started her career as a technical person, she was performing the role of functional lead when she left e-Gate. Hence, it has been quite some time since she took up a purely technical role. She was currently also the team lead on the project and was reporting to the project manager, Suhas Gupta, who incidentally had been her classmate from college.

Suhas Gupta, after graduating from the same college as Sana, went to US for Masters and then joined Matrix Consulting. Sana had quite clearly mentioned at the time of her interview and before getting staffed onto her current project, that she was more inclined towards a functional role. Suhas had promised that she would soon have one, if not immediately.

When Sana joined project XYZ, it was almost nearing its end phase. Hence, there was not much work apart from little enhancements on the developments made by the team before Sana joined. As a result, the project team members were never fully occupied with the project work

during office hours. The work was easy but did not interest her much as it was not challenging. Moreover, she was not being able to use her functional knowledge anywhere. Sana used to finish her work on time and soon became very good friends with everybody in the team. She was quite talkative and the team had started interacting more and hanging out together more often since she joined.

Sana stayed in a joint family which included her husband and two school-going kids, mother-in-law and brother-in-law's family. Her mother-in-law was almost always sick. Because of household responsibilities, Sana preferred to work in the first shift while the rest of the team worked in second shift which was more convenient to take international client calls. Many a times, Suhas often passed comments about Sana leaving early for home. However, the number of hours Sana worked was equivalent to any other member on the team. She was ready to work after getting back home if anything urgent popped up.

Since Suhas and Sana were classmates and knew each other even before Sana joined the firm, Sana was very candid about her thoughts and views. But Suhas was somewhat haughty and had a superiority complex in spite of being her batch mate, he was now senior to her in the firm. This is clearly seen in the way he taunted her for small mistakes, most often in front of the entire project team.

Sana was quite assertive and made it plain that she would not tolerate such kind of behaviour. That was the reason discussions between Sana and Suhas often ended up in arguments, especially during project meetings. This created tension not only between the two of them but also in the team as Suhas and Sana were the senior most members of the team.

Matrix had a policy of conducting project evaluations every time a person left the team or when the project came to an end. Matrix rated its employees as A, B, C or D in decreasing order of rank during project evaluations; a satisfactory rating was a ‘C’.

A project evaluation meeting typically entailed feedback; providers discussed the strengths of the team member, his/her development areas, disclosed his/her rating and ask employee for his/her comments about it. Project X was completed in three months after Sana joined and project evaluations were being conducted for all team members. Now it was Sana's turn.

Problem

Sana walked into the meeting room where her primary and secondary feedback providers- Suhas and Kunal (the senior manager) were sitting. She had high hopes of being appraised for having learnt the project capabilities and delivering quality work in such a short span of time. The conversation started directly with Suhas informing her that they have decided to give her the rating 'D'. Sana was dumbstruck. She had been expecting at least 'B'. After disclosing her grading, Suhas directly jumped to the development areas, thus skipping the strengths part altogether. He listed the following as her major development areas:

- Inflexible towards office timings
- Too fond of gossip that impacted project productivity negatively
- Lack of interest in work
- Arrogant behaviour and blunt replies to seniors

Sana started to lose her temper. Suhas then asked her if she was satisfied with her rating. Sana composed herself and replied, "No, not at all! In fact, I don't agree with any of those points." She tried defending herself but all in vain. She later realized that Suhas was probably utilizing his authority as her manager to make her look inferior. Therefore, Sana decided to report the matter to HR.

Impact

The HR generalist patiently listened to her problem and scheduled a meeting with Suhas, and Kunal to discuss the issue in the presence of Sana. The meeting resulted in a heated argument between Sana and Suhas with the HR generalist and Kunal mere spectators to the entire drama. Failing to reach a conclusion, the meeting was called off. An hour later, Sana received a mail from HR generalist that stated its inability to resolve the issue and the decision to finally award her 'D' rating. Sana and the entire team was shocked at the decision.

Questions

1. Who do you think is right in the case mentioned above? Why?
2. What would you advise Sana? How could have Sana and Suhas 'transacted' better for effective results?

CASE STUDY 2

Keeping Pace with the Young and the Restless

Summary

Ravi has recently been recruited to be a part of the marketing team at MadLabs Inc, a fast growing and successful marketing and branding firm. Prior to this, he worked as the marketing head of a large FMCG company, where the work culture was very orthodox. He finds the new organisation difficult to adjust to, and feels that he is being relegated to the side-line because of his inability to 'connect' with his colleagues. The management feels that his talent is being under-utilised. Things come to a head when the results of the mid-year evaluations are released.

Introduction

MadLabs was started by two college friends. The workplace culture at MadLabs was vibrant, informal and almost irreverent. Employees were encouraged to work hard and to be as independent as possible. Recently MadLabs decided to hire an experienced marketing professional to give guidance to the younger as well as freshers and to steer them towards success.

At 45, Ravi was several years older than his colleagues. He found it difficult to connect with his younger team mates, who were often in their early 20s and 30s. His immediate superior, Naina, the Vice President, was in fact about 10 years younger to him. Naina often felt uncomfortable in the presence of Ravi and got frustrated with him as she felt that there was a lot Ravi could add to the organisation. She felt that Ravi, lacked drive and the energy to get ahead in life.

MadLabs wanted to be known as a contemporary and a happening place for young employees; it used the internal social media network to keep its employees updated on company news, events and miscellaneous works. Ravi, unsure of how to handle this new-fangled technology, missed out on several updates and notifications, and failed to hand over the deliverables till the deadline had passed on more than one occasion. Ravi was upset at this. Aggrieved, he goes to Naina's office to complain.

Problem

It's a Friday afternoon, around 4 pm. Naina was sitting in the conference room with some other junior members (including Vijay), having a beer. When Ravi heatedly brings up his concern, she brushes it away.

“Mr Khanna, why are you making such a big deal out of nothing? Arrey, just ask one of the younger members to teach you the software!”

(The whole team sniggers as a response)

“But Ms Das, this is not the first instance that this has happened, and anyhow!”

“Oho Ravi, can’t you just sit back and enjoy the Saturday! Honestly, you are no fun to work with.”

Needless to say, Ravi was hurt and confused by her reaction. She had shown a similar irreverence when discussing his marketing proposals and plans for the company as well. He went back to his little corner office and continued working, away from rest of the team. He had a performance review coming up on Monday.

During the review, he was optimistic as he had heard that Vijay has gotten promoted to Ravi’s level, which must mean that there were better things in store for Ravi himself! He had prepared an extensive spreadsheet, with figures and data to support his good performance, but was interrupted by Naina.

“Ravi, I hate to tell you this, but it doesn’t look like we’ll be able to promote you in this review. The team just does not feel comfortable working with you and we think that you need to work with them in this position longer to get the grasp of doing things.”

Ravi got rather low ratings in the mid-year review as he had been falling behind in his assignments. Vijay (age 31), who was Ravi’s junior, had got spectacular ratings as he had demonstrated good work on the field and enjoyed a wonderful rapport with the team. He was therefore promoted to the same level as Ravi, despite being significantly younger and inexperienced.

Impact

Ravi was dejected at this treatment. He had left a lucrative position to join MadLabs and this is what he had got

for his sincerity and dedication. He was frustrated and withdrew from the people altogether. It was obvious to him that Vijay had been promoted only because of the camaraderie he shared with Naina and the ‘age factor’. This struck him as being singularly unfair. His experience and wisdom was not harnessed; he felt wasted and underutilised. He realised that he could chose to play the game or suffer silently till things improve. He chose the latter. He was sure that ultimately this would engender the casual and often unprofessional attitude in the workplace, making it more difficult for any worker who was not in the “clique” to fit in.

Questions

1. How do you read the situation?
2. What is the role of the Team Leader?
3. Could the ‘transaction’ between the team members been more fruitful?

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CASE STUDY 3

Back to Work life: Adjusting to Realities

Summary

This case analyses how a manager is unable to respect hierarchies and manage tensions between two members of the team. The case also highlights the importance of emotional intelligence and how it impacts communication with one’s team members.

Introduction

Desarc Limited was a start-up unit based in Bangalore. Rachit was the marketing head of the unit supported by a

team of senior and junior marketing executives. Gunjan was a senior marketing executive working there. She had a work experience of ten years, was a mother of two and had taken a break of five years before joining Rachit’s team. She had worked with Rachit in the earlier organization.

Bhavya was another member in their team; she was fresh out of college, was enthusiastic and always full of ideas and solutions. Rachit was very happy with Bhavya’s performance and considered her an asset to the organization. On the other hand, Gunjan, though being a star-performer herself, was finding it difficult to adjust to the work culture of a start-up after working for years in an organised set-up. In many urgent situations, which is very common in case

of start-ups, Rachit directly called Bhavya to get the work moving, instead of directing it to her through Gunjan. He preferred not to disturb Gunjan after office hours as she had a family to look after. There have been incidences when the work has been accomplished and Gunjan was not aware of as to what and how it happened; once the task was accomplished neither Rachit nor Bhavya brought it to her notice owing to the busy schedule and new challenges which they had to face every day.

This was giving rise to feelings of discontent in Gunjan. Bhavya used to put in her best efforts to involve Gunjan. She used to mark a CC on every mail to keep her in the loop but was not very willing to sit with her and give updates and face cross-questioning from Gunjan about her actions. Rachit was only interested in getting the work done. It did not matter to him who was doing it or how it was done. He did not thought it was important to unnecessarily involve Gunjan in tasks which she was anyways not going to do.

Problem

Discontent with what was going on and feeling side-lined by a new girl just out of college, Gunjan was considering to switch job. But before that she wanted to make her authority clear to Bhavya, to give it one last try to bring things back on track. The conversation went on like this:

Gunjan: *Don't you think what you are doing is wrong? If you think you can get an easy promotion and you will replace me by playing such tricks, you are far from the truth...Don't forget that you are just out of college and you will always need my help, however smart and intelligent you think yourself to be.*

Bhavya: *Why are you talking like this Gunjan? If there is anything which I have done or said to hurt you, then I am really sorry.*

Gunjan: *Oh, don't act so smart. After spending so much time with you so that you can understand the nuances of*

business, this is what I am getting. You deliberately don't share information of the part of work which you do directly with Rachit. You want to overshadow me whenever there is any discussion related to the project. You are projecting it to others that you are doing more work than me.

Bhavya: *I am really sorry Gunjan if you felt that way, but there are no improper motives behind anything. I always try to keep you in loop whenever I am involved in any such task by marking you a CC in all the mails exchanged related to that. I try to frame it a way so that you can get a complete picture of what has happened even when you are not around. But you are well aware of our hectic schedules; it's not possible for me to come to you to inform of each detail in person.*

Just then Rachit enters

Gunjan: *Rachit don't you think that you are giving just too much liberties to that new girl by involving her in tasks that require a much greater competency level?*

Rachit: *I think she is wonderful, she understands the requirements of the tasks easily and it's easier to work with her as she is available all the time when you are busy with your family obligations. I don't see any reason why you should be worried about that.*

Impact

Gunjan was now actively involved in office politics and name calling for Bhavya, which was affecting the latter's performance. She had of late started to absent herself frequently from work.

Questions

1. Do you think Rachit could have been more proactive in resolving the issue?
2. How should Gunjan have reacted ideally?

Chapter 6

COMMUNICATING IN A DIVERSE WORK ENVIRONMENT

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the role of culture in shaping perspectives.
- Learn ways to succeed in a global environment.
- Appreciate that in life, familiar scripts do not apply in international communication.
- Learn ways to resolve conflicts that arises out of cultural differences.
- Understand methods for interacting effectively in cross-border virtual teams.

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

Mahatma Gandhi¹

INTRODUCTION

Observing a business or social setting in the modern world, one can easily find the presence of many heterogeneous groups. Whether it is a classroom, an IT company, a multinational office, or a business process outsourcing (BPO) unit, globalization has indeed made an irreversible foray into our lives and these heterogeneous groups can represent different countries, cultures, and languages. For the purpose of effective functioning, it becomes imperative that these divergent groups are merged into a singular unit and that is why intercultural communication has gained immense importance in the business world. When varying cultures collide in the workplace, regardless of origin, the mannerisms and habits that the individuals were brought up with and consider socially acceptable can result in friction. This friction can start in personal relationships, but could interfere with productivity and customer relationships.

We are all products of our environment. Our educational backgrounds, religious and political affiliations, and family and social relationships are shaped by the environment in which we are brought up. Our philosophical leanings are powerful determinants of how the world perceives us and how we perceive others. We learn to make choices and communicate accordingly. Ways of communicating with those of different ethnicities and cultures can vary and sometimes lead to miscommunication and misinterpretation. The reason for this is that people from other cultures interpret our signs and signals in markedly different ways. This leads to a communication breakdown. Such a situation may be amplified in business situations where many cultures collide.

Consider the following example. When Nikita Khrushchev, the former President of the erstwhile Soviet Union, visited the United States at the height of the Cold War, he greeted the U.S. press with a clasping of his hands, shaking them over each shoulder. This expression was understood to be a sign of greeting in the Soviet Union, symbolizing the embracing of a good friend. But in the United States, this gesture is understood to be the symbol of a winner in a battle; consequently, the U.S. media interpreted it as a sign that the Soviet Union would be victorious over the United States. This incident only exacerbated the cold war, not dissipating the tension as was the intention of the visit!

Managers must become proficient cross-cultural communicators to succeed in a global environment. Effective managers are able to recognize and adapt to different cultures. This assumes particular importance today as most executives are engaged in international assignments.

As stated earlier, communication means that the message is received, but issues get compounded in a diverse work environment where many cultures collide. This makes it imperative to clarify the two terms *culture* and *communication*.

CULTURE

Culture (derived from the Latin word “cultura,” meaning “to cultivate”) is everything that is imbibed, shared, taught, and discussed. Culture may transcend religion. Communication is through shared meaning, which is ascribed to behaviour, words, and objects. Culture is deep-rooted in the psyche; it is complex and often difficult to change.

The term “culture” has two interpretations. It can either refer to the capacity of human beings to classify experiences in the form of symbols or it can mean the distinct ways in which people think and behave in different countries and regions.

Thus, culture has been variously described as a model or a template as well as a medium that we live and breathe in. Culture is learned and innate—an interlocking system. It is a shared relationship and a division of groups. Cultural identities can stem from the following differences: race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, country of origin, and geographic region. Culture, thus, governs the values, attitudes, and behaviours of people most of the time. It has two main parts (as can be seen in Exhibit 6.1):

- The unobservable, non-material aspect, which is the belief.
- The observable and non-material aspect, which is the behaviour.

Culture is the context to which an individual belongs. Indeed, it is a way of life. Culture influences how we talk, behave, and deal with conflict. Culture is the sociological reality from which few can escape.

Cultural nuances such as attitudes towards hierarchy and status, individualism and teamwork, punctuation, technology, and context are discussed further in this section.

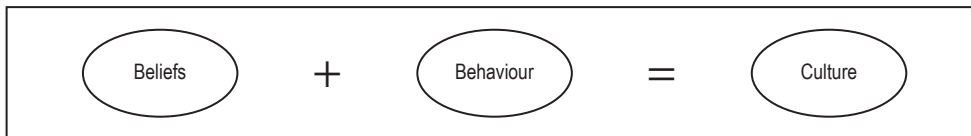


Exhibit 6.1 Composition of Culture

POINT	Others should adapt themselves to our behaviour/culture.	We should adapt and try to adjust to each other’s cultures.	COUNTERPOINT
	People who do not respect our culture must be condemned.	Tolerance and patience are important virtues in a global environment.	
	Organizations should not hire people from other cultures.	Diversity should be encouraged. Racism should be discouraged.	

Information Bytes 6.1

In India cultural differences exist widely. This is because of a large ethnic diversity in the population. For example, there is a pronounced difference between the general culture of North India and South India. The Bengali culture is distinctly different from Marathi culture. In fact, each state of India can be treated as a separate country in itself! Apart from linguistic diversity, each state is characterized by specific customs, rituals, traditions, and culinary preferences. All this exists under the umbrella of a secular democratic nation. No wonder India is referred to as having a “salad bowl” culture!

Hierarchy and Status

There are many cultures where rank, hierarchy, and status are given extreme importance. Employees who are new to this culture may find it odd that their attempts to call supervisors by their first names, sit before their supervisors do, sit on chairs reserved for people in senior positions, and so on, are likely to be misinterpreted as disrespect. On the other hand, an employee who has been taught to show deference towards age, gender, or title, might, out of respect, shy away from being honest or offering ideas because offering suggestions to an elder or a supervisor might appear as a challenge to their authority. This dimension is termed as *power distance* and is the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally.

The view of authority, position, status, rank, and power affects the business environment in a number of ways. In many countries, there is more emphasis on the logic and force of an argument. In others, there is a greater emphasis on the rank and position of the presenter than on the subject matter. This affects the manner in which the message is perceived. In a highly centralized culture, a relatively high-ranking individual's message is taken very seriously, even if one disagrees. On the other hand, in a relatively decentralized system, one can anticipate a greater acceptance of participative management practices.

Teamwork Versus Individualism

There are countries where individualism is frowned upon and teamwork is encouraged. Employees used to such a culture may find it difficult, at least initially, to adjust to an individualistic working style in another country. They may consider people in such countries to be overly independent, self-centered, selfish, and possessing isolationist tendencies. On the other hand, people used to working alone might find another culture to be too dependent on others, slow in making decisions, and incapable of leading an independent life.

Punctuality

Some cultures place a high premium on time. They associate adherence to time with professionalism, high ethical standards, and reliability. Conversely, there are some cultures where time standards are rather relaxed. People in such cultures dislike being hurried and take their own time in making decisions. People used to the former might find the latter to be irresponsible and too flexible.

Most cultures fall into two types of temporal conceptions. The “monochronic” type adheres to schedules; this takes precedence over personal interaction. On the other end of the continuum is the “polychronic” type, where personal interaction, transaction, and involvement take precedence over preset time schedules. Though this is a generalization, by and large, the culture of a state may be described as one of the two in orientation. The main characteristics of these two kinds of culture are discussed in this section.

- **Monochronic:** A monochronic culture discourages one-to-one interaction and is highly performance-oriented. It also restricts the flow of information and self-disclosure. Personal interactions between people are limited. Personal relationships between colleagues are determined by the terms of the job, and multiple tasks are handled one at a time in a prescheduled manner.

In such a culture, one should expect time schedules to be strictly followed and know that personal favours are not appreciated as far as scheduling is concerned. These cultures rarely distinguish between outsiders and insiders. An example of such a culture is that prevalent in Germany.

- **Polychronic:** A polychronic culture encourages interaction among people and is characterized by flexibility as far as scheduling is concerned. It is also highly relationship-oriented, where multiple tasks are handled simultaneously by adequate delegation. Cultures in India and Mexico are polychronic in nature.

In polychronic cultures, one should expect delays in meeting deadlines. People may have to be urged to put in their best through motivation, praise, and encouragement. Insiders are generally preferred over outsiders.



Communication Bytes 6.1

The world's expatriate workforce is becoming increasingly female. Women accounted for 23 per cent of international assignees last year. The workforce is also getting younger. According to the 11th annual Global Relocation Trends Survey, issued jointly by GMAC Global Relocation Services and the National Foreign Trade Council, "The 2005 Annual Global Relocation Trends Report" indicates that relocation of non-U.S. personnel to the United States is increasing. 60 per cent of the surveyed companies provided cross-cultural preparation before international assignments. This figure was consistent with previous surveys. 28 per cent provided training for the entire family, 27 per cent for expatriate and spouse, and 5 per cent for expatriates alone. Although formal cross-cultural training was mandatory at only 20 per cent of companies, the lowest percentage in the survey's history, 73 per cent of respondents rated it as having a great or high value in making the assignment a success. India, China and Singapore are the emerging destinations for expatriates.²

Technology

Generally, cultures may be divided into three distinct groups according to their approaches towards technology: control, subjugation, and harmonization.

- **Control cultures:** In control cultures such as those of northern Europe and North America, technology is viewed as an essential ingredient to control the environment. Technology is employed to improve prospects as well as to enhance productivity. Failures are generally attributed to a technical deficiency.
- **Subjugation cultures:** In subjugation cultures such as those of central Africa and southwestern Asia, technology is viewed rather skeptically. Technology is subjugated to cultural norms and beliefs, and errors, if any, are attributed to failures in judgment rather than technology.
- **Harmonization cultures:** In harmonization cultures such as those common in many Native American societies and some East Asian nations, technology is harmonized with the existing environment. These cultures are neither subjugated by technology, nor do they attempt to control it.

Cultural Contexts

Communication, especially in a cross-cultural environment, is largely contextual. Edward T. Hall was the first person to coin the term *contexting*³. According to him, *contexting* requires a speaker to decide how much prior information the audience possesses about the topic and communicate based on this assumption. It appears that all cultures arrange their members and relationships along the context scale. One of the important aspects of communication, whether addressing a single person or an entire group, is to ascertain the correct level of contexting of one's communication. A communicator in an international business setting must understand the context of any communication in order to understand what was really meant to be conveyed. The rules vary from culture to culture.

Cultures can be divided into two types based on their approach to providing context:

- **High-context cultures:** These cultures believe that the meaning is in the messenger and much of what is meant is largely unsaid. Examples of such cultures are Japan, China, Mexico, Greece, the Arab countries, Brazil, and Korea.
- **Low-context cultures:** These cultures believe that the meaning is in the message and thus communication is generally direct and straightforward. The United States, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, and the German-speaking portion of Switzerland are some examples of low-context cultures.

Apart from these, medium-context cultures include England, Finland, Italy, and France.

In high-context cultures, much of what is not said must be inferred. To people from lower context cultures, this may seem to be needlessly vague. Conversely, those from high-context cultures may view their low-context counterparts as impersonal and confusingly literal.



Information Bytes 6.2

My Big Fat Greek Wedding is a rather interesting movie from a cross-cultural perspective. One scene, in particular, stands out. During the wedding, when the bride is walking down the aisle, all the guests from the bride's side of the family spit on her as she passes. This cultural expression of good luck by her Greek family is considered offensive and one of worst methods of degradation in American culture. This is just one example of how a simple, heartfelt gesture by people of a particular culture could lead to potential disaster in another one.⁴

Since contexting represents a cross-cultural shift in the conception of explicit versus implicit communication, any area of business communication in which such distinctions play a part is significantly affected. Thus, in high-context cultures, the emphasis on words in general, and on the written word in particular, is relatively weak since words provide only one aspect of the context of communication. As a result, how something is said matters more than what is actually said. By contrast, in low-context cultures, the actual words matter more than the intended meaning. What is actually said—and especially what is actually written—matters more than the context in which it was said.

The implications for contexting are far-reaching in the business world. There is considerable emphasis on explicit communication in low-context cultures. This makes the law rigid and inflexible. This is not the case in high-context cultures, where laws are flexible enough to accommodate different situations (how else can one explain the extradition of Warren Anderson, the former chairman of Union Carbide, the company responsible for the worst industrial catastrophe in the world in Bhopal in 1984?). People in high-context cultures, as a result, find that their interpersonal behaviour is governed by individual interpretation (that is, the context of the relationship), while people in low-context cultures find that their relationships are dictated by external rules.

Another dimension of contexting is face-saving. Face-saving implies preservation of dignity and outward prestige. High-context cultures are more concerned with “saving face.” They tend to favour a communication approach that values indirectness and politeness. They may consider directness in communication to be rude and offensive. As a corollary, high-context cultures view indirectness as honest and considerate, while low-context cultures view indirectness as dishonest and offensive. High-context cultures prefer minimal disclosure and tend to remain vague and evasive. This is in sharp contrast to low-context cultures, where preference is given to high verbal disclosure and stating the obvious.

CONCEPTS OF CULTURE

Variations of cultural concepts exist across countries and continents. Some of these concepts include:

- **Leitkultur:** *Leitkultur* is the concept of a core culture, where minorities have their own culture but integrate it well with the “core concept” of the nation’s culture. The culture of Germany is an example of this.
- **Melting pot:** A *melting pot* is where the culture of minorities or immigrants “melts” or amalgamates into the mainstream culture of the host nation. The United States is a melting pot of cultures as it is a host to citizens from diverse nationalities.
- **Monoculturalism:** *Monoculturalism* is the concept of a single culture for a single nation. Certain Islamic nations, like Pakistan, celebrate monoculturalism.
- **Salad bowl:** A *salad bowl* is a where different cultures maintain their own identities while learning to coexist and interact peacefully within a nation. The heterogeneous culture of India (which has people of different religious beliefs and cultural traditions and at least 22 different languages) is an example of a salad bowl culture.

The word *culture* might also mean one of the following:

- **National/ethnic culture:** This is the culture of a nation; an example is Indian culture or American culture.
- **Secondary or subgroup culture:** This refers to a secondary culture within a larger culture and is also called a co-culture. Examples are organizational culture, Muslim culture, and Hindu culture.
- **Culture in the anthropological sense:** This refers to how anthropologists delineate the concept of culture. For example, tribal culture is an example of a culture in an anthropological sense.
- **High society:** This is the exclusive and high-profile reference to culture, such as creative arts like theatre, painting, or sculpture. It might also refer to the sophistication and refinement of an individual.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

In a diverse environment, communication is far more complicated than in the simpler model illustrated in previous chapters. Consequently, many employees feel frustrated when their warm smiles are misinterpreted, their informal demeanor mistaken for sloppy work, or their heavy accents confused.

There are many instances of symbols and signs that differ across cultures. For instance, while the “o” sign indicates nothing in most cultures, it indicates money in Japanese culture. When two people of the same gender hold hands, it is of no consequence in one culture (India, for example), but has a different connotation in another. As mentioned earlier, direct communicators (such as Americans) prefer to state things as they are (bottom-line first), but an indirect communicator from another culture might want to take the contextual background into account before trying to understand a certain response.

Communication with different cultures can be understood using the same variables that describe other forms of communication. We tend to judge and predict more when we are communicating with people we are unfamiliar with. We anticipate (but are never completely sure of) the response we will get from a stranger. As we get to know someone, we become surer of the kind of response to expect. Communication improves if people recognize where familiar scripts do not apply and seek to modify their behaviour accordingly.

Direct Versus Indirect Communication

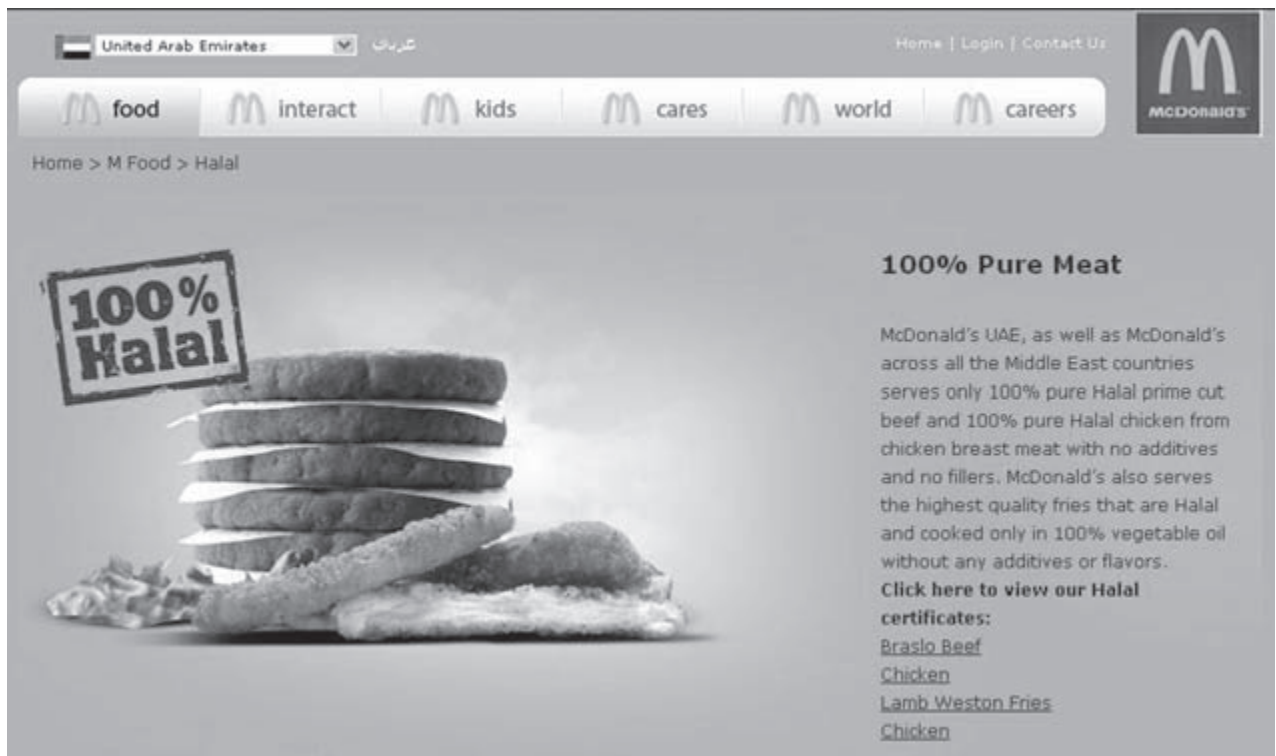
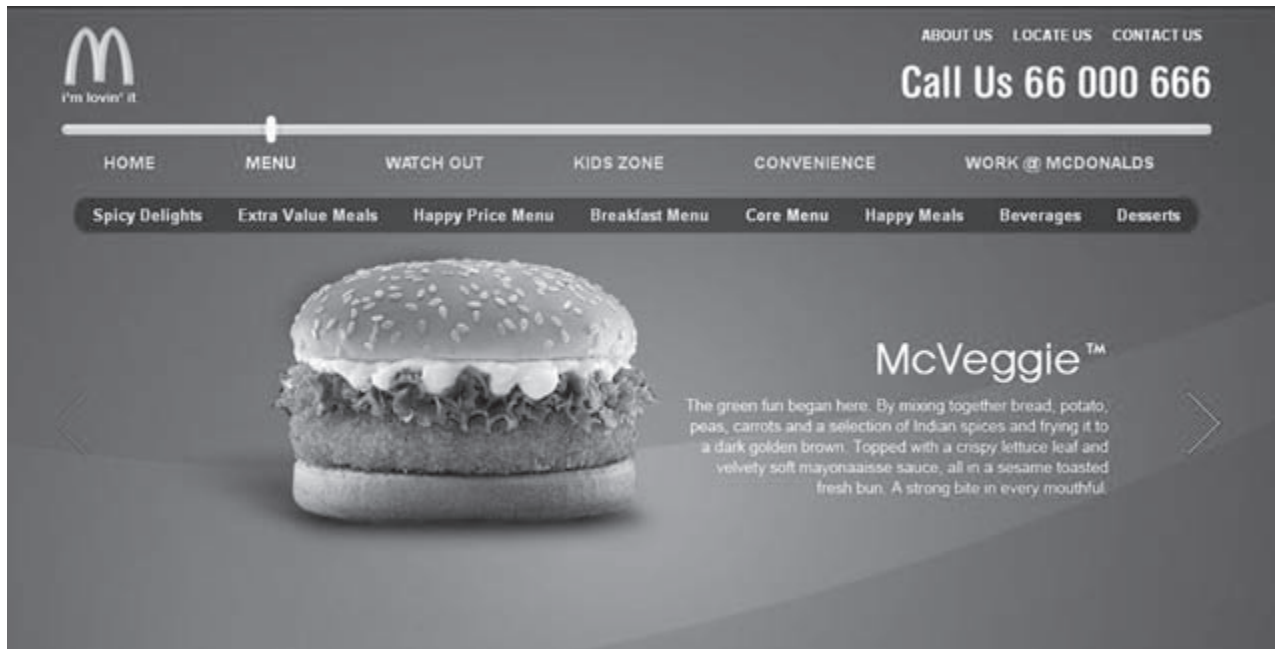
In most Western countries, communication is direct and straightforward. The meaning is explicit and the content gains prominence over context and presentation. However, in Japan, a manager nodding in response to a presentation does not mean that the manager is in agreement with the presentation. It merely implies that the manager is listening to the presentation.

Accents and Fluency

The international language of business is undoubtedly English. However a non-native speaker’s accent, fluency, articulation, and usage of words may create problems and misunderstandings. One frequently cited example of how variations within a single language can affect business occurred when a U.S. deodorant manufacturer sent a Spanish translation of its slogan to their Mexican operations. The slogan read “if you use our deodorant, you won’t be embarrassed.” The translation used the term “embarazada” to mean “embarrassed.” This provided much amusement to the Mexican market, as “embarazada” means “pregnant” in Mexican Spanish.

Chain of Command

In organizations where the chain of command and hierarchy are rigidly followed, communication is deferential, passive, and slow. For instance, in India as well as Mexico, one is



A global organization like McDonald's markets its products according to the culture of each specific country. Because India has a sizeable vegetarian population, McDonald's India prominently advertises its vegetarian fare on its Web site. However, in an Islamic country like the United Arab Emirates, McDonald's chooses to promote its non-vegetarian fare which uses *halal* meat. (Used with permission from McDonald's Corporation).



Information Bytes 6.3

Cultural differences abound across the globe. A blogger recounts how, as an Indian, she was used to the bossy and strict attitude of the new manager (a German) at her job. However, her Australian colleagues were more used to democratic processes and found the new manager's style to be too authoritarian and dictatorial. The German manager became aware of her situation and gradually adapted the Australian work culture. In short, informal Australian managers are effective in Australia but not in India or Germany, and vice versa.

supposed to be respectful and humble when communicating with seniors. Most opinions, suggestions, and so on are put in the form of open-ended questions.

Physical Aspects

Physical considerations in communication include open and closed office systems, issues of physical space, distance, and proximity, and physical artifacts of culture. For example, there is a sharp contrast between the Western closed office system and the Japanese open office system. In the latter, department heads have no individual offices at all. Instead, their desks are simply one of numerous other desks placed in a regularly patterned arrangement in a large open area. No partitions are used between the desks and no individual offices exist. Yet each person is strategically placed in a way that communicates his or her rank and status just as surely as in the U.S. or French systems. Thus, the department heads' desks are normally placed at a point farthest from the door where they can view their whole department easily at a glance. Moreover, status may also be indicated by placement near a window. The messages communicated by placement in a large open office may be lost on a French or U.S. visitor unfamiliar with the system.

Non-verbal Communication

The words used are only part of any message. Four-fifths of the listener's emphasis is generally on the non-verbal gestures made by the speaker while delivering the message. There are five components of non-verbal communication:

- *Kinesics* or body language
- *Oculesics* or eye contact
- *Proxemics* or the use of body space
- *Haptics* or behaviour, including touching
- Clothes

Exhibit 6.2 indicates the cultural differences of such signals.

Communicative predictions are based on data from three levels:

- **The cultural level:** At the cultural level, only information pertaining to a person's culture is ascertained. After gaining knowledge about the cultural norms, one can at least predict some of the individual's responses.
- **The socio-cultural level:** At the socio-cultural level, information pertaining to the group the recipient belongs to is ascertained. Groups influence individual behaviour to some extent, and the response can be predicted with proper knowledge about the group.
- **The psycho-cultural level:** At the psycho-cultural level, data about the individual can be gathered from friends and close relatives. At this level, personal habits, characteristics, and other types of data may be gathered to accurately predict the individual's response.

Exhibit 6.2 Non-verbal Signals and Cultural Differences

Kinesics	Oculesics	Proxemics	Haptics	Clothes
Showing soles of feet (disrespectful in Arabic culture) versus crossing one's legs (as Americans and the British do)	Maintaining eye contact with seniors (as in Western countries) versus lowering one's eyes (as in Asian countries)	Huddling together (as in Japan) versus sitting some distance apart (as in Western countries)	Touching (as in Asian countries) versus not touching (as in Western countries).	Formal versus informal attire (this applies in any culture)
Taking a bow (as is the practice in Japan) versus shaking hands (in Western countries)	Eye contact may convey understanding or attention versus being considered disrespectful	Standing close together (India) versus standing at arm's length (Britain)	A pat on the back versus verbal appreciation	Shoes versus sandals
The "V" sign might mean victory (in most Western countries) versus being a lewd gesture (as in some Mediterranean countries)			Handshake versus verbal greeting (India) or hugging (Arab countries)	Attire that covers the entire body (in Islamic countries) versus that which leaves women's hands and legs uncovered (Western and liberal countries)
			People of the same gender holding hands (India for example) versus not touching at all (Western cultures)	Everyday clothes versus professional suits
				Western versus ethnic dressing

PROVERBS AND CULTURE

By examining proverbs, one can determine how certain aspects of a culture are viewed. This can relate to attitudes towards women, humility, fate, action, religion, spirituality, aspiration, and ambition as well as characteristics related to work such as professionalism, formality, hierarchy, competitiveness, and pragmatism. Proverbs are cultural indicators. Commonly employed as socialization devices, they are passed on from one generation to the other to perpetuate the cultural orientation of the family, society, and country. Exhibit 6.3 provides a list of proverbs from across the world as well as their meanings.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND THE WORKPLACE

Intercultural communication in the workplace includes interactions between members of different cultures at the workplace. In organizations, culture affects people's behaviour as well as how they respond to instructions, listen to their supervisors, relate with colleagues, and resolve misunderstandings among themselves.

Exhibit 6.3 Proverbs and Culture

Indian proverbs	Implication
A man laughs with others and weeps alone.	An individual is alone in sorrow.
A pearl is worthless as long as it is still in its shell.	Explore your potential.
Austerity is an ornament. Humility is honorable.	Always be humble.
Be careful of deep water and dogs that do not bark.	Be wary of quiet people.
Dependence on others is perpetual disappointment.	Always try to be independent.
Eat fire and your mouth will burn; live on credit and your pride will burn.	Borrowing is sinful.
Even a cat is a lion in its own lair.	People are more aggressive in familiar surroundings.
I gave him a staff for his support and he uses it to break my head.	Do not help others for they might betray you.
If you are up to your knees in pleasure then you are up to your waist in grief.	Austerity and simple living is the preferable lifestyle.
If you live in the river, you should make friends with the crocodile.	Try not to antagonize powerful people.
One and one make eleven.	Unity in diversity.
The world flatters the elephant and tramples the ant.	People in authority are given more respect.
Bad workmen blame their tools.	Do not blame others for your misfortunes.
What is the use of crying when the birds have eaten the whole farm?	Try and move on in life.
A distant hill looks beautiful.	Be happy with what you have.
Chinese proverbs	Implication
A sly rabbit will have three openings to its den.	It is good to be smart and strategic.
I see, I forget. I hear, I remember. I do, I understand.	One only learns by doing.
Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.	Self-help is the best help.
He who asks is a fool for five minutes, but he who does not ask remains a fool forever.	Always ask questions.
An ambitious horse will never return to its old stable.	Ambition is always valuable.
Over a long distance, you learn about the strength of your horse.	Time is the best judge of somebody's character.
Money made through dishonest practices will not last long.	Honesty is always the best policy.
If you're in a hurry, you'll never get there.	Patience is a virtue.
Plucking up a crop to help it grow.	It's always better to let things run their natural course.
Firewood and a cup of water.	It is useless to apply minor remedies to a major problem.
Length of ten fingers.	One can't expect everything to be perfect.
Catch a cub in its den.	In order to succeed, one has to take risks.
Crows are universally black.	Bad people remain bad, no matter what.

(Continued)

Exhibit 6.3 (Continued)

American proverbs and phrases	Implication
Time is money.	Punctuality is always a valuable trait.
Blow your own horn.	Individualism and self-accountability leads to individual reward and recognition.
Work before pleasure.	Work should always be the priority in life.
America—love it or leave it.	Patriotism is a valued trait.
Don't beat around the bush.	Always come straight to the point.
I don't care how you get it done, just do it!	Getting one's work done is of primary importance.
Keep your nose to the grindstone and your shoulder to the wheel.	Hard work is of primary importance.
Don't be a stuffed shirt.	It's not always necessary to be formal.
Don't just stand there, do something! There is no time like the present. Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.	Never spend an idle moment.
Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing.	Always be competitive.
The sky is the limit. Every cloud has a silver lining. It is always the darkest before dawn.	Optimism is always good.
Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. Where there's a will, there's a way. You can't keep a good man down.	Determination is always good.
Who says you can't have it all?	It is possible to have a fulfilling career as well as family life.

When immigrants stay for a long time in a host country, a process known as *acculturation* may occur, where traits of the original culture are replaced with those of the host country. This is essentially a group phenomenon. On an individual level, *assimilation*, a process where immigrants or expatriates adopt the culture of the host country, may occur. However, it is not necessary that these processes occur. In many cases, people prefer to retain their original cultural identity and resist attempts to transform their beliefs.

At times, employees face a situation described as *culture shock*—the anxiety and apprehension experienced by an individual when he or she operates in a different culture. In these times, the organization must intervene to ensure that the employee is warmly welcomed in the host country and made as comfortable as possible. At least in the initial phase, the organization can do the following:

- Conduct an induction programme for overseas employees. In the induction, the culture of the specific organization, the policies of the organization, and the office jargon and style of business correspondence may be explained to the employee.
- Create an environment free of racism and discrimination. It is the responsibility of the organization to ensure that no embarrassing situations occur due to racist or discriminatory attitudes. At the outset, the managers must ensure that the organization has a zero tolerance policy towards racism and any form of discrimination at the workplace. This will provide reassurance to new employees and help them to adjust to the organization.

Organizational culture is the persona or the identity of the organization. It comprises the values and beliefs of the organization and manifests itself in appropriate behaviours. One can



Every employee should adapt and try to adjust to each others' cultures.



Information Bytes 6.4

For most people across the world, the weekend comprises Saturday and Sunday. However, for those in the Middle East, the weekend comprises Friday and Saturday, and Sunday is the first working day of the week.

assess the culture of an organization by looking at the interiors of the office, the communication style adopted by the organization, the dress code, the mission and vision statements of the organization, and the accepted rules of conduct. At times of mergers, acquisitions, and organizational transformations, strategic planners need to look not only at the tangible changes to be made, but also at the intangible cultural aspects that should be changed.

Cultural Conflicts

Cultural conflicts occur when there is a perceived difference in values and beliefs between people from different cultures. The most important barrier to cultural communication is ethnocentrism. *Ethnocentrism* is when people of one culture perceive their culture to be superior to others. They assume that their own cultural norms are the ultimate norms of behaviour, and judge others by the same yardstick. This leads to stereotyping and premature judgments, which affect behaviour and productivity in the long term. There are a few issues one needs to keep in mind while training expatriates for cross-cultural shifts:

- They should be given a basic idea about the new workplace they would be shifting to.
- The style of business correspondence practiced by the country or organization where they are going should be communicated to them.

- An idea about the appropriate kinds of clothes to wear should be given. This is especially important for people who shift from one kind of climate to another.
- Detailed information about the immigration rules is important. It is also good for travelers to follow a few basic rules such as always keeping a photocopy of their passport handy.

Resolving Cultural Conflicts

With changing demographics, cultural differences have become an important issue in organizations across the world. Many cultural sub-groups resist attempts by the dominant culture to assimilate them into the mainstream culture and desire to maintain their cultural identity. In this scenario, it is essential to educate people about the nuances of various cultures. Exhibit 6.4 illustrates one such process.

Awareness about the importance of cultural differences is important. Acknowledgement that differences exist and are due to culture is the first step in recognizing and dealing with conflict. This acknowledgement should be followed by a discussion initiated by the conflicting parties or via managerial intervention. The discussion should address the following issues:

- The specific offensive action
- Cultural perceptions
- Conflict handling in various cultures
- Best possible solution

Solutions could range from conducting training programmes for cultural sensitization, enabling interaction across cultures by formulating cross-cultural teams, or bringing about a structural change in the organizational setup to accommodate these differences.

Jeanne Brett, Kristin Behfar, and Mary C. Kern have outlined few representative situations and strategies to deal with cultural differences.⁵

According to the authors, there are four main strategies to deal with cultural conflict based on the situation:

- **Adaptation:** Some teams find ways to work with or around the challenges they face, adapting their practices or attitudes without making changes to the group's membership or assignments. Adaptation works when team members are willing to acknowledge and name their cultural differences and to assume responsibility for figuring out how to live with them.
- **Structural intervention:** A structural intervention is a deliberate reorganization or reassignment designed to reduce interpersonal friction or to remove a source of conflict for one or more groups. This approach can be extremely effective when obvious subgroups demarcate the team (for example, headquarters versus national subsidiaries) or if team members are proud, defensive, threatened, or clinging to negative stereotypes of one another.

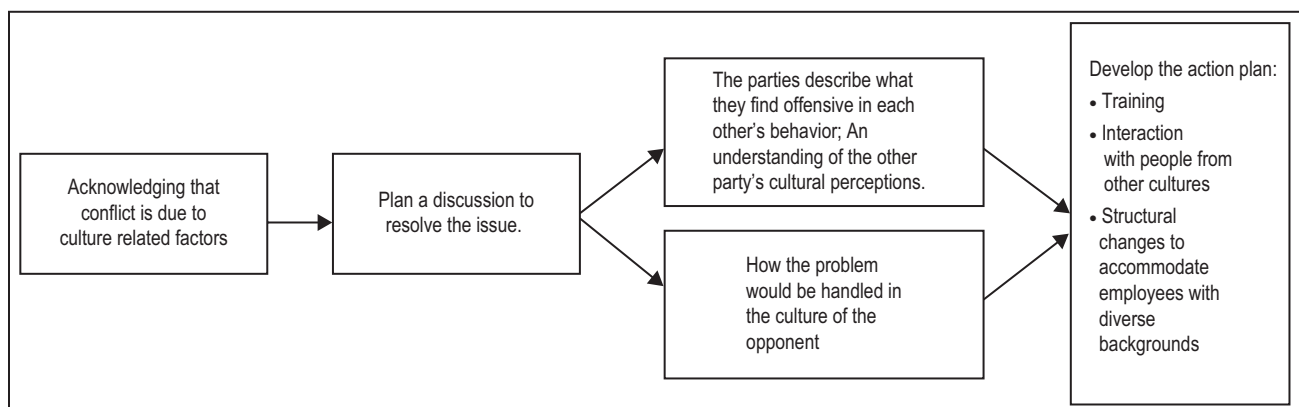


Exhibit 6.4 A Model for Handling Conflict

- **Managerial intervention:** The manager should always behave as an intermediary and not as an arbiter or judge in any case of cultural conflict. By involving the team members, both the manager and the team gain in terms of team productivity.
- **Exit:** When teams are permanent, the exit of one or more members is a strategy of last resort. If nothing else works, this method can be used, either voluntarily or after a formal request from the management. Exit is likely when emotions are running high, too much face has been lost on both sides, and nothing can salvage the situation. Exhibit 6.5 can help us identify the right strategy once we have identified both the problem and the “enabling situational conditions” that apply to the team.

Working across different time zones has become increasingly common. A clash of cultures, especially when the sender and the receiver are not face to face, can lead to unprecedented problems. Different approaches towards time management, meetings, greetings, replies, and

Representative problems	Strategy	Complicating factors
Decision-making differences; Communication differences; Situational conditions Team members can attribute a challenge to culture rather than personality; Higher level managers are not available; Team is embarrassed to involve higher level managers	Adaptation	Team members must be exceptionally aware; They must know that negotiating a common understanding takes time
The team is affected by emotional tensions relating to language fluency issues or prejudice; Team members are inhibited by perceived status differences among teammates;	Structural intervention	The team can be subdivided to mix cultures or expertise; Tasks can be subdivided; If team members aren't carefully divided into subgroups, it can strengthen pre-existing differences; Subgroup solutions have to fit back together
Violations of hierarchy have resulted in loss of face; An absence of ground rules is causing conflict; The problem has produced a high level of emotion; The team has reached a stalemate; A higher level manager is able and willing to intervene	Managerial intervention	The team becomes overly dependent on the manager; Team members may be sidelined or resistant
A team member cannot adjust to the challenge at hand and has become unable to contribute to the project; The team is permanent rather than temporary; Emotions are beyond the point of intervention; Too much face has been lost;	Exit	Talent and training costs are lost

Exhibit 6.5 Strategies for Resolving Cultural Conflicts

e-mails can create confusion and chaos. This can hinder the overall productivity and morale of the workforce.

An important component of communication is trust. It is easier to build trust in a face-to-face situation. In a virtual situation, the time factor is perhaps the greatest barrier. Business has to be conducted virtually—that is, online—and is purpose-specific. How does one build trust considering the limitations of time and a highly impersonal medium? Again, some cultures do not place a premium on relationship building in business (the United States and Germany are examples), while someone from India or the Middle East may feel awkward plunging straight into business. Thus, in intercultural communication, one should always look beyond the form to the content.

The intercultural complexities that make virtual teams challenging are:

- **Language:** It is difficult to decipher a foreign language on the telephone or voice mail. Frequent interruptions and clarifications mar conversation. This also hampers productivity. People are not aware of the terms and jargon used in other cultures and may fail to grasp the meaning and intent of the other person. Those who do not speak English as their primary language may misspell words, use short forms, invent new words, use poor grammar, and generally be unclear. Reading an e-mail with such problems can be a struggle, and the meaning of the message can be radically altered with a single out-of-place word. It is important for those communicating across cultures to bear in mind that this is to be expected. The best way to approach such e-mails is to look beyond the form to the intent. If that is not possible, then a simple e-mail should be sent asking for clarification. Another way of dealing with this is to send close-ended questions, which can have only “yes” or “no” as answers.
- **Response time:** In some cultures, the response time is rather slow and may inhibit communication. A common timeframe should be agreed upon at the very start of the communication.
- **Formality/informality:** In some cultures, communication is rather deferential. In the time-bound professional cultures, excess formalities are unnecessary. This becomes awkward for the recipient at the other end who believes in the virtues of respect and rapport-building. The best solution is to acquaint oneself with the verbal and non-verbal nuances of the other culture; understand and be considerate of the “otherness” of the team members; and get to know the other team members before getting down to business.

Working Your Way Out of Challenges

The following suggestions might be useful when trying to successfully deal with a multicultural team:

- Try to bring together all members of the multicultural team physically, at least once in a while. If this is not possible, try to arrange a videoconferencing session where members see and interact with one another.

Information Bytes 6.5

In May 2007, Kwintessential Ltd., a leading intercultural communication consultancy, announced the launch of three new Google gadgets. These were the translation quote gadget, the free e-mail translation gadget, and the intercultural business communication gadget. With these innovations, users across the world can simply choose their language and enter the words to get their quotes. The free e-mail translation gadget allows users to send e-mail to anyone in German, French, or Italian. The third tool offers practical tips to users across the world on overcoming cross-communication difficulties.

Source: Based on material taken from <<http://hailgadget.com/2011/04/intercultural-communication-firm-launches-new-google-gadgets/>>, accessed on June 3, 2011.

- Formulate clear ground rules for the following engagements:
 - Rules for written communication
 - Rules for processing responses
 - Rules for conflict resolution
 - Rules for personal conduct during meetings
 - Guidelines for decision-making
- Set clear-cut team objectives and share them with everybody else.
- Ask everybody to write something about their own culture, in particular their style of working, customs, beliefs, and ways in which they deal with conflict. Have an informal sharing session.
- Celebrate important festive occasions of each culture in a small way.
- Follow up with written communication so that everyone is on the same footing.
- Create a zero-tolerance policy for any form of racism and discrimination.

SUMMARY

- Culture is the context to which an individual belongs. Indeed, it is a way of life. Culture influences how we talk, behave, and deal with conflict. Culture is the sociological reality from which few can escape.
- Globalization, immigration, and international tourism have led to a large number of people being engaged in cross-cultural interaction. This has increased people's desire to understand the cultures of other countries as well as the norms of cultural interaction.
- Attitudes towards time, physical proximity, and forms of communication differentiate one culture from another.
- The biggest barrier to cultural understanding is ethnocentricity—the feeling that one culture is superior to another.
- Cultural conflicts can be resolved through adaptation, structural intervention, and managerial intervention strategies, with someone exiting being the last option.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. “Communication serves not only as an expression of cultural background, but as a *shaper* of cultural identity.” Explain this statement in light of the impact of culture on communication and vice versa.
2. “Low-context communication may help prevent misunderstandings, but it can also escalate conflict because it is more confrontational than high-context communication.” Explain the differences between low- and high-context cultures.
3. How can cultural awareness enable managers to communicate effectively in organizations? Explain giving examples.
4. Why is ethnocentrism considered to be the most important barrier to cross-cultural communication?
5. Enumerate the four ways managers adopt to deal with cross-cultural communication conflict. Why is adaptation not always the best way out?
6. Describe the process of resolving conflicts in a typical global work setting.
7. How do idioms and phrases used in a country represent the culture of that country? Explain with examples.

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. You represent an Indian firm. You have been asked to prepare a presentation on doing business in Japan. What aspects of Japanese culture would you incorporate in your presentation?
2. The following cross-border mergers and acquisitions have taken place recently. What aspects of each culture, according to you, should be taken into account for a smooth transition of the parent company into the host company?

- a. TATA Chemical acquires U.S.-based Soda Ash Maker General Industrial Products for USD 1 billion.
 - b. Indian shipping company Great Offshore acquires U.K.-based Sea Dragon for USD 1.4 billion.
 - c. Essar Energy acquires 50 per cent stake in Kenya Petroleum Refineries Ltd.
 - d. Banswara Syntex acquires French firm Carreman Michel Thierry for USD 125 million.
3. Investigate cultural issues relating to the merger between a) HP and Compaq, and b) Chrysler and Daimler-Benz. What strategies may be adopted to deal with cultural conflict at the workplace?

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Refer to the following link: < http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/cross-cultural_communication/>. What does the author mean by “face saving” as an important cultural variable?
2. Refer to the following link: <jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue1/wuertz.html>. Read the article by E. Wurtz named “A cross-cultural analysis of Web sites from high-context cultures and low-context cultures.” Comment on the manner in which McDonald’s has used the Internet for online marketing.
3. On January 27, 2006, Lakshmi Mittal, head of the world’s largest steelmaker, shocked the world by announcing a surprise hostile takeover bid valued at USD 23 billion (EUR18.6 billion) for his largest rival, Europe’s Arcelor. Critically analyse the cultural issues in the Arcelor-Mittal merger. Refer to the following link for help: <<http://www.slideshare.net/robvandamm/arcelor-mittal-merger-case-cross-culture-management>>
4. What are the key differences in negotiating styles globally. Refer to this link for more information :<http://www.forbes.com/2010/02/24/effective-presentation-skills-leadership-careers-rosenthal.html>
5. Visit: <http://www.cyborlink.com/>. Refer to the differences in etiquette between the Asian and the Western business contexts and discuss key business etiquette expected from Canadians when doing business with Indians

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ENDNOTES

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3. Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1959)
4. Adapted from Cheryl Rivera, “Cross-cultural communication at work,” *Ezine Articles*. Available at <http://ezinearticles.com/?Cross-Cultural-Communication-at-Work&id=3420444>, accessed on June 3, 2004.
5. Jeanne Brett, Kristin Behfar, and Mary C. Kern, “Managing Multicultural Teams,” *Harvard Business Review* (November 2006). Available at <http://nbr.org/2006/11/managing-multicultural-teams/ar/1>, accessed on July 2011.

CASE STUDY 1

Cross Cultural Miscommunication: How the Swede Lost the Deal

Summary

This case is about the manager of a large Swedish automobile parts manufacturer and the challenges faced by him while he tries to sell a newly developed product to the management of Yoshida Motors, a Japanese automobile behemoth. The readers are instructed to read through the case, identify the key problems that arose due to cross-cultural communication and recommend strategies that should have been adopted to avoid miscommunication.

Introduction

Henrik Johansson is the manager (International Business) of SvenAuto, a manufacturer of automobile parts located in Stockholm. He had joined the company five years ago, after completing his post-graduation in business management from the Stockholm University. After joining the company at an age of 27 years as a management associate, Henrik rose to his current rank of Manager (International Business) due to his sheer hard work and his business acumen.

SvenAuto was rapidly growing as an organization with turnover of approximately SEK 90 million. It exports auto parts to more than 15 countries in Europe. The main products of the company were bearings and braking system. The management was of the opinion that the company must tap the lucrative Japanese auto market in order to be a truly global corporation. After months of research, the management had decided to approach Yoshida Motors, one of the two biggest automobile manufacturers in Japan. Impressed with his work in the Swedish markets, the CEO of the company, Carlsen Torasberg, selected Henrik to present their latest development, the tech-fluo braking system.

The Problem

Henrik flew to Toyko within two days of being informed by Carlsen of the upcoming presentation. Due to being preoccupied by his earlier assignment, he did not put in considerable efforts to understand the Japanese culture. Next morning, Henrik reached the headquarters of Yoshida Motors, to present his case in a car provided by the company.

At the entrance, he was greeted by the secretary of the CEO and was led to a meeting room. The secretary introduced him to Shinobe Taksuro, the CEO of the company, and a few of the Board members. Henrik cheerfully greeted with an arm extended in anticipation of a handshake, "Hey Shinobe! It has been a pleasure to meet you." However, instead of shaking his hand, Shinobe simply bowed. He was

quite surprised to see Shinobe's unenthusiastic response. Henrik was also baffled by the fact that all the people present in the meeting room were dressed in business suits, while he was simply in formal attire. Nonetheless, he greeted others present in the room and started with his presentation. The Board members listened carefully with rapt attention, although they did not ask many questions. This made Henrik anxious. However, at the end of the presentation, the following questions were put forward.

Shinobe: *What is the expected life of the tech-fluo braking system before it needs maintenance?*

Henrik was not sure about the exact technical specification but this deal was important and he wanted to make an impression.

Henrik: *Umm... We have tested it up to 200,000 miles without issues. However, further tests would require car model specifications. Ideally, it should last much more than the current market offerings since it is a technical improvement over the best of the products.*

Shinobe: *What is per unit cost for the system? We would want to restrict our budget to below \$1000.*

Henrik knew that it was practically possible to supply at the specified rate. However, to clinch the deal he lied.

Henrik: *The unit cost would largely depend on the order quantity. I am quite certain we can manage to supply it below your budget cost. I shall ask my technical department to provide you the exact details.*

Eventually, Shinobe said, "Mr Johansson, while we find your product innovative, we need to assess if we can integrate it successfully into our automobiles. We shall revert in two days after discussing with our technical department." Henrik was disappointed with the way the meeting had proceeded, yet refrained from expressing the same. Shinobe proceeded to add, "I shall ask my secretary to arrange for a meeting between technical departments of both our companies within a fortnight to further evaluate the proposal. I hope to meet Mr Torasberg during the meeting." Henrik was not sure about Carlsen's schedule and said, "I will confirm with him and let you know if he can make it." He was preparing to leave when Shinobe asked, "Can you join me for dinner later in the day?" As Henrik's other pressing engagements, he declined. "No. I have a late night flight for Hong Kong and I need to visit some places before I leave. Perhaps, next time."

Before he left, Henrik was handed over a gift by Shinobe's secretary. He unwrapped the covers to find out that it was a Japanese flower painting, something similar to what he had seen in a museum in Stockholm. "Thank you for such a wonderful gift, Shinobe. I shall now take your leave." Henrik left for his hotel.

Impact

Sven Auto suffered loss of business due to manipulative strategies adopted by Henrik. Since he was unaccommodating to the Japanese culture he failed to create a favourable impression on the management of Yoshida Motors.

Questions

1. What the merits are of cross cultural training in global organisations?
2. How should have Henrik handled the situation?

CASE STUDY 2

Cross Cultural Meeting Gone Wrong

Summary

This case is about cross cultural miscommunication and reveals how different styles of communication in different cultures create misunderstandings and possess potential to cancel deals. The case discusses a scenario which includes three cultures and how they interact with each other. The reader is expected to understand and analyse the difference in cultures and come up with a solution to the scenario.

Introduction

Sudhanshu Roy was a senior consultant in a leading strategic consulting firm. His latest assignment was for Saudiaram & Co. a Saudi Arabian Oil exploration giant. Saudiaram & Co. had a total oil production of 3.5 billion barrels; about one in every eight barrels produced in world's crude oil production was done by them. They were the world's sixth largest refiners.

Due to global recession, Saudiaram & Co. contacted Sudhanshu's firm for cost effective efficiency improvement solution. Sudhanshu, considered somewhat of an expert with more than seven years of experience in this field, was put on the job. After a thorough analysis, Sudhanshu found out that inventory cost for Saudiaram & Co. was the critical area for cost cutting and hence instead of going for the existing supplier, Sudhanshu found out that a Chinese drill supplier-Taizhou Nanyang, would be more cost-effective. A meeting of both the clients was scheduled at the Delhi office of Sudhanshu, Mr Sheikh represented Saudiaram & Co. and Mr Lee represented Taizhou Nanyang. The deal was very important for both companies to increase revenue and profit margins.

Problem

After the meeting was over, Sudhanshu got feedback from both the clients that they were not interested in the deal. Sudhanshu was startled by the decision as both the companies were quite a strategic fit, fulfilling needs of each other at the same time. Sudhanshu never thought that the deal could have gone wrong. From Mr Lee's point of view, when Mr Sheikh came late for the meeting, avoided question about family, interrupted him multiple times in presentation, patted him on back while leaving, were signs that he was not serious about the deal. From Mr Sheikh's point of view, asking about his family was disrespectful to him;

the information about the product was not clear to him and the impassive facial expression of Lee were signs that he was not interested in dealing with the Arabs.

The meeting was scheduled at 10:00 AM in the morning. Mr Lee entered the office 10 minutes before time and got settled in the conference room, and went over his presentation. Sudhanshu being the host and the facilitator of the meeting was present with Mr Lee, helping him with the details. It was 30 minutes past 10 and still there were no signs of Mr Sheikh. Mr Lee was visibly upset; after inquiring, Sudhanshu understood that Mr Sheikh would take another half hour to reach office. The message was conveyed to Mr Lee and it was seen to it that he was comfortable during the waiting period. Mr Sheikh arrived at the meeting venue almost an hour and half late.

After the formal introduction, attention was devoted to personal talks. Mr Sheikh complemented Sudhanshu about the capital city and asked about his job. He also enquired about Lee's job, company and his job profile. In return Mr Lee asked Mr Sheikh about the economic scenario in gulf countries and about his family. Mr Sheikh was taken aback and after a brief moment of awkwardness passed the question. It was surprising for Sudhanshu that even after the late start, the meeting did not start with discussing the business at hand. Both the clients were talking generally. He took charge of the meeting and requested Mr Lee to start his presentation. Mr Lee's English was not very clear and thus Sudhanshu and Mr Sheikh had problems in understanding many things. The presentation was short and to the point and Mr Lee gave it rather plainly.

After the presentation, Mr Sheikh had many doubts and the three of them sat down to discuss these. Sudhanshu noticed that discussion was going around in circles and both the clients were beating around the bush, none coming to the point. After the discussion was over Mr Sheikh got up and patted on Mr Lee's back and conveyed that he would communicate the decision shortly.

Sudhanshu now had to resolve the issue and sort out the differences.

Questions

1. What do you think went wrong with the meeting?
2. What advice would you give Sudhanshu so that things are back on track?

CASE STUDY 3

Delayed Order: Problems in Cross Border Communication

Summary

The case revolves around a French company that has its sub head office in India. It was working on the design of a water treatment plant of a third country that is Iraq. The supplier is from Paris, the designer is from India and the client is from Iraq. In this case, the company was supposed to buy its design equipment from France, get its verification done from an Indian office and deliver the same in Iraq. The French people telephonically ordered their Indian designers to contact the vendors of France and to formulate the design for the same equipment. But, there was a communication barrier between the people as the supplier didn't know how to converse in English while the Indian designer faced difficulty in communicating in French. However, there was a lot of work pressure in the organization and the designer was supposed to talk to the supplier regarding the design. The communication could not last for long because of a communication barrier between the two communicators of different countries. The same problem was faced by the Indian designer and the Iraq client as they were also not able to communicate effectively.

Introduction

The company "ABC" was one of the world's leading water treatment organization that made municipal water treatment plants in various countries. It had its headquarters in France and was distributed across the country with one of its sub head office in Gurgaon, India. The turnover of the organization in India was 400 crore with an employee strength of 160 that included highly qualified engineers, designers, managers and architects.

The company took its tender from the Municipal Corporation and assumed control over its designing. It bought the equipment that were required for the same and supplied the designed equipment to a third party or the client.

This "ABC" company faced a cross communication problem between the company's Indian designer, French supplier and the Iraqi client. The problem arose due to language issues primarily as well as lack of clarity in cross cultural communication.

Problem

The owner of the company was a French lady, Ms Hiba, who could communicate effectively in each of the three languages: English, Arabic and French. The owner ordered its Indian designer Mr X to contact its French supplier and

discuss the allocation and budget about the equipment and convey its design ideas to the supplier.

However, Mr X faces a problem since he was not able to communicate in French and the French supplier; Mr Y was unable to converse in English. Thus, discussions do not yield any results.

The company now needs to contact its clients in Iraq who were proficient in Arabic only and thus there again arises the issue of lack of communication. There was a situation when X, the Indian designer had to wait for Hiba to reach its Gurgaon's office and communicate with the French supplier, Y about the equipment supply and design details. This led to delay in the project that directly hampered the company's profitability and the company incurred losses because of this.

Due to the delay, there was a further delay in the communication with Mr Z, the Arabic client and there was a state when the clients were ready to break the project deal between them and resolve the issue that would have led to high losses for the company. Hiba was on leave for some time during the deal and it was with great difficulty that the Indian designer, X managed to communicate with the French supplier, Y. The document regarding the equipment was sent from France based on the communication that took place between them and in the end it was known that they had mistakenly sent the information of compressor instead of the pump and that too in French language. It became extremely difficult for X to interpret the same information and so no progress was observed in the context of the equipment. The equipment failed to reach the client since it depended on one person, Ms Hiba to facilitate the smooth transaction. It was Hiba's job to subsequently translate the design into Arabic language so as to facilitate communication with the clients.

Impact

This adversely affected the organization and even to the employees as they had nothing to do during the interim time. They were not able to proceed further in their work as they were not able to communicate what has to be done further. Apart from this, they were also facing a work pressure; the company was drowning into losses, there was a delay in the project and moreover because of this delay the company started penalizing its employees even to the extent of deducting their salaries.

Questions

1. What are the necessary requirements of a global business in terms of business transactions?
2. What cross cultural barriers are evident in this case?

QUOTE

“I have worked and traveled in many countries, for both work and pleasure. What has worked for me is the ability to exercise patience, to persevere in the face of all odds, and to be tactful in my dealings with others. As an Indian expatriate working in the Gulf region, I can say that I have truly become multicultural in my business dealings.”

—Kamal Atal
Vice President (Finance)
Hyatt Regency

Chapter 7

CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Distinguish crisis communication from crisis management.
- Explain measures to communicate during a crisis.
- Emphasize attention to simmering issues that may snowball into a major crisis.
- Highlight the role of internal communications in a crisis.

“It takes twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.”

Warren Buffet¹

INTRODUCTION

Considering the enormous economic value of any business, it is no surprise that a heightened sensitivity and concern for crisis management and communication in the business sector has emerged. When disruptions occur, organizations can help mitigate the situation by having a carefully crafted crisis communication strategy. By effective coordination with media agencies, the government, and industry players, the severity of the crisis can be reduced by a considerable extent.

A *crisis communication strategy* provides for the accurate, timely, coordinated, appropriate, and understandable release of business-related information to the general public in times of potential and actual crises and emergencies that impact or have the potential to impact the business. An effective communication plan requires cooperation and planning by potential partners and agencies. Individual businesses and enterprises need to make their own decisions as to when and how to contact their clients, customers, employees, suppliers, and so on. Customer-related activities may be affected or possibly cancelled. At all times, the safety and protection of the public is paramount. The major emphasis in a strategic communication plan is on cooperation and coordination, both in the planning as well as in the implementation stages.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF A CRISIS

A *crisis* is variously described as a threat, a challenge, and a call to new action. (It is not always an emergency.) It may cause serious harm to people and property. It is a disruption of a routine, and may require a resolution for the status quo to be re-established.

The word *crisis* is hard to define. Traditionally defined in terms of a sudden emergency inviting a reactive approach, it has now come to encompass words such as *threat*, *disaster*, *problem*, *scandal*, *accident*, *jolt*, *scare*, and *catastrophe*. It is generally agreed that a crisis is a major, unpredictable event that threatens to harm the organization and its stakeholders.

The origin of the word *crisis* can be traced to the Greek word “krisis,” which means differentiation or decision. A crisis, when neglected, can endanger the survival of the company to a considerable extent. In tourism, for example, destinations are compared to organizational units. A crisis situation can threaten, weaken, or destroy one’s competitive advantage.

The word *crisis* has been described in a number of ways. Most definitions mention the following aspects about crises:

- Crises are inevitable, episodic events that disrupt the business on a regular basis.
- A crisis is any incident or situation, whether real, rumoured, or alleged.

- A crisis can focus negative attention on a company or organization internally, in the media, and before key audiences.

There are two kinds of crises. These may be classified as the “Cobra” and “Python” descriptors. A *Cobra crisis* is typified by a sudden disaster, such as the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States, which resulted in the destruction of the World Trade Center. A *Python crisis*, on the other hand, gradually creeps up on an organization. Some causes of Python crises can be poor quality of products or highly priced goods and services. A Cobra crisis is characterized by a definite response, whereas a Python crisis triggers a bureaucratic approach. A Python crisis is not identified, but is negotiated when recognized.

Of all the crisis management models, the one by Faulkner appears to be the most appropriate.² It distinguishes crises into the following phases:

- A pre-event phase
- A prodromal phase
- An emergency phase

The *pre-event phase* is one where risk assessment is done and contingency plans are developed. Simulation, role plays, and mock drills are part of this phase. In the *prodromal phase*, one has to be geared for action, and in the *emergency phase*, efforts have to be taken to protect people and property. In fact, it is in the emergency stage (when a full-blown crisis has occurred) that a communication plan needs to be adopted and put into action.

Western organizations concerned with crisis management have consistently adopted a four-stage model, such as the mitigation, preparation, response, recovery (MPRR) model or the prevention, preparation, response, recovery (PPRR) model.

Organizations have to manage crises that occur as a result of either sudden or long-simmering events.

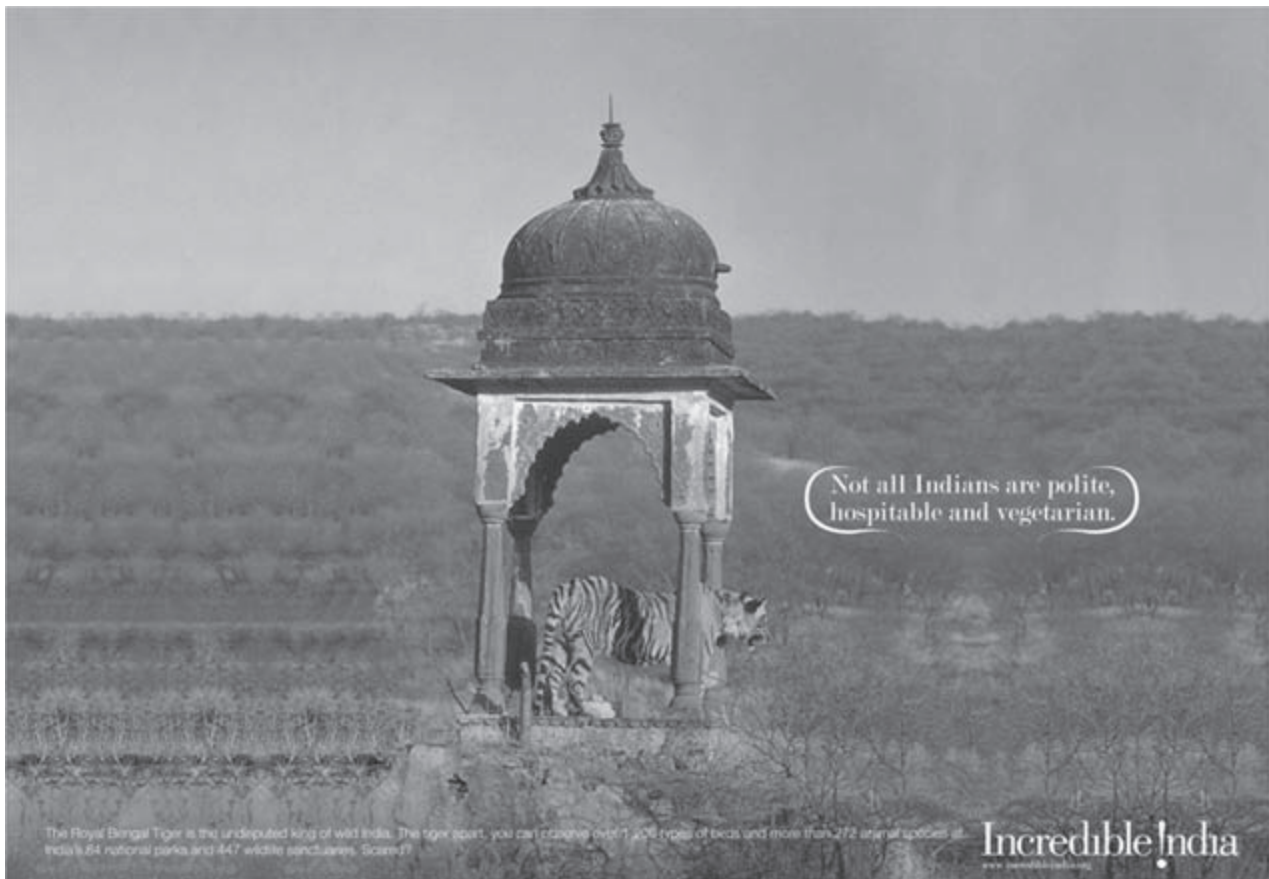
The following are sudden emergencies that organizations may have to face along with examples:

- **Natural disasters:** The devastating earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan on March 11, 2011 as well as the recent Irene hurricane that hit the U.S. coast.
- **Technical disasters:** In November 2009, the cell phone company Nokia recalled around 14 million mobile phone chargers from around the world after these chargers proved to be an electrical shock hazard due to faulty/loose covers.
- **Crisis of confrontation:** In 2008, Jet Airways in India fired approximately 1,900 of its employees as a cost-cutting measure, but hired them back after widespread media attention and general public outcry.
- **Acts of malevolence:** The terrorist attack in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, is an example of this.
- **Acts of deception:** The scams regarding the organization of the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi are acts of deception.
- **Management misconduct:** Satyam’s chairman, Ramalinga Raju, resigned from Satyam’s board of directors in 2009 after admitting to cheating six million shareholders. He was imprisoned in Hyderabad on charges including embezzlement, cheating, and insider trading.

Managers tend to overlook the simmering events that lead to a sudden crisis. However, a shrewd crisis management team is constantly vigilant for issues that can snowball into a major crisis.

Some issues that can turn into a major crisis if left unchecked include:

- **Crime:** A petty crime committed by an employee or one that occurs in the workplace should not be ignored. It is often the symptom of a simmering crisis.
- **Industrial unrest:** Failure of the management to resolve a long-standing issue might result in it turning into a major crisis.



The Indian Ministry of Tourism took several confidence-building measures to avoid negative impact on tourism after the 2006 terrorist attacks in Mumbai. The extremely successful 'Incredible India' campaign was one such measure.

- **Mismanagement:** Acts such as misappropriation of funds should be investigated, as these depict problematic issues in the functioning of an organization.
- **Consumer issues:** Unhappy, irritated, and complaining customers should not be ignored as collectively they can pose a danger to a firm.
- **Whistle-blowing:** Whistle-blowing and whistle-blowers should not be suppressed. These are but symptoms of the larger ills that plague organizations.
- **Legal actions:** Legal suits initiated by the company or vice versa need a deeper investigation of the real issues so that the crisis can be nipped in the bud.
- **Discrimination:** Differentiating on the basis of gender and nationality indicates a deeper malaise within the system and has the potential to transform into a bigger issue.



Information Bytes 7.1

The Indian tourism industry had to face rough waters in the aftermath of the terror attack in Mumbai on November 26, 2008, with advisories issued by several countries including Australia, Canada, Britain, and New Zealand advising their citizens to avoid travel to India. However, the Ministry of Tourism took several confidence-building measures to avoid a negative impact on tourism, and the number of tourist arrivals actually rose. These measures included security updates for foreign tourists to be put up on the Web site of the Ministry, an aggressive marketing drive to woo tourists, appointing noted film actor Aamir Khan as the brand ambassador of "Incredible India" via the "Atithi Devo Bhavo" campaign, allotment of INR 2.2 billion as budget for overseas campaigns, and special familiarization trips sponsored by the Ministry for travel writers and tour operators.

Research characterizes crisis events as chaotic, unpredictable, and complex events that threaten to destabilize the most successful enterprise due to a lack of understanding of these issues.

DEALING WITH A CRISIS

Broadly speaking, there are two types of crises: small-scale or large-scale. A small-scale crisis may be managed without convening emergency procedures. It may be handled with “common sense” management and timely intervention of relevant authorities. A large-scale crisis, on the other hand, might require emergency responses and the setting up of communication command centres and a crisis response plan. However, each crisis is unique, bringing with it varied circumstances that may require deviations from the most superbly crafted crisis management plan.

In general there are four ways to deal with a crisis. Accordingly, the first and foremost step is to identify the cause of the crisis—is it external or internal? If it is internal, is it product-based or employee-based? The next stage is to develop specific plans to deal with the crisis. A primary spokesperson has to be designated. The roles and responsibilities of key personnel should be allocated next. Most experts on crisis communication suggest restraint in dealing with the media, who they say can create bad press for the concerned organization. Accordingly, an angry retort, a careless remark, and statements that imply negligence might invite strong criticism from the public. Organizations that stress safety, care, concern, employee opportunity, long records of good relations, and equal opportunity in their dealings with the press are considered reliable by the media.

Thus the four steps of crisis management are:

- Identifying the cause of the crisis as either external or internal.
- Developing a quick plan to combat the crisis and deciding what to say to employees and the media.
- Designating a primary spokesperson for the organization.
- Defining the roles and responsibilities of key personnel.

“Source credibility” refers to the credibility or the reputation of the organization/person from where the crisis emanates. It affects people’s perceptions regarding the management of the crisis and preparedness. If government leaders and disaster relief officials understand that people have differing attitudes and motivations towards preparedness (through audience analysis), they will be better equipped to encourage people to prepare adequately for any crisis that might occur.

Communication after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States demonstrated that immediate reactive yet strategic communication planning was apparent in the wake of the terrorist attacks—especially among tourism-related organizations.



Communication Bytes 7.1

There are five levels of emergency preparedness in organizations:

- **Level 1:** Those who are totally prepared for any short-term emergency or contingency.
- **Level 2:** Those who are well prepared with enough supplies to get through most disasters.
- **Level 3:** Those who feel somewhat prepared for short-term emergencies.
- **Level 4:** Those who are prepared just a little bit.
- **Level 5:** Those who are unprepared for any emergency or contingency.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION: A THEORETICAL MODEL

Though it is essentially a part of crisis management, crisis communication must be distinguished from the same. As business is prone to a buildup of negative perceptions, it is important to communicate crisis management and recovery issues to the target audience. Positive word-of-mouth information generates demand and pushes the bottom-line. In the event of a long-term crisis, a Crisis Communication Plan (as illustrated in Exhibit 7.1) must not only be detailed and exhaustive, but also flexible to accommodate unforeseen circumstances.

A Communication Response Team (CRT) or backup staff must be designated to deal with such issues. A communication command centre must also be created with a designated office and contact number. The functions of the CRT are to coordinate key messages and send official communication to the spokesperson, who will then liaison with the media to inform the audience—employees as well as clients—about the events. The spokesperson will also identify the appropriate media for communicating messages, and inform people about how they can contact the organization.

The organizational website can also be used to disseminate information with official releases in a timely manner to all affected parties including the media. If necessary, a formal news conference or media briefing can be arranged. As the crisis continues, the CRT carefully monitors how media coverage develops, and responds appropriately. All media contacts should be logged in detail, including the name of the reporter, the media outlet they represent, their telephone number, and a short summary of what was discussed during the contact.

ROLE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS IN A CRISIS

Experts say that in times of uncertainty, employee engagement and communication take on a critical role. In an article, H.S. Lheem, the managing director of Hyundai Motor India Ltd. (HMIL) commented that sharing thoughts and plans with employees and collecting their feedback becomes critical during times of uncertainty, economic downturn, or a perceived threat.³ In times of crisis, it is important to open up new channels of communication.

Internal communications aids in smoothing the task of crisis communication and minimizing the damage to the company's reputation internally (among employees) as well as externally (among customers). How the CEO's thoughts are communicated also makes an impact. Often it is not how much one communicates but what is communicated that makes all the difference. Employees, clients, customers, as well as the media are susceptible to the emotional sensitivity shown by the organization. Feelings of concern, safety, and trust override any sophisticated communication mechanisms.

At all times, a knee-jerk reaction is to be avoided. Carefully thought out responses must be used to pacify the media and customers. Indeed, a crisis is an opportunity that should not be wasted. Seasoned professionals can use this time to demonstrate leadership skills, courage, vision, and innovativeness.

Approaching issues with respect, dignity, and concern for the livelihood of individuals and families, and working out solutions that keep those values intact, is important, say experts. It is these qualities that are remembered by the public long after the crisis is over.

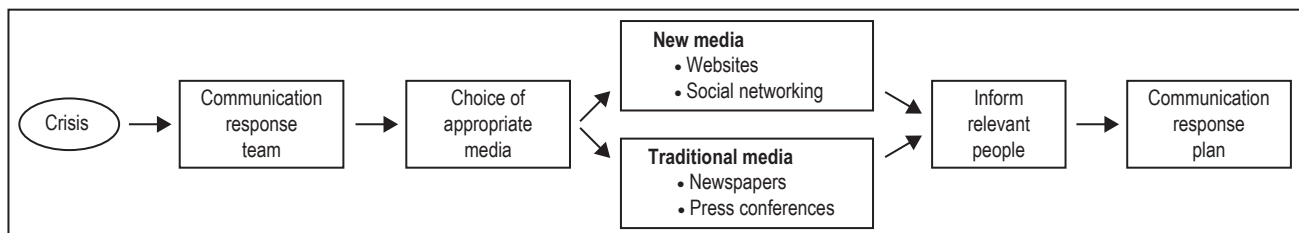


Exhibit 7.1 Overview of a Crisis Communication Process

POINT		COUNTERPOINT
	Crises generally come suddenly. Hence their management is always spontaneous in nature.	It is true that crises come suddenly. However, one must always anticipate this and be prepared for any eventuality. An ad hoc approach is not advisable.
	In a crisis, the primary goal is to manage the media so that the image of the company is not affected in the eyes of the public.	In a crisis, the primary focus is to motivate employees so that everybody in the company understands the real threat and what the company is doing to mitigate it.
	The crisis response team (CRT) is responsible for managing crises.	It is not just the CRT, but also the CEO of the organization and other managers who have to work collectively to manage a crisis.
	It is only quick action that rescues an organization from the throes of a crisis.	Words (and not just action) also have the potential to reduce the ill-effects of a crisis. Caring words, carefully scripted responses, and well-timed remarks help create trust and win loyalty.

Product recall is the worst nightmare for every marketer. As a result of a product recall, painstakingly built brands might go down the drain in almost no time. In this scenario, it is important to not look for a quick solution. The best way to restore confidence in the brand is to quickly acknowledge the problem and be responsible and transparent about it. Customers are generally forgiving, but the good intent of the company needs to be communicated quickly. The functions of effective communication in a crisis are:

- Effective communication helps win the confidence of the employees of the company.
- It helps to effectively counter rumours and gossip that invariably occur in times of crises.
- It helps in sharing the company's plan to tackle the crisis with employees. The message goes out clear and strong to the employees that the company wants to keep all information channels open while communicating with them.
- It helps to gain the cooperation of employees.
- It assists in minimizing the impact of the "bad news."

The company must do the following when faced with a crisis:

- Motivate the team with positive messages.
- Focus on the task at hand and the delivery of output.
- Encourage positive communication with workers who become disturbed and insecure when they see that non-performers have been laid off. Assure employees that their future is secure. This helps to retain these employees as well.
- Communicate clearly about expectations from employees. In times of crisis, cost-cutting and multitasking are common (as Exhibit 7.2 clearly illustrates). Communication will break down resistance and will help involve employees battling the situation.
- Explain the rationale behind harsh decisions taken during a crisis as well as why unpopular measures are necessary. This will boost the image of the company as a responsive organization.

It is true that the crisis will not remain forever, but the way a company manages the crisis will always be appreciated by employees and the market alike. This will help the organization recruit in better times. Many companies have a branded Internal Referral Recruitment programme that helps them find the right person for the right job in times of crises and their immediate aftermath.

SOME EXAMPLES OF COMPANIES IN CRISIS

The examples in this section illustrate crises faced by organizations and the action taken to successfully combat them.

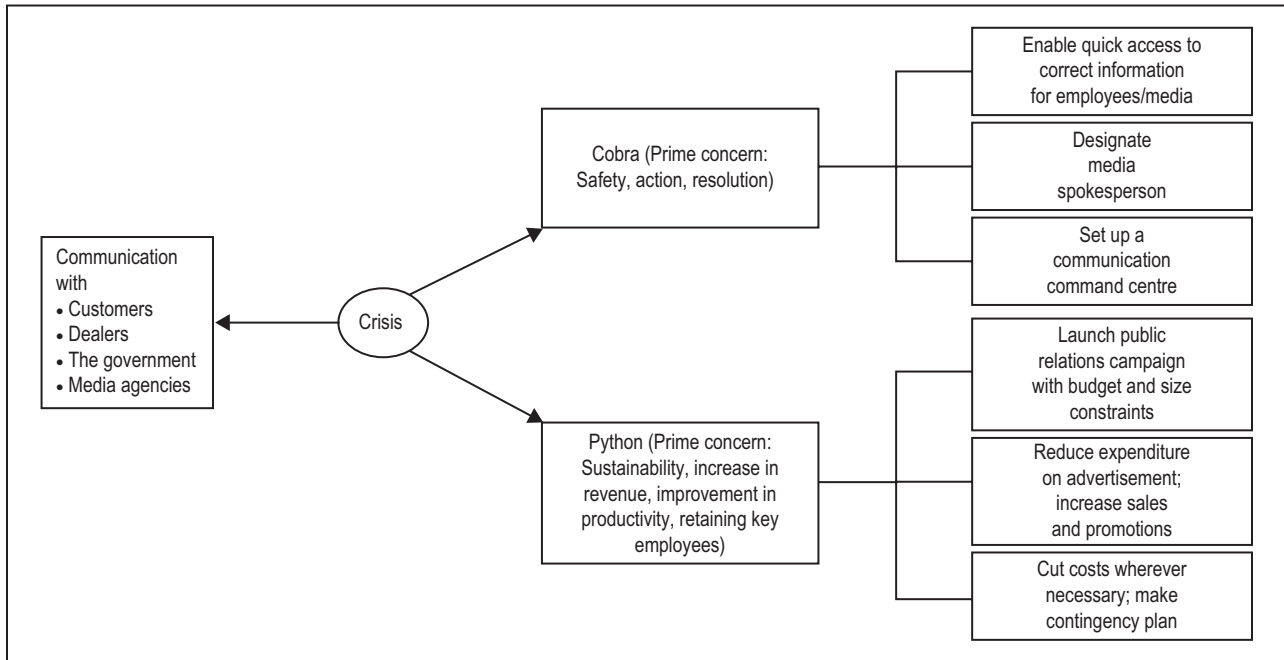


Exhibit 7.2 Crisis Communication Strategies

Toyota Motor Corporation

The president and grandson of the founder of Toyota Motor Corporation appeared before the press, publicly acknowledging that there were genuine problems with Toyota cars. Around 8 million units across the world had already been recalled. Even as he further stated his and the company's commitment to address consumer grievances, the epidemic had touched even Toyota's hybrid car, Prius, forcing the company to recall thousands of the iconic car model. Toyota knows it's going to be a long drive back to the highway with a couple of bumps to manoeuvre—first to re-paint the tarnished image of the brand and, second, to win back consumers' confidence. It's something Toyota learnt this time as public reports indicate that its cars were facing mechanical problems for years before the company accepted the serious nature of the situation.⁴

Maruti Suzuki

Back home, officials at the auto brand Maruti Suzuki are bracing themselves for any eventuality as the company announced a recall of nearly 100,000 A-Star car models with faulty fuel tank problems. Even as the response from the company has been swift, it's too early to assess the damage done to the brand. The damage could well rub off on the other car models in the Maruti Suzuki portfolio. In the case of Maruti A-Star recalls, only a fraction of the 100,000 cars face the problem.⁵

Mattel

After the massive lead paint toy recalls announced by premier toy manufacturing company Mattel in 2007, the company undertook the following external communications measures to handle the situation:

- Newspapers and television shows were used to inform the public about the measures the company had taken.
- Toll-free, multilingual, interactive voice response phone lines were used to keep people up to date about the situation.
- Notices were put up on Web sites in more than 20 different languages, including popular Web sites like Yahoo! and Disney.
- Videos of the CEO of Mattel addressing these issues were put up on Web sites.

- Letters were mailed to customers whose contact information was available.
- Retailers were notified about the recall through letters.

It is very important to hit the right note when one is addressing customers after a product recall. Please see Exhibit 7.3 for a better idea about how to phrase these letters.

Cadbury

Cadbury too faced a backlash when worms were discovered in its flagship product, Cadbury Dairy Milk. The company undertook the following measures to ensure that the crisis was averted:

- A media desk was set up to ensure that no media query went unanswered.
- Every media story carried Cadbury's point of view.
- The managing director himself addressed consumer concerns regarding the infestation.
- Project Vishwas was launched to reinstate the consumer's faith in the brand.
- Editorial outreach programmes were launched.
- Advertisements were placed in all the media outlets.
- Town hall meetings were held to address the issue.
- New "purity sealed" packaging was launched in January 2004.
- Popular Indian film star Amitabh Bachchan was roped in as brand ambassador to connect with the consumers more.

Exhibit 7.3 Sample Letter to Customers after a Product Recall

Connect with customers in order to gain empathy.

End on a positive note.

Dear friends,

All of us at Sharma Pharmaceuticals have been sick or have had an unwell friend or family member at one point. Like you, we know and appreciate that nothing should come in the way of the well-being of the people we love. As you might have heard, Sharma Pharmaceuticals has recently decided to recall two of its drugs (Drug A and Drug B) because it was found that they contained impermissible amounts of Chemical C and Chemical D.

We want to make it clear that every employee of Sharma Pharmaceuticals is aware of the issue and we have already taken steps to ensure that the drugs do not cause any significant damage.

We hope that such a mishap isn't repeated, but we also assure you that in case it does, we will be totally transparent with each and every one of you and act as promptly as we can.

We have been setting new benchmarks in the quality and safety of medicines for a long time and that is why Sharma Pharmaceuticals is such a trusted brand across the world. We hope that we'll be able to maintain that trust for many years to come.

Thank you for continuing to believe in us,

Sanjeev Singh
Chief Executive Officer
Sharma Pharmaceuticals

Show clear commitment to resolving the crisis.



Nokia acted promptly and intelligently during a particular ‘BL 5c battery’ crisis in 2007. Overnight, replacements were made available at the company’s ‘Care’ outlets all over the country.

- Personal interviews were organized with editors of prominent news magazines.
- An outreach programme was launched to reach out to stakeholders through popular press and personal initiatives.
- Testimonial advertisements called “Sincerity” were launched on television.

All of these measures, including better storage at retail outlets through coolers, helped Cadbury survive the crisis. In fact, Cadbury has been able to increase its market share post-controversy.

Nokia

In the mobile handsets segment, faulty batteries in one of the mobile handsets prompted Nokia to replace the particular battery. During the “BL 5C battery crisis” in 2007, Nokia India quickly sent out an advisory to customers articulating the exact nature of the problem. Though roughly 45 million batteries across the world were affected, there were only 100 cases of overheating reported. It cannot be denied, however, that the company was highly affected by this fiasco. Nokia went that extra mile to win back public confidence. It meant replacing nearly a million batteries for free, even though no cases of overheating were reported in India. Nokia says they did this to assuage any perception that the company is not serious about the issue though there was no legal requirement to do so. It managed to galvanize the entire business network in a crisis, which means that retail touch points became rather important. Overnight, replacements were made available at the company “Care” outlets. The lessons learnt during the battery crisis helped the company tackle other problems that arose

later. Hardly any ripple was caused by later problems because the company knew how to effectively put remedial measures in place.

We can identify some “Do’s” and “Don’ts” for communicating in a crisis. These are listed in this section.

Do:

- Communicate with employees about the crisis and how you plan to go about mitigating it. Seek their support and also inform them about how they should react when a media person approaches them.
- Enlist the support of the top management.
- Collaborate with the CEO at all levels. Give him or her a prepared document on the words he or she should use, the body language that he or she should exhibit, and the communication style to be adopted.
- Regularly update the media on events.
- Appoint a designated spokesperson and a Web site.
- Make sure that social media is being used by the organization to keep people updated.
- Meet up with the other stakeholders—clients, support service providers, and suppliers to share and resolve their concerns if any.
- Apologize when you are wrong and take corrective action.

Don’t:

- Assume that the crisis will pass and everything will be back to normal soon.
- Say “no comments” to the media.
- Keep your employees in the dark.
- Think that the immense brand value of the organization will tide you over.
- Use aggressive words with negative overtones.
- Start the PR work once the crisis is public.
- Use language that is complex and filled with jargon.

SUMMARY

- Crisis management strategy has recently become a very critical business concern, particularly when organizations need to cope with unpredictable circumstances such as natural disasters, the unstable economy, acts of terrorism, and so on.
- It is essential to apply the preparedness strategy, which leads to effective solutions. Studies show that rather than a reactive strategy, it is the strategy of proactive anticipation that can work positively for organization.
- Even where a crisis has potential for long-term negative effects (reduced customer flow and fear and apprehension in the minds of customers about the company and brand), innovative strategies to increase the customer base can be launched.
- There is a general perception that crisis planning is usually neglected by many organizations until a crisis reveals the lack of planning. Organizations should plan the impossible and create not only a manual for action but also for careful forethought.
- The literature on crisis communication shows that effectively planning for any crisis and being in a state of total preparedness helps the industry. Adopting a reactive yet strategic communication plan, having a good response time, managing the media, and providing information to the public hold the key to effectively managing a crisis.
- Depending on the size of the organization and the scale of its operation, it is not only external determinants, such as public relations, consistent communication strategy via an integrated marketing communications plan, and collaboration in social networks, but also internal determinants such as source credibility, internal flow of information, and a viable post-crisis recovery plan that affect the organization positively in the long run.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. “Crisis communication is common sense communication.” Discuss.
2. What are the key principles of verbal and non-verbal communication in a crisis? Answer with examples.
3. What lessons can we learn from the crisis management and communication strategies adopted by Cadbury and Nokia?
4. Explain the following terms in brief:
 - Python and Cobra crises
 - Communication Response Team
 - Source credibility
 - MPRR

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Assume that you are the corporate communications chief at Jet Airways. The management is planning to cut down on costs, and retrenchment appears to be the only way out. What you are concerned about is the fate of the 1,900 employees whose names are on the list that has just been handed over to you. You have always got along well with them. Yet you do understand that layoffs are the only way out of the current financial mess, and the pilots and ground staff did have a clause in their contract to that effect. However, you still disagree with the method planned by the management. You feel that the issue is sensitive and should be handled delicately. It might also harm the morale of the workforce in general. You are slightly apprehensive as the chairman is known to be inflexible at times. You have a strong feeling that this is not going to be an easy task. In about 5 minutes you have a meeting with the chairman and board members.
 - a. Role play with two students in the team. One will assume the role of the chairman and the other will be the chief of corporate communications. Convince the management and the board about an alternative way to inform employees about the retrenchment.
 - b. Write an e-mail to the employees informing them about the bad news.
2. Assume that you are a striking pilot. The recent layoffs at your company have greatly disturbed you and the other pilots. You felt that you have given your best to the company during your tenure of 10 years. Somehow,

you cannot help feeling “betrayed” by the company you helped build from scratch. You are also feeling insecure as you are still a contract employee. You discuss this with the other pilots and together you decide to form a union, which you would duly register. You personally feel that the management must know about it. Even though you know that they would strongly oppose it, you still feel that they should be warned. Unionism, you feel, is a highly risky organizational activity and you might be shown the door!

But first you also need to convince the other pilots, as you know that without mass support you simply cannot carry this off. Though there are about 400 pilots who support a union, there are about 400 more who will resist it. Most of those opposed to the union are in their first or second year of service and would not be willing to take the risk.

- a. Consider that your fellow students are the pilots that have to be persuaded to join the union and go on strike. As pilots, the students must ask questions to the speaker regarding the issue. Prepare a persuasive presentation to convince the pilots to form a union.
- b. The pilots decide that they would not inform the management before they formed the union. They would inform the management later, in the form of a memo signed by all, along with their demands. Compose a one-page memo addressed to the chief operating officer of the airline.

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Refer to the media interviews given by Jet Airways’ management and pilots at the following links and then analyse the management’s approach towards communicating during the crisis: <<http://www.timesnow.tv/Excl-Why-the-Jet-boss-wont-give-in/videoshow/4326959.cms>> and <http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/exclusive-pilots-union-jet-slug-it-outlive-tv_414865-3.html>.
2. Refer to <<http://www3.niu.edu/newsplace/crisis.html>>. The author advocates “telling it all, telling it fast and telling the truth.” Examine this statement from the perspective of crisis communication. Also explain seven key ways to address the media effectively.
3. Refer to the following site: <<http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/rt/prINTER FRIENDLY/943/865>> The author states in the article that information habits changed after September 11, 2001. In what ways did these habits change and why?

FURTHER READING

- B. Faulkner, "Towards a framework for tourism disaster management," *Tourism Management* (2001) 22(2): 51–62.
- D. Glaesser, *Crisis Management in the Tourism Industry* (Burlington, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003) 1–20.

ENDNOTES

1. R. Lowenstein, *Buffet: The Making of an American Capitalist* (New York: Random House, 1995).
2. B. Faulkner, "Towards a framework for tourism disaster management," *Tourism Management* (2001) 22(2): 51–62.
3. Rajeshwari Sharma, "Crisis Time, CEO needs to be the HR manager," December 21, 2008, available at <http://www.livemint.com/2008/12/21222828/Crisis-Time-CEO-needs-to-be.html>, accessed on May 30, 2011.
4. Preethi Chamikutty and Dilshad Irani, "Product Recall: How Brands Ensure Minimal Damage," *Economic Times*, March 3, 2010. Taken from http://articles.economic-times.indiatimes.com/2010-03-03/news/27623068_1_mobile-handsets-akio-toyoda-maruti-suzuki, accessed on May 31, 2011.
5. See endnote 4.

CASE STUDY 1

Faulty Assumptions and a Hasty E-mail

Summary

Mr Ramesh was working as an engineer in ALPHA Ltd., a MNC in the field of automation and engineering. He had worked with the organization for almost 3.5 years. He was well versed with the system and processes. Mr Srikanth was the group manager for the vertical in which Ramesh was working. Ramesh had built good reputation with Srikanth because of his sincerity and hard work. Ramesh had delivered projects on time and as a result he recently was awarded with a certificate of appreciation by the company. Srikanth's team specifically worked for Norwegian clients and had consistently delivered larger projects for a wide range of customers. The Norwegian counterpart of ALPHA Ltd. was the interface between the Indian arm and the end clients. Thus, all projects, approvals, quotations had to pass through the Norwegian office to the client. The case discusses an incident that happened due to lack of effective communication between the protagonists.

Introduction

Mr Samuel Vincent was the principal manager at ALPHA, Norway. He had a team of about ten engineers to support the activities in Norway. These ten engineers were crucial for the organization to provide support to clients based in Norway. The Indian subsidiary was started to cater the requirements of the Indian market and provide cheaper support and solutions to other countries. Indian engineers would often travel to Norway and deliver solutions to clients. However, at times the engineering or design activities were conducted in India and the Norwegian engineers would deliver the solution to the end customers.

Ramesh was working on one of the crucial projects which had multiple parts to it. Since this was a crucial project, Srikanth had extended full support to Ramesh. Ramesh was responsible for one of the sections. It also included few sections of the project to be delivered by engineers in ALPHA, Norway. After completing the engineering part of the project in India, Ramesh travelled to Norway to conduct the testing and installation with the end customer. He successfully demonstrated his part to the customer and everyone was happy. As his job was complete, Ramesh delivered his part of the software and control strategy to Allan Patterson, one of the Norwegian engineers. Ramesh assumed that Allan being a senior engineer would be aware of the processes involved in implementing the software. Ramesh was back to India after his part was complete.

Problem

There were some internal issues with the application software which had to be solved every time the software was implemented on the system. Ramesh also assumed that Allan would know about these issues. There was an installation procedure in place, but it did not mention these minute aberrations.

After all the sections of the project were complete, Samuel decided to conduct a comprehensive test with the client. Allan was allotted the job to do the test. It normally happens in countries like Norway etc., where people tend to follow the installation procedure word by word. Allan also did that and as a result he started getting errors in the logic. Allan was also not aware of the changes which were required to be made so as to resolve these issues. As a result he complained about this to Samuel. Samuel without consulting with the

other senior engineers or Ramesh, sent an email to Srikanth and some senior managers about the inefficiency and carelessness of Ramesh. He also required a quick response to it. Though Srikanth's team had done excellent job over the years and delivered projects on time with good efficiency, Samuel in his email mentioned about the couple of small issues which had occurred previously.

The email was a shock to Srikanth and he demanded an explanation from Ramesh, who was also surprised. After looking into the problem and the errors, Ramesh realized that this was not due to negligence but a lack of communication with Allan. He explained this to Srikanth. Srikanth had faith in Ramesh and he supported him. As the problem had escalated, the higher management decided

to have a meeting and find out the problems. Ramesh was disappointed as he had worked hard but because of communication gap, he had to face the peril. He and Srikanth explained the causes and effects to the senior team. The team was satisfied and a solution was provided to Samuel. Samuel later accepted that he took the decision hastily and even Allan should have had talked to Ramesh or Srikanth before reporting the problem.

Questions

1. What were the reasons behind the fiasco? Could it have been avoided?
2. What are the key considerations in framing an email?

CASE STUDY 2

The Disturbing E-Mail

Summary

This case is about a situation at an analytics firm called Woodpeckers Research. The management decided to change the work-hours policy given the current market requirements. However, the intent behind the change was not precisely communicated to the employees. Instead, the management employed an underhand method of communication that created confusion and discontent among the workers. An aggressive e-mail written by a manager, triggered further unhealthy discussions around the workplace. The HR department tried to save the situation through a town-hall. The case explores how the management should go about salvaging the situation, such that their recent business decisions were suited to the employee-friendly environment that they strived to maintain.

Introduction

Woodpeckers Research was known for its employee friendly culture. The management took pride in this and was aware that its practices were often emulated by its competitors. The revenue model of the business charged clients on a per hour basis, which was unlike its nearest competitor, Absolute Analytics, which billed clients on the basis of number of days.

The knowledge management industry had recently hit a slump and growth had slowed down. Though there were enough projects to staff employees, the group managers were facing challenges in maintaining the flow of revenues. Many clients were insisting on quick turnaround and were ready to hire Woodpeckers for short term projects for less than a week. Competition in the knowledge management industry was intensifying too. As a result, the senior management was contemplating on increasing bill hours per day to improve the quality of work delivery and hence, retained maximum number of clients.

Problem

As soon as the employees returned after the three day winter break in December, they were all staffed on the latest cases. Even though, the winter season was considered a lean season for the analytics business, there were multiple short term cases this year. However, as noticed by all, the group managers who were pitching for the case seemed to be overpromising the final case delivery. The pitch proposal had changed in format without any intimation to the project leaders who lead the cases. Hence, the project leaders were often noticed huddling in the café to discuss the sudden increase in workload.

The pressure of work trickled down to the junior analysts. Even though, the number of team members on a case remained the same, the deliverables per analyst had escalated, leading to longer work hours.

The issue reached its peak when on a certain project with a high profile client, the final slide loop had a calculation error. The error was pointed out by the client which caused extreme embarrassment to Mr Ankush Sharma, the manager of the case. He sent the following e-mail to the team and copied the director on the e-mail.

Team,

Is this the output you were expected to deliver to a high profile client such as Mr Mark Bower? The growth rate is the most basic check and I am shocked that an error was found in that. I think efficiency of this team is compromised. Playing music and visiting the café often is distracting you. If this behaviour continues and credibility is not restored in the next case, I am sorry to say that I will have to request the HR department for a

new team. This will be appropriately reflected in your reviews. Shivika, being the Project Leader and also in a promotion window, you were expected to be extra careful.

Team,
Ankush Sharma

This e-mail quickly circulated to the other teams and became the talking point during lunch that day. Shivika tried managing the crisis through multiple meetings with Ankush and the Director. The arguments brought up the subject of increased workload which the employees were not habituated to. Working till 1 AM everyday had led to productivity decline of some teams. This had created discontentment among analysts, associates and project leaders alike.

Realizing the change in office pulse, the HR department announced an office town-hall where everyone was informed that the billing policy had been changed to the

effect that post-winter, clients have promised a minimum of 9 hours per day, instead of the 8 hours earlier.

Impact

The HR announcement took the employees by surprise. The new billing policy was not communicated beforehand. Project leaders felt tricked into working the extra hour without a clue about the policy change. There was a feeling of disappointment in office reflecting the irresponsibility of the HR in clearly communicating policy changes. This affected the culture of the workplace which the senior management took pride in. The manipulative communication employed by the management had affected productivity across divisions. The new projects also required extra effort which made it imperative for the senior management to take initiatives to lift employee morale.

Questions

1. What would you have done as the manager to manage the situation?
2. What email etiquettes should the manager have kept in mind to manage the team?

Chapter 8

BUSINESS MEETINGS AND NEGOTIATIONS

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the preparations required for a meeting.
- Describe the key attributes of a successful meeting.
- Distinguish between the various types of meetings.
- Know the various terminologies used during meetings.
- Understand formal meeting procedures.
- Create an agenda for a meeting and take down the minutes.
- Deal with disruptions that might occur during a meeting.
- Understand what negotiation is, and negotiate successfully.

“Meetings are a symptom of a bad organization. The fewer the meetings, the better.”

Peter Drucker¹

INTRODUCTION

In today’s business culture, information flow is critical and organizations can ill afford to waste time revisiting issues repeatedly. Good meetings can accelerate the collective decision-making process and improve execution. Poorly conducted meetings, on the other hand, increase costs and waste the valuable time of participants.

There is evidence to suggest that more meetings are now being held than ever before. In 1990, it was estimated that there were 25 million meetings worldwide on a single day. Five years later, this figure rose to 50 million.² Most executives are in some sort of meeting for more than half their business day. The average number of meetings attended in a week is on a steady rise, and business professionals devote a chunk of their working hours to attending various kinds of meetings.

MEETINGS: A WASTE OF TIME?

Though meetings are a way of life in organizations of every size and kind, nobody seems very happy with them. Dull, ineffective, useless, and failing to live up to expectations are some of the epithets reserved for meetings. They are considered to be a waste of time, an interruption, and merely an opportunity for supervisors to deliver ineffective lectures to subordinates. People even end up wanting to take their work to meetings so that their time is not completely wasted.

A report in *Public Relations Tactics* reveals that a typical professional attends more than 60 meetings in a month.³ This study suggests that American businesses “face a situation of meeting mania” as 46 per cent of professionals are attending more meetings than they did last year. The study also predicts an increase in this figure within the next few years. Large corporations are having more meetings than their smaller counterparts. Even where meetings are not conducted face to face, video conferencing and, to a lesser extent, audio conferencing are used to organize meetings.

Research studies have raised serious concerns regarding meetings. One report says that although a little more than a quarter of attendees interviewed expressed strong dissatisfaction with the meeting process (especially the “ineffective speaking skills” of their team leaders),



Information Bytes 8.1

According to an MCI Conferencing White Paper, 91 per cent of professionals who attend meetings on a regular basis admit to daydreaming during the meetings. Ninety-six per cent miss entire meetings, while 95 per cent miss parts of it. Seventy-three per cent of the people surveyed admitted to bringing other work to meetings, and 39 per cent even dozed off during meetings. Further, professionals also lose 31 hours or roughly four working days a month attending unproductive meetings. In the United States, approximately 11 million meetings occur each day and most professionals attend an average of 61.8 meetings every month. Research also indicates that 50 per cent of the time spent in meetings is wasted.

Source: Meetings in America: A Study of Trends, Costs and Attitudes Toward Business Travel, Teleconferencing, and Their Impact on Productivity. A Network MCI Conferencing White Paper (Greenwich, CT: INFOCOMM, 1998), 10.

the team leaders expressed conviction in their meeting-heavy management styles and its ability to positively influence participants.⁴ This depicts the increasing perceptual divide between managers and team leaders regarding issues at the workplace including meetings.

The cost of unproductive meetings is high. According to this report, most professionals attend an average of 61.8 meetings per month. Research from Nelson and Economy indicates that over 50 per cent of this meeting time is wasted.⁵ Assuming each of these meetings is an hour long, professionals lose 31 hours per month in unproductive meetings, or approximately four work days!

In spite of criticism, face-to-face meetings are here to stay. In today's business scenario, where value-added services have become a core concern, the challenge for managers is finding ways to make meetings more productive.

MEETINGS: DEFINITION AND TYPES

A *meeting* is a gathering of people with a common cause and a common agenda. Meetings can be characterized as having “multi-party talk” that is “episodic in nature.” This “talk” is governed by a set of conventions. Essentially designated as a communicative event, meetings involve framing and coding of the agenda, deciding participation criterion and channel selection, and establishing the norms of speaking and interaction.⁶ Meetings, thus, include “serious meeting talk” interspersed with “chat.” As long as agenda integrity and temporal integrity are adhered to in a meeting, this is perfectly acceptable.⁷

Meetings are of many types—for instance, staff meetings, planning meetings, and problem-solving meetings. However, there are certain basic objectives that are common to all meetings:

- Sharing information
- Improving performance and productivity
- Dealing with any gaps in communication
- Addressing the concerns of employees
- Removing doubts
- Formulating policy
- Fixing targets
- Ensuring proper implementation of policies

Thus, meetings serve numerous valuable functions, including:

- **Enhancing employees' confidence:** A major soft drinks company has internalized the practice of regular meetings with employees. The CEO and president of Coca-Cola, Atul Singh, moved to India from China in 2005 with the intention of hauling Coca-Cola India out of the myriad controversies that were adversely affecting its business. In order

to achieve this, the first thing he did was insist on holding regular meetings with his employees. These meetings were useful in updating employees on the challenges faced by Coca-Cola as well as the preventive measures taken by the company. According to Singh, employees are the building blocks of a confident and successful company.⁸

- **Addressing staff gripe:** Companies use frequent meetings to address employee disillusionment. Ombudspersons, skip level meetings, meals, and outdoor trips are organized to address deep-rooted employee grouses.⁹
- **Obtaining customer feedback:** A well-known information technology-enabled service firm regularly invites its key clients and customers to board meetings where they have the liberty to freely talk about the experience of doing business with the firm, even comparing the company to their other technology vendors.

Meetings are purpose-intensive activities. For example, in problem-solving meetings, productivity is measured by the process by which the problem is solved, the time taken to reach a consensus, idea generation, and so on; thus, deciding the purpose of the meeting beforehand assumes critical importance. If the flow of ideas is strictly one way and there is no need for immediate feedback, then a meeting need not be scheduled. If people are merely being advised or informed, the facilitator can send an e-mail or memo and resist from calling a costly meeting. In some cases, one-on-one dialogue may be sufficient, rather than a meeting involving a large number of people. However, if the purpose is serious deliberation over a troublesome issue or if an important decision is to be made (requiring greater collaboration and a feeling of cohesiveness), a meeting may indeed be necessary. However, even then, the purpose of the meeting should help in deciding the number of participants. If the purpose is intensive problem solving, then as few as five participants, selectively chosen, may be adequate. On the other hand, if the purpose is problem identification, then even ten people may be ideal. Thus, there is often no need to call a large number of people for every issue.

Skip Level Meetings

In *skip level meetings*, a particular individual or group is allowed to meet the senior management. In other words, it involves “skipping” one’s own reporting manager and talking to those higher up. This is normally done to understand micro-level issues and resolve them at the earliest. In some cases, managers who are managing 10 to 12 people assign two to three project leads, who directly report to them, while the other members report to the team leads. Due to this hierarchical structure, team members may not find an opportunity to talk to their managers and share their views on the project, company, or management. To close this gap, managers schedule skip level meetings with their team members approximately once in every three months.

During downsizing, mergers, re-engineering, restructuring, and other organizational shifts, units, departments, and divisions are combined and changed in dramatic ways. A newly recruited manager in such a situation needs to quickly acquire a working knowledge of the organization. This can be done by engaging with employees working two to three levels lower down the ladder. By interacting with people far removed from their direct supervision, managers hope to understand the ground-level reality, which they may not be able to grasp by just interacting with senior-level staff.

Skip level meetings should involve the following steps:

- **Step 1:** Sending an invite to employee(s) one or two levels below, at least two days before the meeting. One should desist from calling an employee immediately.
- **Step 2:** Planning a meeting for about 30 minutes.
- **Step 3:** Explaining the purpose of the meeting and assuring the employees discussions will be kept confidential.
- **Step 4:** Listening well and not interrupting. One should not defend specific views and should refrain from taking anything personally.

- **Step 5:** Asking open-ended questions such as, “Could you elaborate on this?” “Did you feel the same when working with...?” One can also ask questions related to the organization and the project. Biographical information can also be asked for.
- **Step 6:** Concluding by summarizing the meeting.

Stand-up Meetings or the Daily Scrum

The *stand-up meeting* is a daily team meeting held to provide status updates to other team members (and not to the management). It is usually conducted “standing up,” to remind the participants that the meeting has to be short and to the point. At some places, it is also called the daily scrum. All members of the team are expected to participate, though the meeting is not postponed if a few people do not turn up. In general, the following three-question rule is followed:

- What did the participant do yesterday?
- What will the participant do today?
- Are there any bottlenecks?

The purpose of scrum meetings (particularly when they are held online) is to seek clarification about the work, ensure that the team is working cohesively, present an update of the work in progress, and communicate any hitches in the process.

It is recommended that team members answer the three questions in a manner that solves team issues and problems, and contributes to effective project management, especially when the stand-up meeting or scrum meeting is held online.

Performance Appraisal Meetings

The *performance appraisal meeting* is a vital evaluating tool and is conducted by the supervisor. If it goes smoothly, this meeting ensures that employees are motivated and looking forward to working towards a common goal. If it's not done well, it might leave the participant confused or even angry. One should keep certain things in mind if one is to conduct a successful performance appraisal meeting. For instance, it is important to spend sufficient time on each point. It is no use hurrying to the next issue if the previous one hasn't been resolved to everyone's satisfaction. There should always be proper dialogue between the employee and the supervisor. Engaging in a monologue is not a good way to hold a successful appraisal meeting. The supervisor should also have a positive attitude. There is no point in being too negative. Before the meeting is over, the supervisor should confirm whatever facts other employees have provided about the participant. The focus of the meeting should always be the result and not the process through which the result is achieved. If the supervisor fails to satisfactorily explain the rationale behind the appraisal, the appraisal meeting isn't considered successful.

Annual General Meetings

Section 166(1) of the Indian Companies Act of 1956 says that “every company shall in each year hold in addition to any other meetings a general meeting as its annual general meeting.”¹⁰ According to Section 166(2), every annual general meeting (AGM) must be held either at the registered office of the company or within the city, town, or village in which the registered office is situated. An AGM cannot be held elsewhere. The law also dictates that there shouldn't be a gap of more than fifteen months between two AGMs.

The AGM is a formal meeting that is held once a year. It is a legal requirement and deals with issues relating to the approval of accounts and election of board members by a company's shareholders. Each organization usually has a section in its memorandum and articles of association regarding the way an AGM has to be conducted as well as the matters involved in it. There is also usually a section pertaining to where and when the AGM should be held. Organizations have to give advance notice of the AGM, and this notice has to be public. All members must be informed about the meeting at least 21 days prior to the event through ordinary and registered post. A copy of the agenda should accompany the invitation.

For example, consider the following norm proposed by Arcelor Mittal: “The annual general meeting of shareholders will be held at the Company's registered office or at any other place in



The performance appraisal meeting is conducted by the supervisor. Done well, this vital session can leave the participants feeling newly motivated and eager to implement whatever agreements were reached.

the City of Luxembourg mentioned in the notice of the meeting on the second Tuesday of the month of May each year at eleven o'clock (11:00) am. If that day is a legal or banking holiday, the meeting will be held on the preceding banking day. An extraordinary general meeting of shareholders may be held as often as the Arcelor Mittal Board of Directors deems necessary."¹¹

The AGM is conducted by the chair of the organization. The minutes of the meeting must be recorded. A typical AGM has the following components:

- Opening remarks
- Apologies (if any)
- Minutes of the previous AGM
- Matters arising from the minutes of the previous AGM
- Presentation of the annual report by the chair or the secretary
- Adoption of the annual report
- Presentation of accounts, usually by the treasurer
- Adoption of accounts
- Appointment of auditors or an independent examiner
- Election of the management committee or office bearers
- Motions to be put to the AGM
- Discussion of any other competent business
- Closing remarks

KEY ATTRIBUTES OF A PRODUCTIVE MEETING

It is not easy to clearly estimate the value gained from a meeting. Scientific data on what happens in a corporate meeting room is rare, and too often one has to rely on data that is “soft” and based on impressions rather than any statistical evaluation tool. Despite their ubiquity, meetings have received relatively little scholarly attention. The meeting per se, as a social institution worthy of study in its own right, does not appear frequently in the scholarly literature.

For a meeting to be considered productive, participants must be free to air their opinions, so that multiple points of view can emerge. These conflicting and sometimes alternate viewpoints add to the depth of the meeting. Limited participation, a specific agenda, alternatives, control, and follow-up are other critical determinants of an effective meeting. The “tenor” of the meeting is dependent largely on the structure of the society or system. Egalitarian systems encourage greater participation in meetings than rigid hierarchical systems and consequently are more satisfying.

Successful meetings are the result of skilful management by the chair. The chair needs to be experienced and has to be firm, yet tactful. He or she should also ideally possess a sense of humour. Above all, the person must command the respect of all the participants in the meeting. The chair should resist giving speeches of undue length and must avoid repeating statements. Brief interjections should be allowed, but the chair should ask a persistent offender to leave the meeting. To be productive, meetings should start on time, encourage conflict, involve the “wallflowers,” focus on one issue at a time, and stick to a system of discipline.

Meetings must have high level of collaboration, should share information, and should work towards a common goal. They should focus more on decisions to be taken and not on presenting and reviewing data. An effective meeting is where participants come prepared, the agenda is well-planned and executed, and members are held accountable with appropriate follow-up. Excellent attendance, goal-oriented actions, the skills of the chair, and having a follow-up plan in place are essential characteristics of a productive meeting.

To be productive, meetings should be few and far between. They should also strictly adhere to the time limit, set rules for building trust among the participants, create empathy among the participants, and ensure that there is a sense of positive experience. The role of meetings in motivating salespeople is highly important and such meetings should be product- and knowledge-based, time-bound, and decision-oriented.

Effective meetings, thus, have a set of core attributes. The four elements that follow are critical to the success of a meeting. Attributes such as adherence to time and making sure that the goal is met can be seen as components that fit into these broad categories:

- A well-planned agenda that matches method to purpose and lays out who needs to discuss what. This implies that significant thought needs to be put into the meeting process.
- A high level of collaboration and sharing of information. Leaders need to encourage employees to bring issues and critical concerns to the fore. In other words, a meeting should always welcome conflicting opinions.
- Team leader in the role of a facilitator.
- A well-defined follow-up plan.

A TENTATIVE MODEL OF THE PROCESS OF MEETING

Exhibit 8.1 presents the process of a meeting as an input–output system. The input is purpose-specific, as meetings are essentially purpose-dependent. It includes thoughts, ideas, issues, and concerns expressed vocally. However, the output of the meeting, as opposed to the input, must be concrete. This includes decisions, specific motivations, resolutions, and discussions that lead to action. The outcome is driven by various factors such as timeliness,

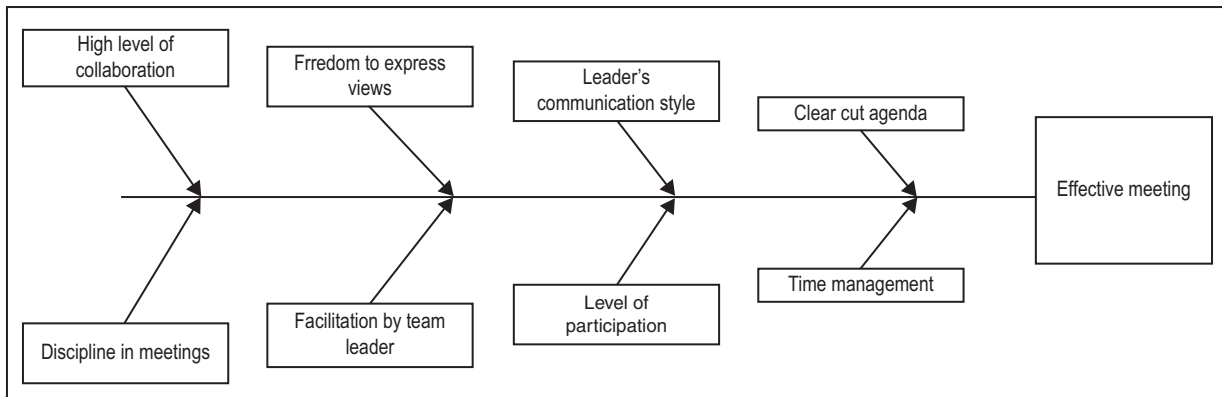


Exhibit 8.1 A Meeting as an Input–Output System (A Fish Bone Diagram Depicting Meeting Productivity)

discipline, agenda, and the competence of the team leader. The outcome of a meeting can be perceived to be productive or unproductive. It can be perceived as unproductive if it is too long, too boring, does not involve everybody, or has too many or too few attendees. An unclear agenda and poor facilitation are other factors that might lead to an unproductive meeting.

The characteristics of productive meetings can be further segregated into measurable and non-measurable attributes.

- **Measurable attributes:** The measurable attributes of a meeting are features such as the agenda, the duration of the meeting, attendance, the follow-up plan, and the number of breaks taken. These attributes are, by and large, objective, tangible, and easily counted, implemented, and replicated.
- **Non-measurable attributes:** On the other hand, non-measurable factors such as the quality of participation, the leader’s communication style, the creation of trust and empathy among participants, the motivation of employees, and the involvement of the “wallflowers” who rarely speak are subjective and intangible. Interpretations of these differ from one individual to another, and it is difficult to standardize and measure these.

These characteristics do not carry the same weight in all meetings. For example, if a meeting is called to solve a current crisis in the company, the measurable attribute of timeliness would hardly be considered a benchmark to assess its productivity. Here, the more important issues would be non-measurable attributes like raising the morale of the participants and motivating the employees. However, it should be noted that for routine matters, timeliness is an important indicator of meeting productivity.

Thus, where the purpose is merely to inform, timeliness, agenda setting, and follow-up plans are important indicators of the productivity of a meeting. Where meetings are held to motivate the participants, collaboration assumes a priority. In meetings where important decisions need to be taken, timeliness would still be a criterion, but the productivity of the meeting would be judged by the manner in which the manager encourages ideas and, more importantly, reduces dissent. After a few pleasantries in the meeting room, it is necessary to “get down to business.” Western meetings generally run on a tight schedule with an organized, pre-planned agenda. Meetings are for business. On the other hand, other cultures may see a meeting as the arena for building personal relationships and strengthening bonds. Getting down to business comes further down the priority list in such cultures.

Most critics suggest that, generally, the non-measurable attributes contribute to participants’ feelings regarding whether a meeting is productive or non-productive.

MEETING ETIQUETTE

Meetings are not just for sharing information but also for making judgments about each other. Meetings do not always have to be boring; they can also be considered opportunities to impress one's supervisor and colleagues.

In business meetings, poor etiquette can prove costly. Comfort, trust, attentiveness, and clear communication are examples of good etiquette. Meetings are generally of two kinds: formal meetings and informal meetings. Informal meetings are characterized by bonhomie, friendliness, and a relaxed outlook. Even though these may not take place in the confines of closed doors, a boardroom, or a meeting chamber, the rules of meeting etiquette still apply to such meetings.

In general, both men and women are expected to step from behind their desk to shake hands and offer a seat to their visitors. Maintaining appropriate eye contact, respecting personal space, and escorting visitors to the lobby/elevator at the end of the meeting are gestures expected from all professionals. In corporate entertainment, payment is made by the party who issued the invitation.

The meeting chair must notify everyone about the meeting, make sure that no one is inconvenienced, and check that the agenda is circulated to everybody. The chair must make the purpose of the meeting clear to attendees. He or she should also inform people of how long the meeting will last and if any particular information or preparation is expected of them. Failing to relay the proper information is poor business etiquette as it could cause embarrassment.

The chair must observe punctuality, as it is not good manners to keep people waiting. It is proper etiquette to respect other people's valuable time, to keep the meeting as short as possible, and to stick to the agenda. The chair also must also depute somebody to note the minutes and circulate these after the meeting. The chair has to be decisive, and ensure that aggressors and pressure groups do not hijack the proceedings. It is also the responsibility of the chair to make sure that everybody contributes to the meeting. Humour and tact are essential to keeping tempers under control.

Departmental meetings, interdepartmental meetings, board meetings, management meetings, and sales meetings are some examples of formal meetings. Etiquette demands that the chair and the participants are well prepared for such meetings. It is the duty of the chair to inform attendees about any preparation required for the meeting at least three days prior to the meeting. Good etiquette also demands that mobile phones are switched off during the meetings.

The chair must be seated when the meeting is scheduled to start, and should welcome the attendees and reiterate the agenda. When discussions are under way, it is good etiquette to allow the senior person to contribute first. The chair must disallow interruptions.

Attendees must ensure that they maintain full decorum during meetings. If they disagree strongly with a viewpoint, then they should jot it down and broach the subject matter with the permission of the chair. It is a serious breach of etiquette to divulge what transpires during



Communication Bytes 8.1

The following is a sample code of conduct for client meetings:

We recognize that client meetings are important to entertain business and professional contacts. We also understand that meetings foster team interaction. It is the policy of the company to keep entertainment expenses at a reasonable level and assume that meetings will be cost effective on all occasions. Expenses incurred for meetings will be budgeted by each department annually. The approving authority for such expenses will be the concerned functional head.

Expenses for business meetings with professional/business contacts are classified under "Business Meeting." Discussions with business or professional contacts are normally held at the office premises, and expenses incurred towards the cost of food and beverages will be reimbursed. Discussions with business or professional contacts, either by way of courtesy or as a necessity, may be held over lunch or dinner at a restaurant. Expenses incurred towards the same will be reimbursed.



Information Bytes 8.2

A meeting held in the traditional Japanese style generally follows certain strict guidelines. Casual attire is not allowed, and where one sits is determined by one's position in the hierarchy of the organization. People who are higher up sit near the head of the table, closer to the chair. One cannot sit or eat until the chair does so. Taking notes during a meeting is a gesture of respect. Unlike certain American organizations, which frown upon exchanging gifts, a traditionally Japanese meeting is highly welcoming of gifts. However, it is bad manners to open the gift in front of the person who gives it.

Source: Adapted from <<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e622.html>>, accessed on June 15, 2011.

a meeting, since information leaks in highly confidential meetings are commonplace. Companies are now using mobile phone jammers, especially in top-secret board meetings, to maintain confidentiality. Even the sales force and service teams may have their phones tracked to preserve and enforce confidentiality.

DO'S AND DON'TS IN A MEETING

The following is a list of do's and don'ts in a meeting.

Do:

- Be prepared for the meeting.
- Keep your briefcase near you on the floor.
- Come on time.
- If that is not possible, please ensure that there is a valid reason for being late.
- Respond to queries.
- Be serious and listen carefully.
- Take notes.

Don't:

- Fiddle with pens, pencils, paper clips, and so on.
- Doodle on a notepad.
- Chew gum.
- Ask for coffee/tea unless these are specifically offered to you.
- Make a grab for the refreshments.
- Slouch in your seat.
- Sit too close to the chair. That position might be reserved for the meeting secretary.
- Cross the arms. This posture communicates resistance.
- Come late.
- Speak too loudly or too softly.
- Walk out for a break before the meeting is over.
- Blurt out thoughts. It is prudent to frame them coherently before speaking.
- Repeat whatever has been said earlier.
- Use negative language.
- Begin with an apology.
- Use confrontational phrases like "I disagree" or "I oppose this."
- Use "I". Use "we" instead.
- Use a weak voice. Always be assertive and confident.

HANDLING DISRUPTIONS IN MEETINGS

Conflicts and disruptions invariably arise in meetings. Proposals may be rejected and presentations may be objected to. There may be a clash of personalities. Sometimes, such conflicts are good. Groupthink, especially in meetings, should be discouraged so that better solutions can be forthcoming. However, at times the situation might threaten to get out of control. Here is a list that classifies potential disruptors.

The Side Talkers

The side talkers are people who constantly engage in conversation with their neighbours. They smile, giggle, scribble, share a joke or two, and recount stories to each other throughout the meeting. In order to handle them successfully, the Chair should try and complete their speech and then pause and wait for the disruptors to stop talking. This method ensures that the offenders get the message without actually saying anything.

The Ramblers

The ramblers are people who never get to the point. They keep repeating and rephrasing what they have to say. In order to deal with them, it is important to acknowledge their point and follow it with a close-ended question like “Did you mean this or that?” After that, it is time to move on to the next point.

The Aggressors

Aggressive people in a meeting are difficult to handle. They speak loudly, overpower others, and generally display rude behaviour. They can be sarcastic, undermine the chair’s



Aggressive people in a meeting are difficult to handle. They speak loudly, overpower others, and generally display rude behavior.

authority, and in general create trouble. It is important to ignore these people during the meeting and ask others about their opinion. It is also a good idea to defer the matter and invite them to one's office after the meeting. They can also be asked to leave under certain circumstances.

The Opponents

The opponents are people who usually sit at the back of the room with their arms folded, listening to every spoken word. Usually they are the last to speak, and they appear to challenge the authority of the speaker with bold, authoritative statements. It is important to remember that a challenger is not hostile. Their alternative agenda is just to increase their credibility in the eyes of others. In order to handle such people, it might be a good idea to invite them for separate discussions so that they sense that they are being given due importance. If possible, it is better to identify the opponents before a meeting and take proper steps to neutralize their opposition.

The Wallflowers

The wallflowers are people who do not speak up in meetings at all. Some of them are just not interested, while others might not have the confidence to speak up. In such a situation, it is important to involve them in the discussion by asking their views on an issue.

THE AGENDA AND MINUTES OF A MEETING

Meetings are considered time wasters when they are ill-planned and conducted in a disorganized manner. The absence of a clear agenda and poor planning may mar the productivity of meetings. The agenda is important as it gives a sense of direction to the meeting. It imparts a professional feel to most informal meetings as well. It is goal-oriented and enables the chair to keep the meeting on track.

The agenda comprises the following information:

- Who has called the meeting?
- When, where, and why has this meeting been called?
- What are the main points to be discussed (sometimes, the time to be spent on each item is also specified).

The MOM, as the minutes of meeting are popularly called, is a record of the decisions taken during the meeting. It serves as a reference for important decisions and is used for legal purposes too. Some guidelines associated with MOM are:

- A responsible person should be deputed to write the MOM.
- The MOM should be written in the third person (for instance, "it was noted..." and "the chair observed...").
- Personal comments or feelings should not be included in the MOM. For example, one should avoid statements like: "Raghav disliked the idea and began to protest."
- Only the decisions should be recorded against the agenda item. The process by which the decision was arrived at is not to be noted down. For instance, one should note "Regarding the appraisal policy, it was decided that appraisals should be conducted once a month..." Statements such as "Deliberations on appraisals took nearly 70 minutes. Three people opposed the motion and four favoured it. Raghav was totally against it as he felt that it would add to the already burgeoning paperwork" should be avoided.
- Sentences should be short. However, telegraphic phrases are not welcome. Headings should be inserted to indicate important decisions. It should be easy for people to read the minutes and note what they need to do for later reference.

A good MOM should have the following components (refer to Exhibit 8.2 for an outline of a good MOM):

- Agenda
- Attendees
- Absentees
- Decisions
- Allocations

CHALLENGES BEFORE MANAGERS

The fact that good communication can save both cost and time is now being felt more than ever before. Globalization, with its emphasis on clarity and speed of communication, has made it imperative that managers accord due respect to internal “routine” processes such as meetings. No longer deemed commonplace, they serve as forums where differences are bridged and relationships are cemented. Time-bound and result-driven meetings require a change in the mindset of managers, especially those who lead teams.

The challenge before team leaders is to find answers “within.” With a shortage of time and increasing spatial distances between participants, managers cannot afford to waste time on unproductive meetings. They appreciate a decisive and firm chairperson who can simultaneously invite conflict and restore balance.

Thus, an effective meeting is a result of a set of causal factors (refer to Exhibit 8.1). Appropriate handling of each of these factors results in suitable contributions to the end result. Planning the purpose, process, and participants is the key to organizing successful meetings. This may require revisiting the older styles of meeting and questioning them. It is not necessary that what worked in one context would continue to be effective in another.

Managers should also seek feedback on their meeting style. This is extremely important. First, it will transform their approach towards meetings in case they feel that their meetings are unproductive. Second, it will reduce the gap between “what is” and “what ought to be.” The team leaders can then take mental notes on how to organize and evaluate meetings.

Exhibit 8.2
Outline of a Good MOM

Date, time, and venue:	Name of the company:		
Minutes prepared by:			
Agenda:			
1.			
2.			
3.			
Attendees:			
1.			
2.			
3.			
Leave of absence is granted to:			
Details of meetings:			
No	Item	Details	Actions to be taken by
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

These are essentially mind maps that help in deciding the purpose of a meeting (whether a meeting needs to be called or not), the format of the meeting (will the existing format, say morning meetings, add value in this context or is a change required?), attendees, the time required, the number of decisions to be taken, and the communication style to be adopted by the manager.

Once these frames are organized, an analysis of the cost incurred for the meeting can help in bringing greater insights and can also act as triggers for examining questions such as:

- Can one decrease the length of the meeting?
- Can there be fewer or more participants?
- Can one add or cut overhead costs?
- Can the frequency of the meeting be increased or decreased?

Quantifying the benefits of meetings remains fuzzy as of now. While productivity can serve as a surrogate measure of value, a more refined measure would perhaps be the need of the hour for which benefits and costs are to be estimated somewhat precisely. As of now, there do not seem to be many guidelines for this. Research still remains weak in terms of presenting a robust indicator that calculates the gains precisely. However, the time has come to use meetings more judiciously and responsibly, taking care that they are called only when absolutely necessary, and are conducted in an effective manner.

NEGOTIATION

A *negotiation* is a discussion between two or more people to work out a solution to a common problem. Negotiation may be interpersonal (between two people) or intergroup (between two groups). It might also be at a corporate, national, or international level. Negotiation is, thus, an activity that is designed to resolve a conflict.

The process of negotiation has the following characteristics:

- There is a conflict of interest.
- There is some form of interdependence, that is, a realization that one party needs the other to resolve the conflict or dispute.
- The type of interdependence determines the outcome as well as the nature of negotiation.
- A negotiation is a formal affair, and the main objective for both parties is always to get a better deal.
- Successful negotiation requires special communication tactics as the entire purpose of negotiation is to get more benefits than would be possible without a negotiation.
- During the process of negotiation, the aim is to mutually agree on something, rather than being openly aggressive or passively submissive.
- Each negotiation has a task aspect and a relationship aspect.
- A negotiation can be an intricate and lengthy process, and one needs to be patient to complete it successfully.
- Negotiation is usually culture bound, especially in the use of non-verbal language. The following examples might be considered:
 - German negotiators place a high premium on timeliness and associate punctuality with professionalism, efficiency, and productivity. This may be interpreted as impatience in some cultures.
 - American negotiators value distance and associate it with professionalism and formality. However, this may be considered too rigid and formal in other cultures.
 - French negotiators are slightly more animated than most and associate animation with passion and self belief. This might be interpreted as uncontrolled and reactive by other cultures.

- Indian negotiators do not prefer to use direct eye contact, especially with someone senior in the hierarchy. This may be interpreted as shifty and dishonest in some cultures.
- Negotiators from Middle Eastern countries may wear a flowing robe instead of a business suit, and this might be perceived as disrespectful and informal by some cultures.
- Italian negotiators may speak loudly while negotiating, and this might appear to be too boisterous to people from other cultures.

Negotiation skills are considered extremely valuable in today's world. The following reasons might give us an idea why:

- Organizations nowadays are matrix-based as well as flatter than before. People work in teams and constantly interact with each other. Conflicts have to be nipped in the bud.
- Organizations are becoming more diverse. Different cultures yield different perspectives, management styles, and approaches. This could potentially lead to conflicts that demands negotiation skills.
- Organizations are changing. There is a need to negotiate with those who resist change.

An effective negotiator is basically an extremely effective communicator. An effective negotiator:

- Has a thorough understanding of the psychology of his or her "opponents." The effective negotiator is a good judge of people and can understand how people shift their interests, positions, and focus.
- Is a good listener. Effective negotiators rarely interrupt their opponent, until they understand exactly what the other party is seeking from the discussion. They listen not only for facts, but also for feelings.
- Exchanges information, but cautiously. Effective negotiators do not disclose information prematurely; rather they wait for the correct moment to strike a bargain.
- Uses assertive language. The effective negotiator rarely uses words that are weak or passive.
- Uses minimal body language and gestures. Effective negotiators understand that about 93 per cent of one's impact comes from body language and voice and, therefore, attempt to downplay their body language. This minimizes disclosures about one's position and available concessions. At times, body language is an instant giveaway and thus expert negotiators are rather impassive in their demeanour.
- Can predict behaviour. The effective negotiator can, with reasonable accuracy, predict the stance or the position of opponents by reading their facial expressions, body gestures, and voice intonation.
- Focuses on the company's needs rather than individual concerns.
- Is open about other options and flexible in his or her approach.
- Prepares well in advance.
- Clearly communicates expectations and comments on unfair tactics or unethical practices if any.
- Eliminates distractions by closing the door and turning off phones in order to tune in to the person sitting opposite him or her.
- Responds to the other party with stimulating questions.
- Looks for differences once the similarities are known.
- Take notes on the important points the other party makes.

Planning for the Negotiation

Business negotiations do not take place in an unplanned manner. Essential planning is required so that there is mutual agreement and satisfaction from the process. This requires some preparation.

Framing the Issue

Framing, as discussed in an earlier chapter, is an essential art for a business communicator. It is the first step in the process of negotiation and involves answering the following questions: What is the purpose of the negotiation? What outcomes do we seek? What roadblocks do we anticipate? How much is to be conceded? Who is the opponent? What are their needs and wants? What motivates them? What is their reputation? What is the nature of our relationship with the opponent? Are we looking to change the relationship? What would constitute a fair deal? The best deal? What line of arguments, facts, and evidence needs to be assembled to get the better deal? How much flexibility should be accommodated to get what we desire? What alternatives do we have?

Framing is thus an assessment of the perceptions that each party has of the other, on the basis of which one's own position may be identified. It involves an investigation of the opponent's past behaviour in similar settings and determining the manner in which this may predict future behaviour.

Frames can be attempted in two ways: behind the scenes (where individual parties frame their position) or shared framing (where both parties meet to discuss conceptions). The ideal approach is to seek a position where frames of both the parties "match." When frames match, it implies that both the parties have a similar outlook on an issue and only their approach is different.

Setting the Norms of Negotiation

Once the frame is mutually decided, the second step is listing the common issues that are at stake. At this stage, assistance from an outside consultant or an expert may also be taken. A comprehensive list of issues is drawn up and exchanged in this pre-negotiation phase. This allows agreement on agenda, location, duration, names of parties involved in the negotiation process, procedures, the order of issues to be addressed, and the actions to be taken if the negotiation fails. This is crucial for the success of a negotiation activity.

Power Bases in Influencing a Negotiation Process

Power bases are the inherent "influencers" that help people gain compliance from others. They help in deciding the "position" of the negotiator. At times, two or more power bases may be used to get the desired result.

They include the following:

- **Authority:** This influencing power is embedded in positional authority. People who influence through formal power vested in them almost coerce others into action. In negotiations, it may work when the interdependency is skewed towards the people in authority; it may not work when both the parties are equally dependent on each other.
- **Expert power:** This influencing power is derived from one's expertise and credibility. It may be used when one party uses expertise as a basis for action.
- **Connection power:** This influencing power is used to show the other party one's connections and influence with them. A show of strength, it is used to argue one's superior networking ability.
- **Empathy:** This influencing power emanates from understanding and concern and is used to demonstrate a superior understanding of people and situations.
- **Information power:** This influencing power comes from selective access to information that is privy to a privileged few.

Presentation of Facts and Evidence

The effectiveness of communication depends upon two factors:

- What ideas, facts, evidence, and data are selected (content and structure of the message), and
- How these are presented to the opponent (the delivery style).

Thus, an offer has to be appealing to the other party, and benefits must be highlighted to get the other party to agree. Often, negotiators begin by stating their viewpoint, putting the other party off even before the negotiations have begun. This may not be a wise move in most situations. Effective negotiators try to obtain agreements on minor points so that the major point can be accepted without much resistance.

The ideas and proposals that are suggested must be consistent with the values of the opponent. See Exhibit 8.3 for an example. The text in bold is consistent with the values of the management, and thus might influence the management in a positive manner.

Barriers to the Negotiation Process

One barrier to negotiation is the failure to recognize the opportunity of negotiation: some people accept any offer that comes their way. This can be due to the following reasons:

- They may not be aware that the scope for negotiation exists. They fail to negotiate simply because they do not realize that bargaining can lead to a better offer.
- Some people are shy and hesitant by nature and do not take risks with communication (perhaps due to fear of loss of face or embarrassment). They do not want to be perceived as confrontational.
- Some people are in deep conflict with the other party and do not negotiate deliberately. There is an inherent power struggle for supremacy borne by a deep-rooted dislike for each other.
- Negotiation is not a linear process. Many times, the process is driven by hidden agendas. Also, the negotiators are not always willing to negotiate and are unclear about what they want. Thus faulty assumptions may be a barrier to negotiation.

Approaches to Negotiation and the Role of Communication

There are two broad approaches to negotiation: the competitive approach and the collaborative approach. The former seeks a win–lose position, while the latter seeks a win–win solution. The nature of the conflict and the goals of the parties decide the approach to be adopted. Usually in negotiation, the goals are interdependent and the parties can decide to compete or collaborate.

- If both sides collaborate, they can have good outcomes that leave both the parties satisfied.
- If one side competes and the other collaborates, the collaborator will have a tough time and the competitor will get good outcomes.
- If both sides compete then the outcome will be mediocre.
- If there is uncertainty on both sides, the best strategy is to compete.

Communication plays a major role in resolution of deep-rooted conflicts. Prejudice, anger, and hostility create a chasm of distrust and suspicion. Often, third-party intervention

Exhibit 8.3

Example of an Agreement Put Forth by the Management

Issue: Increase in Enhanced Remuneration to Temporary Staff in ITES

Management position: Neutral to positive

Management belief: Money should not be wasted on the wrong resource

Argument put forth by the interested party (proposer): “Currently, we have close to 80 per cent of our resources as temporary workers. **They have been carefully selected from the best talent pool after a rigorous screening process. They have been with us for four years now.** The competitor is offering a higher wage rate and the cost of switching will be rather high. Since these are our valued resources, this amount will be an investment rather than a cost.

is necessary to resolve the conflict. A mediator who is trusted by both the adversaries can help bridge the divide. The available alternatives and the best alternative are listed to bring the parties to a common understanding. Each party must believe that the other party is willing to compromise and that it is not a one-sided initiative. There is a hidden fear in the parties that they may disclose more than they intended and thus expose their vulnerability.

Negotiation Semantics

The words, signs, and symbols we use influence the direction of the negotiation process.

Consider this illustrative example: “The HR function followed by the Company is inefficient and costly whereas the alternative of outsourcing is viable enough to merit a debate.”

This statement by a proposer appears complex and impersonal. It does not involve the audience. It merely tells them facts.

It sounds better to say: “**We** are in the process of a major revamp that focuses on simplicity and cost effectiveness. *This is how the two systems of self managed and outsourcing compare.* Please look carefully at the cost efficiency that we achieve in the outsourcing alternative. Which do **you** feel is the better option?”

This is a simple and a personalized message.

A few illustrative examples that show the pitfalls of poor negotiation semantics follow.

Illustrative Example 1: Negotiating a Price

Kirti was interested in buying an office stationary set for herself. She was not convinced about the price that the shopkeeper quoted and found it to be on the higher side. Kirti wanted to reduce the price of the set but could not express this in so many words. The exchange went something like this:

Kirti: Umm... isn't this rather expensive?

Shopkeeper: How much would you like to pay?

Kirti: I don't know, I am asking you...

Shopkeeper: Have you seen anything like this before?

Kirti: Um... yes, I get to see these every day.

Shopkeeper: This is the price I am offering.

Kirti: Er... what is the best price you would quote...?

Shopkeeper: What's your price?

Kirti: Well... I don't know... really... this is like cheating the customers.

This went on for some time. Finally, irritated with Kirti's complaining, the shopkeeper refused to sell the stationary set.

What was Kirti's mistake? She did not speak in a convincing manner. Had she stated that her price was INR 100 less than what the shopkeeper had quoted, the stationary set could have been hers. The negotiation was not a fruitful one as no one gained anything from the exchange.

Illustrative Example 2: Negotiating a Salary

Consider the following exchange:

Recruiter: Well Rachel, your total emoluments amount to about INR 80,000 per month.

Rachel: Well, I expected something more...

Recruiter: But we have already accommodated your work experience and the certificate courses that you have completed in determining your compensation.

Rachel: Well you see, in a city like New York, the cost of living is so high... you must be more knowledgeable about it than I am...

Recruiter: Then trust us.

Rachel: I know that L.M. Brothers has a reputation for low starting packages, but I still feel that. I hope you do understand...

This went on for some time. Finally, irritated with Rachel's indecisiveness, the recruiter asked her to wait and that they would get back to her... and they never did.

What was Rachel’s mistake? Rachel failed to express her salary expectations clearly in front of the recruiter. If your salary should be more than that quoted, mention it firmly but politely. Do not appear indecisive as this example illustrates. Give sound arguments to prove your claim. This could mean the following:

- How much more do you feel you should get?
- What is the basis of your argument? (Experience? Certification? Location? Cost-of-living indices?)
- State how you will justify the increase once you join the organization.
- Learn to be tactful. Do not state generalizations (such as “L.M. Brothers are known to give lower starting salaries.”).

It can be said that negotiation is 90 per cent communication and 10 per cent strategy. Skilled negotiators are aware of this and plan their communication accordingly.

POINT	Meetings are a waste of time.	Meetings are useful as they help with effective information flow in an organization, motivation of employees, and performance review.	COUNTERPOINT
	Only face-to-face meetings are effective.	In today’s age of information technology, video conferences are as effective as face-to-face meeting.	

SUMMARY

- In most surveys on meeting effectiveness, meetings per se are considered important by participants. This is significant because it means that meetings are valued as an important communicative event in the organization.
- Meeting inertia is common, as attendees often weigh a meeting from the standpoint of opportunity costs. The team leader should be aware of this and plan accordingly.
- The real issues pertain to the manner in which meetings are conducted. These relate to poor planning, poor leadership, lack of clarity of purpose, and the actual conduct of the meeting.
- For any meeting to be considered productive, the thought that goes into the planning and execution of the meeting is of utmost importance. The onus of making meetings productive lies with the team leader. Maintaining basic discipline and laying out the ground rules can earn the leader suitable respect.
- A realization that meetings are not forums for social gatherings would go a long way in reinforcing the commitment of the participants.
- Timely circulation of the agenda and previous minutes convey non-verbal messages of timeliness and efficiency.
- Using appropriate communication cues, the leader can steer a meeting through troubled waters. At the same time, he or she must not be curt and authoritarian. It is a leader’s responsibility to generate critiques and comments to not only improve participation but also stimulate dissent. In fact, this is where the real commitment comes from. A team leader’s willingness to listen to ideas contradicting his or her own earns the rightful (if at times grudging) respect of the attendees.
- Managers and leaders must take personal feedback, construct mental frames, and conduct meeting cost analyses to fine-tune their meeting styles and get the best results from people.
- A negotiation is a discussion between two or more people in order to work out the solution to a problem.
- Business negotiations need essential planning so that there is mutual agreement and satisfaction.
- The effectiveness of communication depends on what facts/ideas are being presented and how they are being presented.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What are the different types of meetings in organizations?
2. What key characteristics distinguish the different types of meetings?
3. List and explain the different criteria for meeting effectiveness. Are these different for different types of meetings?
4. Marissa Mayer, Google's vice president of search products, holds an average of 70 meetings a week according to news reports. The meetings serve as a last stop before ideas can be placed before Google's co-founders, Sergey Brin and Larry Page. Marissa is particular about having a note-taker at the meeting, an agenda circulated well in advance, time management, and data. One of her "tenets of innovation" is "don't politic, use data." A stickler for micro meetings, Marissa's meetings are fairly visual and illustrative.¹²

This example from Google illustrates that frequent meetings can be productive. What are the comparative merits and demerits of frequent meetings? Support your answer with examples.
5. Successful meetings are the result of skilful management by the chair. Discuss.
6. What are the roles participants need to play in a meeting?
7. Describe the causes of meeting disruption. How can a leader work to minimize these?
8. Of late, meetings have become less popular. What reasons may be attributed to this?
9. Write short notes on:
 - Minutes of meetings
 - Involving the wallflowers
 - Meeting agendas
 - Skip level meetings
 - Mental frames

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Hari is proposing a reduction in travelling expenses and the entertainment budget for client meetings. To assess the reaction of the 23 sales representatives and ask for their suggestions on how to reduce expenses, he decides to call a meeting. This would be on a Monday, when all the sales professionals touch base at the company headquarters. Additionally, Hari wanted to bring up a few issues relating to discipline and filing of weekly sales reports. Also, there is a conference scheduled for sales professionals in Singapore, for which he wanted to invite two nominations. Based on this information, answer the following:
 - Frame an agenda for the meeting.
 - How would the manager prepare a mental frame to deal with opposition to the proposal?
2. Imagine that the meeting described in the previous question is over. Based on the following summary of the meeting, frame the minutes of the meeting.

Overall, the meeting went off peacefully except for the cost-cutting initiative. As predicted by Hari, members opposed it and suggested that optimization of area and travel plans might be attempted instead. Someone promised to bring a cost analysis of the same and compare it with the one proposed by Hari. The sales professionals requested Hari to send them a reminder about the daily call report and weekly assessments. They even requested him to set a day aside for this. Two members were nominated for the conference. Both were senior members and top grossers in terms of revenue. This was, as Hari explained, an award for their hard work and result-oriented performance.
3. What are the cultural nuances in business meetings? Read the example that follows and explain how you would interpret the meeting styles in Switzerland.

In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, business meetings are kept as short as possible. The senior manager (*Chef*) generally speaks first and leads the meeting. Lower ranking colleagues usually speak only when spoken to and are always addressed indirectly during the first meet. In contrast, people from the French- and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland have the custom of prolonged business meetings over lunch, where conversations often touch on cultural tastes, cuisine, travel, the European Community, and so on.¹³
4. In the context of a business meeting, conduct the following role-play for a performance appraisal meeting. Conduct a not-so-ideal meeting and an ideal meeting. The instructor can then examine the different approaches to communicating during the meetings.

Viewpoint 1

Rajath Srinivasan is the vice president of Technology Solutions. With a B. Tech degree from a regional engineering college, he has diligently worked his way up the

corporate ladder. He has a performance appraisal meeting coming up with a newly inducted management trainee, Harsh. It has been a year since Rajath has met with Harsh. He had not been too keen on hiring Harsh, as he liked the other candidate better. He felt that the other candidate had more of a spark. According to Rajath, Harsh was “all brains and not too much of anything else.” After quickly scanning his resume, Rajath had noticed that he was from IIT Kharagpur and had worked for five years with a project firm, followed by an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad. Rajath always thought that people with brand names in their resume had it easy.

Rajath conceded that Harsh did contribute to the progress of the project and had demonstrated sufficient amount of team work. Harsh’s reports were lucid and to the point. Rajath faintly recalled that he had encouraged him to speak up more assertively in meetings. Rajath

had positive reviews about Harsh from everybody. However, he still wished to see more leadership in him.

Viewpoint 2

Today is Harsh’s performance appraisal meeting with a supervisor that he could not bring himself to like. Harsh was rather confident about the interview, given his impeccable credentials and performance. However, he did regret that he had not made an effort to get to know Rajath better. How he wished that he had not let his personal prejudices influence his communication with Rajath!

As soon as Harsh had joined the company as a management trainee, he was told that Rajath had voted heavily against recruiting him. This led to a bit of a distance between them. Harsh had never even spoken up in Rajath’s presence, and now this man was going to decide his fate in the organization!

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Refer to the following Web site to view a live meeting: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9MYNKVg0W8>

Now answer the following questions:

- Compare face-to-face meetings with computer-mediated ones.
- Compose a memo addressed to team members saying that the team would henceforth be using Microsoft Live Meeting for all meetings, unless specified otherwise. Explain how to do so.

2. Refer to the following Web site:

<http://www.iaconline.org/content/files/WhyFace-to-FaceBusinessMeetingsMatter.pdf>

Read the article “Why Face-to-Face Business Meetings Matter” by Professor Richard D. Arvey. Comment on

potential differences in how face-to-face business meetings might be viewed and conducted in five different cultures.

3. Refer to the following Web site:

<http://www.effectivemeetings.com/meetingbasics/training.asp>

How can a manager determine if a meeting is really necessary?

4. Visit the website: <https://www.trainingjournal.com/articles/interview/turning-bad-meetings-productive-ones>. Do you agree with the assertion that unproductive meetings are harming the long-term prospects and aspirations of organisations today and why?

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CASE STUDY 1

The Worried Sales Manager: Meeting for Results

Summary

The case describes the busy lifestyle of a sales manager and how effective meeting skills can help him do his job better as well as get work done from the team members. It highlights the importance of preparing an agenda and the key role of the team lead in conducting and managing meetings.

Introduction

The Area Sales Manager of KPG Life Insurance, Samit Tandon gazed worriedly at the computer screen. His hands were full. He was noting down the key tasks for the day:

1. He had to communicate the results quickly to the team and also to motivate them. He also planned to hold a quick meeting to decide the Q2 projections prepared by him.
2. He wanted a proposal from his team to improve the brand perception of KPG Life Insurance.

3. He wanted his team to prepare a powerpoint presentation outlining the Q1 results and strategies for the future.
4. He wanted to write an email to his distributors to seek their suggestions.

Problem

The Q1 achievement category and SM wise results were a disaster! Samit was in no mood to compromise on the sales results and wanted to get down to the bottom of it all. Specifically he wanted that the meeting should delineate the pros and cons, and should result in concrete suggestions. He wanted to be very specific and straightforward in his approach in the meeting and wanted the agenda of this day long meeting to reflect that.

He opened the spread sheet in front of him and started writing the agenda.

The spreadsheet went something like this:

Category	Target FY 2014-15	Target Q1	Achieved Q1	% Achievement
A1	45	5.63	2.66	47
B1	20	2.50	5.1	204
B2	45	5.63	2.9	52
Total	110	13.75	10.66	78

SM Wise Break up

SM/ABDM	Category	Target 2014-15	Target Q1	Achieved Q1	% Achievement
Samit Tandon	B1 + B2	30	3.75	8	177
Amit Sinha	A1	45	5.63	2.66	47
Diwakar Sharma	B2	35	4.38	—	—

All figures converted to APE

The July Performance

Category	Target-July	Achieved-July	% Achievement
A1	2.7	5.96	221
B1	1.2	1.83	153
B2	2.7	1.34	72
B3	6.6	9.73	147

SM	Category	Target-July	Achieved-July	% Achievement
Amit	A1	2.7	5.96	221
Samit	B1 + B2	3.9	3.77	97
Diwakar	B2			

Login APE

Category	Commitment July	Achieved July	% Achievement
A1	3.5	5.6	160
B1	2.5	1.77	71
B2	2	1.71	86
Total	8	9.08	114

SM	Category	Target July	Achieved July	% Achievement
Amit	A1	3.5	5.6	160
Samit	B1+B2	3.5	2.85	81
Diwakar	B2	1	0.63	63
Total		8	9.08	114

Q1 Budget Vs Actual	Q1-2014		
	Budget (%)	Actual (%)	% Achievement
Throughput %	90	80	88
ECS Penetration %	60	43	72
Free look cancellation %	5	2	40
Complaint %	5	3	60
Complaints only from FY 2014-15 business	2	0	0
Cheque bounced %	7	11	157
Attrition %	10	0	0
Surrender	419		0

B2 Break up-Business

Branch/ABDM	Total number of active distributors	B2 Target FY 2014-15	B2 Target Q1	Achievement Q1	% Achievement	Average business / Distributor
Agra	3	45	6.75	2.9	0.42962963	0.96666

SM Wise Break Up

SM name	Total number of active distributors	B2 Target FY 2014-15	B2 Target Q1	Achievement Q1	% Achievement	Average business/ Distributor
Samit	2	10	1.5	2.9	1.9333	1.45
Diwakar (DOJ: June)	1	35	5	0	0	0

B2 Break Up-PHF Licence

Branch/ABDM	Q1 PHF logged	Q1 Licenses downloaded	July PHF logged	July Licences downloaded
Agra	7	0	2	0

SM Wise Break up

Branch/ABDM	Q1 PHF logged	Q1 Licences downloaded	July PHF logged	July Licences downloaded
Samit	1	0	1	0
Diwakar	5	0	1	0

B1 Update

BI Target FY 2014-15	APE Target
Bajaj Capital	13
Netambit	3
Reliance Capital	3
Anand Rathi	1
Total	20

Achieved Q1

Channel	Q1 Business-KPG LI	Q1 Total business done tacross all insurers	Share of KPG LI
Bajaj Capital	4.1	10	41
Netambit	4	7	6
Reliance Capital	0	3	0
Anand Rathi	0	0	0

All figure converted APE; BB-15; Casa-160

Q2 PROJECTIONS

Plan for Q2 Category and SM Wise

SM/ABDM	A1	B1	B2	B3	Total
Samit		4	2		6
Amit	9				9
Diwakar			7		7
Total	9	4	9		22

All figure converted APE

Plan for Q2 SM and Distributor Wise

Diwakar	Q2 Plan	Q1 Achieved
Rohit	2	0
Inderjit	1	0
Raghav	1	0
Bipan	0.5	0.2
Raj	0.5	0
Self	2	0.6
Total	7	0.8

Samit	Q2 Plan	Q1 Achieved
SPA	2	1.94
Self	1	0.5
Ipsika	1.5	0
Shalini	0.5	0
Total	5	2.44

Amit	Q2 Plan	Q1 Achieved
Arvinda	2	0
Haya	1	0
Kamaal	0.5	0
Total	3.5	0

Impact

The result of this morning exercise had positive results, Sumit could frame a SWOT analysis that could reflect his concerns (see the table below):

A SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Old client base
- Good relationship with RO/RM
- Good data base of existing policy holders
- Agra has come up with the BBG - Business Banking Group for loan of upto 30 lacs to 5 crore: chance to hit big ticket with HNI accounts

Weaknesses

- Cut throat competition
- Product comparison support required from back end
- Least focus for LI products which will impact the lead generation

Opportunities

- Advisor should be rewarded for training and on license with login of 3 NOP which will motivate and foresee the income from the insurance industry
- Vast database untouched
- Low penetration rate
- Existing customers having only ULIP so opportunity to sell them traditional plan

Threats

- Brand recognition is poor in Agra
- Clients ask for short term investment rather than long term Savings plan
- Lack of interest in Insurance as a career due to ULIPs return

Questions

1. Compose a detailed one page agenda on behalf of Samit to the team members.
2. What are the important attributes of an effective team leader, especially in conducting strategic meetings?

INTERVIEW

How do you perceive the value of communication at the workplace?

When you communicate well with your team, it helps eliminate misunderstandings and can encourage a healthy and peaceful work environment. Efficient communication will also let you get work done quickly and professionally.

What are the types of meetings that are held in your organization?

We have very systematic approach towards meetings. All meeting minutes are recorded for future reference. Some of the meetings are fixed such as budget planning and budget presentations to the board. Conference call are regularly held at the area level as well as the zone level with the team members as well as the top management.

What are your meeting schedules?

January - Budget planning

March - Final Budget to the board

April - 1st Monday - Discuss the implications of the Annual Budget in the routine, monthly and the quarterly

meetings; to chalk-out an action plan to plug the gaps between planning and performance outcomes, along with the deadlines to plug those.

We have weekly conference call meeting with different state heads on a prescribed format. All formats and discussions are standardized.

Could you please share a sample format with us?

Yes, I have attached a typical meeting memo below.

Rajesh Khanna,
General Manager,
Everest Industries Limited.

A. Sample of a Meeting Memo			
MP	Madhya Pradesh		
	Price increase as per dates communicated. Build up orders for Shadhol, Katni and Sagar area.	Inform ALL	Surinder Singh and MP team.
	Careful vigil on market stock and to keep an eye on any size wise mismatch of competition.	Continuous	Surinder Singh
	To push Kymore for a minimum of 500 mt dispatch per day. Direct & STR. Ensure 1000+ dispatch order + STR to Kymore everyday.	2.05.16	Surinder Singh and GSS- SKM
	Vacancy to be filled up for Gwalior. To follow up with Mr Rakesh Johri.	Immediate	Rakesh Johri. Awaiting clearance at HO. Candidate finalised.
	To stack up Jabalpur depot. 1200 mt	Continuous	Surinder and GSS
	All sales promotional activities to be targeted in and around home markets.	Continuous	SS/DKV/RS/GSS
CG	Chhattisgarh		
	To start the new depot operations by 1st week of May.	2.05.2016	SS/GSS/RS
	To identify two MDO's for Chhattisgarh area.	8.05.2016	Rakesh Johri. Candidate identified and finalised. Awaiting clearance at HO.
	Price increase to be announced strictly and to implement ₹10 . Lower price of others is a concern area. Keep strict vigil on market activities especially.	Inform ALL	JAI/SS
	Two MDO for Ambikapur and Korba by 1st April 2016.	SS/Jai	Shortlisted candidate details sent to HO (Rakesh Johri)
UP	Uttar Pradesh		
	TC a main concern in 3.6 mt received from Kymore works. Identified batches communicated to KW. KW to segregate and send material only.	Immediate	MKP/SKM/GSS
	To identify new depot operator and location for Varanasi depot. To commence operation from 5th May 2016.	DKV/Gaurav	HO Cleared. Mr Bhaskar to upload details in SAP
	Create a new sales district, Sultanpur. Deepkamal to send details and present during Budget meeting.	Done	Approval Cleared. Mr Bhaskar to upload details in SAP
	Start pitching about additional volume available for UP during season time and keep our channel intact before getting wooed away by competition.	Continuous	All So's /DKV
	Meet BDOs at taluka/panchayat level and pitch for rooflight for use as alternate for good lighting.	Continuous	DKV and UP Team.

B. Format of a Head Office Review of Sales

Head Office review – U.P.

State	Initiative	Targets (April-June)	Target (April)	Activ MTD	Month LY activ	YoY Growth	MoM Growth	Last week activ	Status	Last week	Remarks
UP	State-wide CBS sales	158580	4450	390	5581	-5191		390	●	●	
	State-wise tracted sam sale Rootflight	1540	420	21	332	0		21	●	●	
	State-wise tracted MoM sale EPQM	1080	450	25	140			25	●	●	
	NSP	75	76	78	76		0	1	●	●	
	Effective distribution strength	230	225	16	214			30	●	●	
	Network addition (Stockist / Sub-dealer)	22	10	2	12			2	●	●	
	Sales force build-up	4	5	0					●	●	Vacancy at Sultanpur, Gorakhpur
	Wall & Shop pointing	50,000 sq ft.	20,000 sq ft.	20000	30,000 sq ft.			25000	●	●	
	Multi-brand stockiest		2/5	2	2				●	●	

Chapter 9

PREPARING AND DELIVERING PRESENTATIONS

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the difference between presentations, speeches, lectures, and talks.
- Formulate a strategy for giving a successful business presentation.
- Know about the various ways to collect and arrange information for presentations.
- Have a clear understanding of the various strategies to open and end a presentation.
- Understand the types of visual aids used in presentations and ways to enhance them.
- Handle nerves and stage fright.
- Enhance the vocal and visual appeal of potential presenters.
- Explain strategies to respond to difficult questions.
- Suggest ways to deal with aggressive questioners.

“I am the most spontaneous speaker in the world because every word, every gesture, and every retort has been carefully rehearsed.”

George Bernard Shaw¹

INTRODUCTION

A presentation is an opportunity to address an important issue with an individual or group of people. The tenth edition of the Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines a *presentation* as “...action or an instance of presenting or being presented...” as well as “the manner or style in which something is presented.” It also defines a presentation as “a formal introduction.”

Business presentations are forums to influence people towards a desired action or thought. Thus, business presentations are persuasive in nature.

There are differences between a presentation, a lecture, a speech, and a talk. A *speech* is a formal public address such as one delivered by a politician. For instance, speeches have been an important part of the United States presidential elections. Televised debates and speeches form an integral part of the process of influencing delegates to nominate the presidential candidate of a party.

On the other hand, a *talk* is an informal chat. The numerous talk shows on television are an example of this. A *lecture* is a discourse on a particular theme about which the speaker has in-depth knowledge and often takes the form of one-way communication.

IMPORTANCE OF PRESENTATIONS

Among the various ways in which communication takes place—letters, memos, e-mails, face-to-face conversations, meetings—a presentation stands out, as it offers the greatest opportunity to have a powerful impact on a large number of people. The hallmark of successful business people is their ability to influence others by exercising effective rhetoric and by helping their audiences to connect their message with the verbal, visual, and vocal appeals presented by them.

The following aspects are often put to test during a presentation:

- The quality of the content
- Explanations of complex issues
- The confidence level of the speaker

- The authority and credibility of the speaker
- Handling of questions by the speaker

Presentations are an opportunity. Every presentation is a chance to do the following:

- Convey credibility
- Communicate knowledge and expertise
- Genuinely connect with the intended audience and establish a rapport
- Inspire people
- Gain visibility for career advancement

TYPES OF PRESENTATIONS

The purpose of any form of business communication is to inform, persuade, or motivate. A great deal of business is done through presentations.

Presentations may be divided into the following categories based on their basic purpose:

- **Informative presentations:** *Informative presentations* teach, demonstrate, or instruct an audience on some topic or process such as office policies and rules. This includes press conferences, speaking at seminars, classroom instruction, candidates presenting their ideas to an interview panel, and so on. These are generally called “tell” presentations.
- **Persuasive presentations:** *Persuasive presentations* are designed to induce an audience to accept a belief or action. Examples are sales presentations that attempt to persuade the top management of a company to accept an idea or a proposal, management consultants pitching to a client, manufacturers positioning a new product or brand or repositioning an existing product or brand. These are called “sell” presentations.
- **Motivational presentations:** *Motivational presentations* are designed to reassure the audience. Examples include presentations to enthuse team members to adopt a new idea, motivational public speaking, presentations to influence people to collaborate with each other, and presentations to support organizational initiatives relating to a change in management. These are called “join” presentations.

Based on the audience profile, presentations can be of the following kinds:

- **Internal presentations:** *Internal presentations* are those made to an internal audience. The audience consists of the employees and can be known or unknown to the presenter.
- **External presentations:** External presentations are made to an external audience. The audience is generally not well-known to the presenter and consists of potential clients, vendors, and partners.

Based on the time available to prepare, presentations can be of the following kinds:

- **Impromptu presentations:** *Impromptu presentations* are those without any preparation or planning.
- **Planned presentations:** *Planned presentations* are those that result from careful planning and preparation.

COMMON PROBLEMS WITH PRESENTATIONS

At times, presentations are dull. The reasons cited for this are often lack of preparation, poor knowledge about the audience, and an unimaginative delivery. Since presentations involve high stakes, it is worth considering why some presentations fail to yield results. Some of these reasons are:

- **The presentation is boring:** A boring presentation is not tailored to the audience’s interests. The speaker speaks in a monotone, and active involvement of the audience is missing.

- **The content is not suited to the audience:** In this kind of presentation, either too much information is packed into the presentation, or there is too little information. Relevant data and information might be missing.
- **Poor style:** Presentations can fail because the speaker lacks charisma and has a forgettable personality. This can happen if the speaker looks ill at ease and is unprepared.
- **Poor quality of slides:** Too few or too many PowerPoint slides, or badly prepared slides with too much content packed in one slide, make it difficult for the audience to keep pace with the speaker. As a result, the audience might lose interest.
- **Lack of clear organization and purpose:** Presentations become a waste of time when the speech is poorly structured and the points fail to follow a clear, logical sequence. Too much information and not enough support for the ideas presented also mar an otherwise good presentation.

Often, speakers find the following points to be the most troublesome when planning a speech:

- How should the presentation be started? Opening statements tend to be difficult because it is essential to get the undivided attention of the audience with the opening.
- How should the various points and sub-points of the presentation be linked to each other? Transitioning from one point to the next seamlessly, so that the points appear to be linked, is another great challenge.
- How should questions from the audience be addressed? The question-and-answer session tends to be difficult because the credibility of the speaker is being tested.
- How many visual aids should be prepared? The quantity and quality of visual aids and handouts are key to making a good presentation.
- How can the audience be more involved? Keeping the audience engaged and active throughout the presentation is a rather difficult task.
- What can make the ending interesting? Coming up with techniques to end with an impact is also not an easy task.

THE CENTRAL TENETS OF PRESENTATIONS

At this stage it may be helpful to recapitulate the key constructs of professional communication and frame them in the context of presentations:

- Good communication results when there is a desire to communicate. Similarly, the readiness of the presenter to communicate well and influence the audience is very important for a good presentation. A presenter's enthusiasm is contagious and transmits itself to the audience.

POINT	Presentations are essentially sender-centric. The speaker decides what is to be presented and how.	Presentations are essentially receiver-centric. It is the audience that decides what they need, and the sender has to keep the audience's perspectives in mind.	COUNTERPOINT
	Presentations must be planned extensively and each word and phrase must be memorized.	Extensive planning can mar spontaneity. Good presentations incorporate not only facts and a well-planned strategy, but also humour and spontaneity.	
	Only the content is important in a presentation. If a speaker has expertise in a subject matter, it is sufficient to make the presentation effective.	Content and charisma are two sides of the same coin. Both are important. Effective content raises the quality of the presentation; charisma creates interest and enthusiasm among the audience.	
	Presentations must include only facts and supporting evidence as they have to appeal to the left (logical) side of the brain.	Presentations must include not only facts, but also stories, visuals, examples, and anecdotes to appeal to both the left as well as the right (emotion-centric) side of the brain.	

- Good communication flows from purposeful intent and honesty of purpose. Audiences are perceptive and can easily recognize artificial and superfluous presentations.
- Communication is effective when there is mastery of message, meaning the speaker is knowledgeable and prepared, and the well-planned discourse fulfils the stated objective. Though delivery is important, for a presentation to succeed, the speaker must have something substantial to say.
- Good communication is natural. One's natural presentation style is the best presentation style. It helps to realize that there is no such thing as a "perfect" presentation. Presentations are like conversations as they help the speaker connect to the audience naturally. Communicating honestly is the best way to influence the audience.
- Good communication is crisp and focused. In business communication, the adage "less is more" applies perfectly. Business audiences rarely have the time to listen to long-winded theories and explanations. Two or three points in a presentation are all that is required to make an impact.
- Good communication is broken into chunks. An effective presentation helps the audience to understand matter easily as the material is broken down into points and sub-points.
- Good communication adopts the "whole brain" approach. The whole brain approach to presentation essentially requires presenting the topic from a variety of perspectives. Speakers generally veer towards either a left brain approach (which focuses on logic, data, and facts) or a right brain approach (which focuses on intuition and emotions) while communicating. A combined approach in presentations helps to cover a topic completely. It also helps to cater to the needs of a diverse audience.

Four essentials of a successful presentation are:

- Coping with fear.
- Making the presentation interesting and creative for the audience.
- Connecting with the audience.
- Handling questions with ease.

Apart from these, two additional dimensions are:

- Structuring the presentation.
- Planning the PowerPoint slides.

Qualities of an Effective Presenter

The manner in which information is organized depends to a large extent on the personality of the speaker. A systematic speaker prefers a well-knit structure. On the other hand, there are speakers who prefer to go with the flow rather than adopt a systematic plan. These speakers adapt to the audience and improvise on the spot. Though both approaches can be effective, a judicious mix of both is generally desirable.

Presentations should neither be too tight and rigidly compressed, nor should they be too loose and directionless. The former robs them of creativity and humour essential for good oratory, while the latter makes them too unplanned and vague. PepsiCo CEO, Indra Nooyi; Microsoft founder, Bill Gates; the President of the United States, Barack Obama; and former President of India, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, are examples of highly effective speakers, as they mix the formal and informal aspects of presenting effortlessly.

A good speaker is one who:

- Is well prepared.
- Takes the audience's concerns into consideration.
- Anticipates subsidiary issues and concerns.
- Makes allowances for disruptions.

PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi is known to be... successful presenter.



- Anticipates questions.
- Incorporates a conversational style, wit, and humour in the presentation.
- Shows no artificial pretensions.

PRESENTATION STRATEGIES

An effective presentation strategy is one that combines the varied components of the presentation in such a manner that the desired impact is created. A strategy is driven by the end results. It aims to ask questions such as, “What do I want the audience to feel, act, and do at the end of my presentation?”

In other words, an effective strategy is one that focuses on the receiver rather than the sender. It considers the audience as a collection of heterogeneous individuals bound by homogeneity of purpose. Undoubtedly, this approach requires considerable planning. Well-rehearsed presentations are typically the best presentations because they look and sound natural, but are actually the result of significant planning and preparation.

Exhibit 9.1 reveals inter-relationship between the elements of a powerful presentation strategy. Together, these elements combine to create a powerful and stimulating strategy framework.

Purpose

In order to present successfully, it is extremely important to decide the purpose or the objective of the presentation. The purpose refers to the presenter’s reasons for making the presentation in the first place. Most speakers confuse the purpose with the subject. For

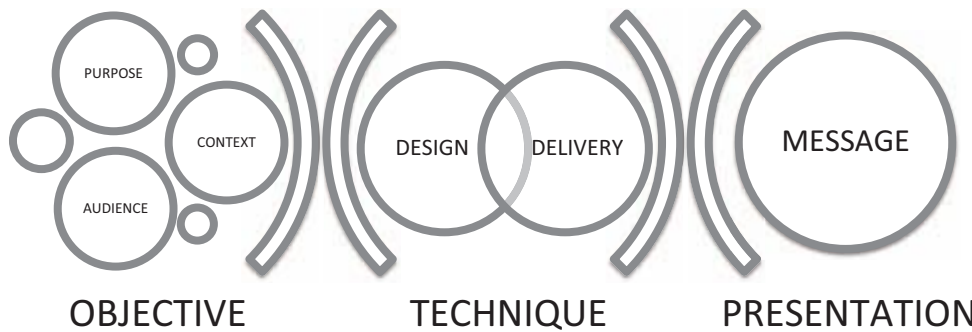


Exhibit 9.1 Presentation Strategy Framework

instance, if the subject of the presentation is “Ethical Business Practices,” then the following is a weakly defined purpose: “I am going to deliver a talk on ethical practices in business.” A speaker who plans a presentation based on this definition will be giving a general talk on ethical communication without taking the audience and the situation or context into consideration.

On the other hand, a more clearly defined purpose may be one of the following:

- Convincing the audience to be ethical in their professional lives.
- Presenting the demerits of unethical practices in a specific profession (to which the audience members belong).
- Exploring the concepts of ethical and unethical business practices.
- Deliberating on the wisdom of ethical and unethical choices in business.

It is thus apparent that purpose is more sharply defined than the subject. A well-defined purpose presents a direction or a guideline not only to the speaker but also to the audience. It is action oriented and focused on achieving a goal or an aim. It challenges the audience and at the same time is tailored to meet their specific needs. On the other hand, a subject merely indicates the content of the speech, but not its aim. In business, an effective presentation is one that does not merely inform, but also persuades.

Persuasion, thus, is an important element of an effective presentation. The Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote in his treatise *Rhetoric* that there are three essential ingredients of persuasion. This can apply to presentations as well (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of this). These three ingredients are:

- Ethos
- Logos
- Pathos

Logos is the logic element of persuasion and includes data, facts, and statistics that support arguments. Speakers also make effective use of emotion (pathos) to influence their audience. By using stories and emotional appeals such as fear, happiness, safety, security, and the like, speakers attempt to relate their offerings to the audience’s real or latent need. The persuasion gets stronger if the speaker’s ethos is highly regarded. Ethos is reflected in the credibility of the speaker. Mahatma Gandhi had a high ethos, which is part of why he attracted millions. Similarly, business leaders such as Azim Premji of Wipro and Narayana Murthy of Infosys arouse feelings of tremendous respect. However, Azim Premji and Narayana Murthy are well known and dignitaries in their own right. So, what about ordinary people? How do they highlight their ethos? The ethos of the speaker is reflected in a number of ways. By paying attention to the minutest details, one can create a positive ethos. Other ways to achieve positive ethos are being punctual, keeping commitments, being well organized, having positive body language, being courteous, and so on.

Facts alone are not sufficient to move people to adopt new ideas, products, or strategies. The speaker has to appeal to the audience’s emotions as well. Thus, persuasion can be explained in the following way:

$$\text{Persuasion} = \text{Facts} + \text{Emotion} + \text{Authority}$$

A well-defined presentation has four components: title, subject, purpose, and content. The following example regarding a presentation on fire extinguishers might make this clearer:

Title:

Fire Extinguishers—Safety and Security Management

Purpose:

- To persuade the client to buy fire extinguishers
- To help management and employees recognize and deal with concerns related to fires

Subject: Safety management

Outline of contents:

- Introduce self, build credibility, and create rapport with audience
- Explain the advantages of the offering vis-à-vis the competitors and outline the benefits to the customer/client
- Respond to questions, doubts, and concerns
- Seek assurance from the client and close the sale
- Follow-up

Another example might be considered:

Title:

Coping with Stress—Evolving an Effective Work–Life Balance

Purpose:

- To help employees recognize and deal with stress
- To reassure employees that the organization is committed to their well-being
- To retain employees

Subject: Stress management

Outline of contents:

- Introduce self and build a rapport with employees
- Show visuals depicting stress in the workplace
- Discuss issues relating to stress on the basis of short video clippings
- Quickly assess stress levels of employees
- Give proper feedback
- Explore corrective options
- Conclude with a five-minute meditation session

A good purpose sets the tone of the presentation. It also helps the speaker to decide on the examples, stories, arguments, and illustrations to be included in the presentation.

A presentation can have a hidden agenda that supports the stated agenda. Thus, there may be two types of purpose statements: overt ones and covert ones. Overt statements are those statements where the speaker's intent is clearly visible to the audience. Some examples are "help employees recognize and deal with stress," or "reassure employees that the organization is committed to their well being."

Covert statements are those statements where the speaker's intent is not visible to the audience. For example, "to retain employees" is not a statement that is clearly conveyed. Examples of covert objectives include:

- Creating a positive impression on the audience
- Getting the contract
- Displaying knowledge and expertise

Audience

Once the purpose of the presentation is clear, the next immediate concern is to identify the characteristics of the audience. Popularly called “audience analysis,” this deals with the following:

- **Demographic characteristics:** This includes the audience members’ age, gender, management level, experience, and job profile.
- **Learning profile:** This involves determining the underlying motivation of the audience in attending the presentation, the nature of the participation (voluntary or involuntary), and the preparation level of the audience (high, low, or moderate).
- **Predisposition towards the speaker:** This helps to ascertain the perception the audience has about the speaker—positive, neutral, or hostile. This can impact the way the message is received.

In all fairness it is nigh impossible to analyse the audience ahead of time unless the audience is already familiar to the speaker. Rarely does a speaker get to know the audience beforehand and prepare a presentation tailored to its needs. Most of the time, the speaker has to make an educated guess about the audience’s profile and characteristics.

Information about the audience can be obtained in the following ways:

- **Ask the “source”:** The source is the person who has organized the presentation. The speaker can get the most information about the audience from the source.
- **Contact audience representatives:** The speaker can interview the leaders and the self-appointed spokespersons of the audience to get an idea about their needs and interests.
- **Read relevant materials:** The speaker can read newsletters, Web sites, brochures, and other relevant literature to learn more about the audience. The information may not be wholly comprehensive but can provide leads or pointers about the sensitivities of the audience.

Interest Level and Type of Attendance

Some audiences are designated as “captive audiences” as they have to attend the presentation and do not have a choice about it. To cater to such an audience, the speaker must provide additional motivation and keep the audience interested. By creatively organizing the session, the speaker can capture the audience’s interest and command their attention. A lively, interactive session attracts audiences. Empathizing with the audience and acknowledging their “captivity” helps the speaker strike a quick rapport with them. This is because the perceived interest level is low or neutral. To a captive audience, the session must be made useful and relevant. Such an audience responds to the speaker on the basis of the speaker’s perceived expertise and command over the topic.

For audiences attending the session voluntarily, the enthusiasm level is high (at least initially). The speaker must maintain this interest level. However, it is not always true that a voluntary audience is more favourably inclined to the speaker than a captive audience. At times, a voluntary audience may attend a presentation with the intention of disrupting it.

In some cases it is difficult to assess whether an audience is captive or otherwise. In this scenario, it is safe to assume that the audience is captive and proceed with that assumption.

For both informative as well as persuasive presentations, understanding the knowledge level of the audience is critical. The simplest method to gauge this is to ask the audience itself. For an extremely knowledgeable audience, it is pointless to spend too much time giving out basic information. The speaker can use jargon and explore complex concerns with this type of an audience. Visual aids may not be necessary for this type of audience.

On the other hand, a less knowledgeable audience requires justification of the topic as well as extensive background material. Visual aids become necessary for this type of audience, and considerable time has to be spent explaining the charts and diagrams. The use of jargon has to be minimal.

The following are steps one might take in order to deal with a less knowledgeable audience:

- Give complete background information.
- Define terms of reference.
- Incorporate more visuals.
- Explain each visual in detail.
- Use less jargon.

The following are steps one might take to deal with an audience that already knows a lot about the subject:

- Give limited background material.
- Focus on analysis and interpretation.
- Use appropriate jargon.
- Have fewer visuals.
- Avoid unnecessary explanation of visuals.

At times, the audience can be a mixture of the uninitiated and the highly knowledgeable. This poses a challenge for the speaker as it is difficult to satisfy one without annoying or leaving behind the other. In this case, it is suggested that the speaker openly acknowledge this at the start of the presentation. Such an acknowledgement is likely to have a favourable impact as the knowledgeable audience is likely to take a sympathetic view and understand the dilemma faced by the speaker.

Another dimension of audience analysis is the predisposition of the audience towards the speaker. This is likely to be favourable when the audience perceives the speaker to be credible. Audience impression of credibility comes from the perceived level of competence and expertise of the speaker. The speaker's credentials (academic background, experience, and reputation) play an important role here. Though they create somewhat of a halo effect, at least initially the impression is favourable.

The audience's predisposition is likely to be unfavourable or neutral if the presenter is relatively unknown or lacks the requisite credentials.

Thus, an audience can be a combination of the following characteristics:

- Friendly
- Indifferent
- Neutral
- Involved
- Hostile

There are specific strategies to deal with each type of audience. However, no strategy will work if the speaker's intention is not honest, if the speaker is unprepared, if the speaker lacks self-confidence or is over-confident, and if he or she has not done enough background research. Exhibit 9.2 illustrates this further.

Attention Span of the Audience

Attention span is the span of time in which the audience is keenly listening to a speech, lecture, or talk. It varies according to an individual's level of interest. It is generally agreed that it is highest at the start and at the end of the presentation. In between, the mind tends to get distracted. A good speaker is aware of this phenomenon, accepts it, and plans accordingly. The speaker makes allowances and plans creative techniques to hold the attention of the audience. This could include an audio-visual display, an exercise, a question-answer session, a quiz, a game, and so on.

Exhibit 9.3 indicates the "tweak" points where attention span dwindles and then rises again.

Exhibit 9.2 Audience Analysis and Presentation Strategy

Type of audience	Preparation	Delivery
Friendly	Prepare the essentials. Use creative techniques to make the session enjoyable. Use your natural style of communicating.	Connect naturally. Use stories and narratives, simple and clear language, and good visuals.
Indifferent	Focus on an opening statement that will get the audience's attention. Plan your activities well in advance and focus on the value of the concept being discussed. Include data, statistics, and new features intermittently to maintain interest. The presentation should be based on hard facts.	Be enthusiastic and interactive. Pace the floor, use illustrative visuals, and involve the audience in the discussion.
Neutral	Because you do not know the attitude of the audience, it is ideal to adopt a conventional planning approach. The presentation should have adequate content, visuals, examples, quotations, and other features.	Enthusiastic style is important. Introduce yourself and establish credibility early on. State the pros and cons of your topic as well as your standpoint. Inform the audience about the relevance of your topic.
Cynical	Presentation should include up-to-date information, points of debate, supporting arguments, and activities to engage the audience. A cynical audience likes to hear concrete action plans and specific solutions.	Be serious and professional. A conversational and interactive style is required, as along with a good sense of humour. A cynical audience can be won over with time.
Hostile	Prepare thoroughly, anticipate questions, and have visuals ready.	Accept diverse views, prepare to answer hostile questions. Be calm and composed. It helps to be a little assertive if you are being pushed into a corner.

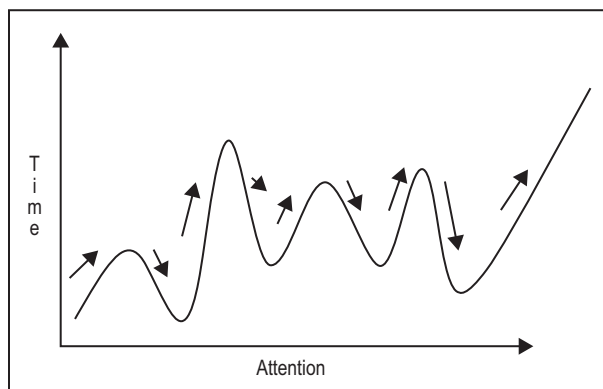


Exhibit 9.3 Attention Span and Time

Demographic Characteristics of the Audience

Demographic characteristics refer to variables relating to size, age, income, designation, gender, nationality, and the like. This information is easier to obtain than information about the audience's knowledge level and predisposition towards the speaker. Knowing the demographic characteristics of the audience help the speaker tailor the contents of the presentation to the needs of the audience. It helps decide the level of formality needed in the presentation.

It also helps determine the “pitch” of the presentation. For example, in a cross-cultural setting, presentation planning involves not only organizing the content of the presentation but aspects related to non-verbal communication as well.

Audience Size

Having a small audience (less than 20 people) allows a presentation to be slightly informal. The speaker’s focus can be on individual concerns. There are more opportunities for individual interaction and feedback. The physical distance between the audience and the speaker is almost negligible. The presentation is more of a discussion and the speaker can avoid sophisticated audio–visual aids.

A medium-sized audience also offers opportunities for interaction, but to a lesser degree than a small audience. A larger audience implies greater formality and more focus on audio–visual presentation, and is characterized by an increase in physical distance between the speaker and the audience.

Audience Age

At the workplace, there are three broad age categories: the younger age bracket (23–30 years), the middle age bracket (31–45 years), and the senior age bracket (46 years and above). Naturally, people in the senior age bracket are more experienced than those in other age groups. Generally speaking, they look for tangible solutions, rather than textbook knowledge. They are more impressed by words, and not by technology. On the other hand, a younger audience is relatively impatient, eager for results, and enthusiastic. In current times, a younger employee may be more tech-savvy than an older counterpart. Though these are generalizations, it cannot be denied that balancing the communication among different age groups is an art and requires much skilful handling on the part of the speaker.

Audience Designation

The designation of the members of the audience might help decide if the presenter is to “talk up” or “talk down” to the audience. Talking up means being more formal in tone, while talking down means being slightly informal in tone and orientation. While choosing one or the other, it is important to respect the designation of the members of the audience. By involving a senior in the planning of the presentation, the presenter wins a part of the game. Similarly, junior colleagues must be made comfortable. Background information must be shared with them and dissent considered in a fair manner.

Audience Gender

As a rule, presentations are not gender oriented. However it helps to know the number of males or females attending a session. This is because certain products/offering are gender specific and the speaker can tailor the presentation accordingly. Sexist remarks can annoy a gender, and one has to be careful of gender discrimination issues at the workplace.

Context

Understanding the situation or the context in which a presentation has to be delivered is an important element of presentation strategy. This includes the physical setting and the physiological context within which the presentation has to be designed.

Context refers to the backdrop of the presentation. The physical backdrop is the layout of the conference room, the seating and electrical arrangements, the venue, the physical infrastructure, and the facilities available. It also includes the time at which the presentation is scheduled, the proposed duration of the presentation, and other related aspects.

The physical setting refers to the layout of the conference hall or office where presentations are normally held. The chairs are arranged in an oval, round, or square arrangement, and senior audience members typically sit in the front rows. For informal presentations, strict protocol need not be followed. However, for formal affairs, careful planning is important. For instance, the speaker must make provisions for distributing handouts. When addressing a small audience, a small venue is a good idea. For a larger audience, a large conference hall with a podium and well-equipped audio–visual facilities must be booked in advance.

The *physiological context* refers to the conditions under which the presentation has to be delivered—the sense of urgency, the hidden agenda, the current situation in the company, and so on. This is a matter of interpretation and entails sensitivity on the part of the speaker. Examples can be:

- A company approaches a management trainer to design a session on motivating employees. (The company has just announced a takeover and is anticipating serious employee concerns.)
- A prominent institute will conduct a general management programme for army personnel on management-related concepts. (These army officers have opted to leave the army to join corporate organizations as management professionals.)

The sentences within parentheses indicate the context or the backdrop against which the training programme will be prepared. The speaker modifies the content on the basis of this information and adapts to the audience suitably.

In the first case, the speaker should assume that the company is undergoing internal turmoil, which is a natural corollary to takeovers. Employees become suspicious of the management and prone to doubt about its intentions. More than anything, employees need reassurance from the management about the security of their jobs and the future of the company. The trainer should take these factors into account and design a programme accordingly.

In the second case, it helps to know that these army officers would soon be joining a corporate organization. The professors could then design presentations that would help the army personnel transit smoothly from the highly disciplined army environs to a relatively flexible corporate environment.

Technique

Technique denotes the medium used to convey a message. The first and foremost concern is “Is a presentation necessary?” Can it be replaced with a face-to-face conversation, a phone call, or a written message (e-mail, memo, or letter)? Once it is decided that a presentation is the desired medium, the next step is to determine how the message is to be delivered. The following concerns need to be addressed:

- Should there be a visual display?
- What type of display should be included?

Most presentations use a number of techniques to get the message across. Some of these include boards, flip charts, objects, and models. These will be examined in greater detail later in the chapter.

PREPARATION AND DELIVERY

Once a broad strategic framework has been determined, it is time to get down to the details. As discussed in the previous section, there are two components of a presentation—the objective and the subject. Depending on the proposed objectives, one can plan the content (or subject) of the talk. The content has to be framed keeping in mind the overall purpose, audience expectations, and available time.

There are many types of presentations in business, but they can generally be divided into two broad categories—the informational presentation and the persuasive presentation. Every presentation, irrespective of its type, will have a general purpose and a specific purpose as illustrated by the example in Exhibit 9.4.

Collecting Information

Once a speaker knows that a presentation has to be given, the first important step is to find out as much information about the subject as possible. At this stage, the speaker should compile

Exhibit 9.4 Example of General and Specific Purpose of a Presentation

General Purpose	Specific purpose
Recommend new suppliers along with/in place of existing suppliers.	Induce the audience to try specific other suppliers; review the performance of the previous supplier; initiate a discussion on the prospect of building an online relationship with potential suppliers.
Explain a new office procedure to the staff regarding attendance.	Indicate that you are serious about time keeping; let the staff know the value of a log book; talk about the benefits of recording time-in and time-out to the staff.

all the information related to the topic. The sources of information for a typical academic presentation include:

- **The library:** One can visit libraries to explore books and journals that deal with the subject. The speaker should find out what other scholars feel about the particular topic. However, the material collected should be up-to-date and contemporary. Conflicting views, if present, must be taken into account. They add depth to the research and help to build up the credibility (ethos) of the speaker. Most libraries also provide online access to scholarly sources such as journals.
- **Newspapers:** These are a good source for information on the latest happenings. It is a good idea for the speaker to select one or two reputed business newspapers and magazines to obtain varied perspectives on the topic.
- **Internet:** This is a search tool that adds significant variety and depth to one's research. There are usually specific Web sites that are connected to the topic and it is very helpful to browse through them. Important company-related information, the latest data, facts, and figures can be downloaded through this medium.
- **Primary sources:** This includes collecting data through questionnaires, personal interviews, and first-hand testimony.

Preparation for any business presentation includes:

- **Gathering data from past records:** An example is analysing the sales figures of a particular brand for the past 10 months and extrapolating them to predict future trends.
- **Obtaining market feedback:** The market includes both customers and retailers. Tools such as brainstorming, focus group discussions, and one-on-one interviews can help the speaker gauge people's responses to the presentation topic.
- **Conducting an employee survey:** A survey on perceptions relating to satisfaction, performance, reactions to a proposed idea, views on the top management, and so on can help the speaker better understand the audience's needs and priorities.

To summarize, a business presentation requires current, updated information. It does not require historical antecedents regarding the topic, but, rather, a review of past and present practices of the company in the light of a stated context. The context can be a decline in sales or performance, introduction of a new brand or procedure, revision of an existing brand or procedure, and so on.

Organizing Information

Once the information is collected, it must be organized. The following techniques can be used for this:

Framing

Experts suggest framing as a way to help organize content. Visualize a picture or scenery. Surrounding the picture is usually a frame. Often the frame is selected to enhance the visual. For example, if the visual has pink flowers on a grey background, then a maroon or a beige frame may be selected. A black frame would make the visual contrast too harsh.



Communication Bytes 9.1

A presentation on stress management in the workplace can be framed in the following way:

- Sub theme 1: Types of stress (Conduct an exercise to explain this.)
- Sub theme 2: Causes of stress and distress
- Sub theme 3: Signs of stress (Show a 20-minute video)
- Sub theme 4: Coping strategies
- Sub theme 5: Sessions on meditations

In a similar manner, the information that has been collected must be put in a frame. In this case, the frame is the structure or the content plan. The structure adjusts according to the topic, the expectations of the audience, and the time available for the presentation. *Framing* is, thus, a broad outline on the basis of which a presentation is prepared.

Reframing is related to the concept of framing. It implies presenting the same information in a different manner such that it better serves the interests of the audience.

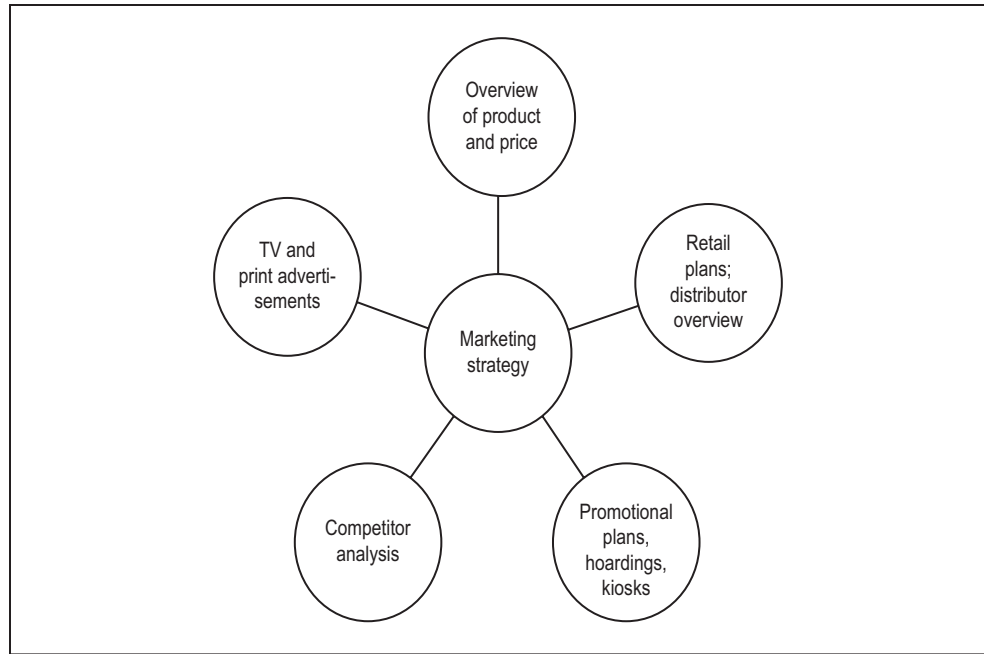
Mind Map

Another way to organize information is to use a “mind map.” A *mind map* is a method of brainstorming. Ideas are mapped in accordance with a central theme. They are first organized randomly. Then, a tentative numbering is given to indicate the sequence in which the presentation would be delivered. It is a thought process in which ideas that have been randomly generated are noted down around a central theme. It offers greater flexibility than framing, as in this process, the ideas are generated as and when they occur, without any bias. It is only later that the ideas are pruned to suit the audience, time, and context. The following example illustrates the usefulness of mind maps.

- **Topic:** Marketing strategy of the new Brand A refrigerator.
- **Audience:** The vice-president; senior managers.
- **Duration:** 60 minutes, not including discussions and the question–answer session.
- **Primary purpose:** Recommending a strategic framework for the launch of the refrigerator.
- **Secondary purpose:** To gain acceptance for the plan; to get more ideas from other team members.
- **Audience analysis:** The 48-year-old vice-president is a tough customer. He wants details and is difficult to convince. He doesn’t talk much and has 18 years of experience in the field. The 23 senior managers are mostly favourable to the speaker’s plan. However, a few managers from the production department had voiced their concerns regarding the finances for the new brand. Overall, the audience seems favourable to the plan.
- **Venue:** The presentation is in the executive conference room, implying that the event is a formal affair.
- **Context:** Brand A’s launch comes at a crucial point in the company’s existence. It marks the company’s transformation from a traditional mass appeal–based organization to a premium, personal care one. Thus, the presentation has high stakes involved.
- **Technique:** PowerPoint slides, exhibits, audio–visual elements (for instance, proposed brand endorsers and simulations of dealer interviews), and handouts can be used.
- **Information:** Important information to research includes the company’s SWOT analysis, competitor analysis, competency mapping, results of consumer surveys, multidimensional scaling for brand positioning, results of focus group interaction, historical data, collated findings of discussions with related departments, financing (pricing and margins), and packaging schedules. There also needs to be a Plan B in place, in case the first plan is not approved.

Exhibit 9.5 presents the mind map for this presentation.

Exhibit 9.5 Example of a Mind Map



Pyramid Principle

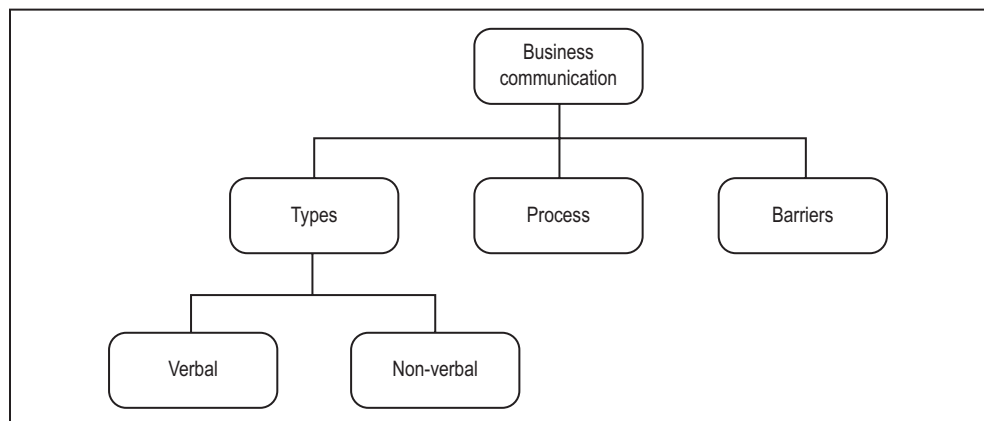
The “pyramid principle” has been proposed by Barbara Minto. According to the pyramid principle, ideas are arranged in a sequence. The most important information is placed first (the main idea). This is followed by the less important ideas (subsidiary ideas). Later, the main idea and the subsidiary ideas are expanded. This is similar to a news report, where a brief, to-the-point headline presents the main news. The details are added in subsequent paragraphs. Similarly, in a presentation, the main idea is presented first, followed by the details. This is further illustrated in Exhibit 9.6.

Structure of a Presentation

A well-crafted presentation is arranged in a logical and sequential manner. This helps the audience by making it easier to follow the speaker. A presentation has three parts, namely, the beginning, the middle, and the end. The beginning is the introduction phase. The speaker presents the material to be covered in the presentation. This is important because:

- It gives the audience an indication of what to expect.
- It prepares the audience.
- It is a systematic method and connects well with audience who are themselves systematic.

Exhibit 9.6 A Pyramidal Arrangement of Ideas



The second step is the explanation section. It includes examples, illustrations, and visual aids that support and enhance the key points of the presentation. This is the crux of the presentation.

The third step is the conclusion. It is a summary of the points discussed in the previous section. The conclusion is important because it helps the audience recapitulate the salient points. Exhibit 9.7 illustrates the structure of a presentation.

Monroe's Motivated Sequence Presentation Pattern

The *motivated sequence presentation pattern*² devised by A. H. Monroe derives its name from the fact that the normal processes of human thinking motivate an audience to respond affirmatively to the speaker's purpose. The strategy is suitable for those seeking an immediate action or those who make their living by persuading others. The sequence consists of five steps:

- **Attention:** This involves relating to the audience, illustrating the importance of the topic, and employing creative opening strategies.
- **Need:** This involves describing the problem and the need for change and backing the argument up with testimonials, examples, and relevant data.
- **Satisfaction:** This calls for stating the action or change to be induced, planning to implement the change, theoretical demonstrations, and examples.
- **Visualization:** Positive visualization entails vividly describing a situation if the change is accepted, while negative visualization includes describing the situation if the change is not accepted. A contrast method combines these two approaches.
- **Action:** At this stage, an urgent and immediate call for action is made.

The Attention–Interest–Desire–Action Structure

The attention–interest–desire–action (AIDA) model³ is mainly used for sales presentations. It depicts a sequence similar to Monroe's motivated sequence:

- **Attention:** This involves making an attention-getting statement, including introductions in a group presentation and the agenda.
- **Interest:** In this step, an interest in, and a desire for, the product, service, or idea is created based on solid evidence.
- **Desire:** The benefits of the product, service, or idea based on the audience's needs and desires are communicated next.
- **Action:** The last step calls on the audience to act and makes it easy for them to communicate (e.g., by giving out the Web address or a toll-free phone number).

<p>Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention-getting statement or visual • Agenda <p>Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main points • Sub-points • Supporting material for sub-points <p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of key arguments and their implications • Creative ending
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Exhibit 9.7 Structure of a Presentation

OPENING, CLOSING, AND SUSTAINING THE PRESENTATION

A successful presentation has a strong opening as well as closing section.

The Opening

As stated in the previous section, every presentation has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning of a presentation is called the *opening*. The opening can be simple or dramatic. An effective beginning consists of the following:

- Introducing the topic and speaker to the audience.
- Outlining the reasons as to why they should listen to the presentation.
- Discussing the aims of the presentation.
- Illustrating how the presentation will be helpful to the audience and what they can expect from it.
- Giving an outline of the presentation and introducing the salient points.
- Delivering an icebreaker.
- Beginning with something imaginative, like an experiment, a surprise, or a striking visual.

The purpose of the opening is to capture the immediate attention of the audience, establish a rapport, build a bridge of understanding, and make the audience feel that the presentation will benefit them in some way.

Some successful opening strategies include:

- A topical beginning
- Facts and statistics
- Humour
- A personal anecdote
- Visual impact
- A question
- A quotation
- A story

Topical Beginning

In a topical beginning, the presenter begins with an explanation of the main theme of the presentation and comes to the point immediately, without wasting the audience's time. This approach is especially suitable for a senior-level business audience. For example, a topical beginning is desirable in the case of a doctoral candidate who has to present his or her findings to an audience consisting of the director and other senior faculty members of the university.

Facts and Statistics

The presenter can open the presentation by quoting extensive statistics or facts regarding the theme at hand. Statistics are the data and information that the presenter has obtained from secondary sources of research such as newspapers, journals, and magazines, while facts pertain to obvious information that the speaker has gathered about the topic of the presentation. Such an opening holds good for all types of audiences; it is a good attention-grabber. Statistics and facts help to garner credibility for the speaker. However, in order to be effective, they have to be startling and not too obvious. For example, consider a social work organization that has to get a loan sanctioned from a premier funding agency for a polio eradication programme. Opening the presentation with relevant statistics to show the impact of the dreaded disease is a good idea.

Humour

Some presenters begin with a joke or a humorous incident. This approach has a positive impact if the joke is well executed. This means that the speaker has to use the punch line effectively to produce laughter. This decreases the tension that is generally present at the start



Communication Bytes 9.2

Experts recommend the use of natural and spontaneous humour as a way to connect with audiences. A natural smile and a sense of humour add sparkle to the interaction and make it lively and interesting. For example, a veteran management trainer might use humour to bond with her audience. When she enters the training hall after an especially hearty lunch session, she might quip something to the effect of the audience getting food for thought, now that they have food for their stomachs. This is bound to go down well with the audience as they might feel that she understands that trainees are sleepy after a hearty lunch.

of a speech and has a feel-good effect on the audience. The impact is better if the humorous anecdote complements the topic of the presentation in some way. This requires creativity and ingenuity on the part of the speaker. Thus, at times, a joke may not be spontaneous. It might be a result of careful planning and forethought.

A poorly executed joke or attempts at weak or self-deprecating humour may produce the opposite effect. A joke falls flat if the audience has already heard it before. A poor opening lowers the morale of the most confident of speakers. Because audience reaction can never be predicted with certainty, it is wise to refrain from this type of opening if one is inexperienced or immature.

Personal Anecdote

The speaker recounting a personal story at the start of the presentation helps the audience to instantly empathize with the speaker. It creates the kind of support a speaker requires at the start of the presentation. However, to be truly effective, the story has to be genuine and personal—it should not be borrowed and it must not be for “effect” alone. It must also connect to the theme of the presentation and be short and precise. Long-winded stories are boring and tedious. For example, a particularly inspiring speaker (who is also the head of a large conglomerate in India) was invited to a number of convocation addresses at reputed educational institutes, and at one such ceremony he began his speech with the fact that he had no management degree and had just worked his way up. The audience was instantly wooed.

Visual Impact

The speaker might start a presentation with:

- **Showing an audio–visual clip:** This includes clippings from films and videos.
- **Conducting an experiment:** This refers to an experiment that actually unfolds in front of the audience.
- **Displaying props:** Props can be used to demonstrate concepts and key points.

A successful visual opening is truly a testimony to the fact that people remember better if they see something, rather than being told about it. However, the important point to remember is that the visual must connect with the topic at hand, be quick and snappy, and not hurt religious or other sentiments. For example, a presentation on stress management might begin with a five-minute clip showing managers in the throes of stress—personally as well as professionally. An opening clip might show a manager coming in late to work because of personal stress, and being shouted at by a supervisor because of this. Needless to say, such openings generally have a marvelous impact.

Question

A presenter can begin a presentation by asking the audience a question. There are two types of questions—the thematic and the mundane. The question can range from thematic (e.g., “What do you feel about this topic?”) to mundane (e.g., “Are you comfortable at the back?”). Asking a topical question helps the speaker get a sense of the profile of the audience as well as how perceptive it is. For example, asking the audience if they have heard of a particular blog is a good way to start a presentation on the impact of new technologies on

business. If most members of the audience respond affirmatively to a query, the speaker can safely assume that he or she will have to pitch the presentation at a higher level. The opposite is true when the audience claims to know little or nothing about a topic.

Mundane questions are asked to make the audience feel comfortable with the speaker. Though used quite often, caution must be exercised when asking mundane questions. If a member of the audience says that he or she cannot hear the speaker at all, it just might dampen the spirit of the speaker. This can happen because speakers do not generally anticipate a negative response to a seemingly innocuous query like “Can you hear me at the back?”

Quotation

The presenter begins with a quotation in this type of opening strategy. The quotation may be literary or contemporary. Usually, the speaker quotes someone else’s words and attempts to link them with the theme of the presentation. In business, quotations are used rarely; however, when they are used they reflect the views of contemporary work done in that area. Using quotations is similar to dropping names to impress the audience. It also reflects the credibility of the speaker and throws light on the kind of research done by him or her, and his or her ability to think out of the box.

However, at times quotations may be misplaced and may not always be the best opening strategy. They might appear clichéd, commonplace, and unimpressive. In some cases, quotations can be attributed to the wrong person and might cause an immediate loss of face. At other times, the audience might not know or care about the person who is being quoted. In a presentation on brand life cycles, the speaker might want to open with a quote that would connect a brand’s life cycle to a person’s life cycle. In this case, it would be a good idea to quote a few lines from the Indian philosopher Aurobindo’s work.

A Story

The speaker can also open by narrating a short story, anecdote, or incident. Usually, the impact is significant, especially if the story is well connected to the theme of the presentation, has a valuable lesson for the audience, and relates in some measure to the personal experiences of the audience. In some cases, the story can even be enacted for greater visual impact and recall. However, as with personal anecdotes, the story must be short and interesting, must connect well with the theme at hand, and must link the emotions of the audience with the theme. Stories work especially well with soft skills presentations. For example, in a communication skills workshop, the speaker might begin by narrating a two-minute story on the theme of rigid mindsets. This might set the tone of the presentation and help the audience appreciate the fact that communication cannot improve merely by attending a training programme: it must begin with the removal of preconceived notions about oneself and others.

The Middle

Once an initial connection has been established, the presenter can move to explaining the key features of the talk. There are many ways to do this:

- General to specific approach
- Specific to general approach
- Chronological technique
- Cause-and-effect method
- Comparison and contrast technique
- Advantage and disadvantage method
- Problem and solution method
- Component approach
- Spatial approach
- Combination approach

General to Specific Approach

In this method, the talk veers from general to specifics. The background or the big picture is explained first, and then the finer details are elucidated. This goes down well with audience members who like to have the background to an event or a theory before other details or practical illustrations. For example, a teacher talking about motivation might explain the concept first, before going on to examples of motivational techniques in organizations. Similarly, an executive might give the background of a proposed merger before talking about specific ramifications for employees.

Specific to General Approach

The specific to general approach is for audience members who like to have the facts first. The big picture comes in later. At times, it may not even be necessary to talk about the big picture. This kind of audience is generally time bound and has to arrive at decisions quickly. For example, a business professional might explain the conclusions and recommendations of his report before talking about the findings and background, or a professor might begin with a case study and then expand on the theory.

Chronological Technique

In the chronological technique, the subject matter is presented sequentially in the form of events or important landmarks. The purpose is to walk the audience from the beginning to the end, that is, to give them an idea of “what it was” and “what it has become.” For example, in a talk given to young management trainees, a senior executive might talk about the phenomenal rise of the company by beginning with how the company started and finishing with where it is now. A person introducing a speaker to an audience and highlighting the speaker’s achievements over a period of time is also usually following a chronological order.

Cause-and-Effect Method

In the cause-and-effect method, the speaker takes the audience through an explanation module, giving reasons for a particular phenomenon. This kind of presentation focuses on either the reason why a particular action always results in a specific consequence, or the possible causes for an event that has taken place. For example, a senior executive might use this method while explaining that a certain brand should not be extended further (action) because it would have a negative impact on sales (consequence).

Comparison and Contrast Technique

Another good technique for a successful presentation is the comparison and contrast method. Here, the presenter compares two or more ideas, products, or services based on certain parameters. These are generally ideas or products that are competitors. This sort of presentation requires a clear idea about each of the competing offerings, as well as an unprejudiced approach on the part of the presenter so that objectivity is maintained. The presenter can either present all the features of one brand or idea at once and then move on to its competitors, or it can compare and contrast the competing brands one feature at a time. For example, this can be a useful method for a sales executive in an electronics appliances showroom comparing the profile of two brands in the same product category to potential customers.

Advantage and Disadvantage Method

The advantage and disadvantage method works well when the audience is prepared to listen to both sides of an argument or a proposed strategy. At first, this may appear to be similar to the compare and contrast type of presentation but it is, in fact, quite different. The presenter in this case is not comparing two different ideas or services, but is merely enunciating the advantages and disadvantages (pros and cons) of a single approach or idea. Sales professionals commonly use this approach. They, however, like to downplay the disadvantages as it might distract the customer. This technique might be a useful to a social worker informing a group of villagers about the merits and demerits of contract farming for instance. With all the points in front of them, the villagers can then make an informed decision.

Problem and Solution Method

The problem and solution method is focused on identifying a problem and providing its solution. At times, more than one solution may be presented. The basic purpose here is to suggest a remedy. For example, a sales executive might use this approach to explain to an audience why a particular brand of water purifier is the best remedy for common water-borne diseases.

Component Approach

The component approach uses a functional segmentation approach to explain processes, ideas, and products. The unit to be explained is divided into parts and sub-parts and explained systematically. The units are not separated geographically. A fireman giving a presentation on handling fire outbreaks in residences might use this approach. The presentation may systematically highlight the steps to be taken while bringing a fire under control. An HR manager inducting new employees into the organization might also use this method to systematically inform new employees about the departments within the organization.

Territorial and Spatial Approach

A spatial approach uses geographic segmentation to explain processes, outcomes, assets, and so on. For example, a regional marketing director might use a spatial approach to explain region-wise sales performances to the top management. A national sales director of a company might use this method to present the performance of each of the three districts in the first quarter. Spatial approach underlines the concept of space and design of an office, a product, etc.

Combination Approach

The combination approach is a mix of some of the strategies discussed. A spatial approach can be combined with the comparison technique, or a general to specific method can be combined with a problem to solution technique to deliver a successful presentation.

The Ending

It is often said that a great ending makes an otherwise mediocre presentation memorable, but the reverse also holds true. A poor ending can also undo the impact of an otherwise spectacular presentation. The end or the close of a presentation must be planned meticulously. It must not be a hasty and ill-planned affair. As dessert after a meal completes it, an intelligent ending helps the audience get a complete picture of the presentation. The close of the presentation should be indicated clearly. Effective speakers may lower the pitch of their voice, taper the speech, and give hints like “as we come to the end of our presentation....”

The benefits of a good closing include the following:

- Audience members generally love a summary at the end of the presentation. It helps them remember the important points mentioned during the presentation.
- The speaker's standpoint becomes clear with a good ending.
- It has a “binding” effect similar to a well-made sandwich—the top and lower slices of bread can be compared to the opening and closing parts of a presentation, while the “filling” is the middle part. The two bread slices are the binders, so to speak, for the filling inside.

The following are examples of weak and ineffective endings to presentations:

- The presenter closes rather abruptly and hurriedly, saying “this is all I have to say.” This has an effect similar to that of a car driver slamming on the brakes suddenly, surprising the vehicles following behind.
- The presenter quickly starts distributing handouts without any preliminaries, leaving the audience flummoxed.
- The speaker springs an unexpected and sometimes unwelcome surprise at the end—it could be a quiz, a test, or an exercise.
- A weak joke makes a poor ending.

- Apologetic statements such as “I hope you enjoyed this boring talk, and it is a tribute to you that you could tolerate me.” Most audience members dislike such self-deprecating comments
- A confusing ending might include posing a question at the end, adding a new point, explaining a point dealt with earlier, and in general going back and forth. In such a presentation, it is difficult for the audience to know whether the talk has ended.
- The presenter asks “any questions?,” and then walks off in a minute or so, seemingly without waiting for a response.

Strategies to close presentations successfully include:

- A typical ending
- A quick recap—a reminder of the key points
- A motivational thought
- An action-oriented ending

Typical Ending

This occurs when the speaker closes with words such as “at the end, I would like to conclude that...” This type of ending is generally expected.

Quick Recap

This is when the speaker closes by saying something like “before I conclude this presentation, let me give you a quick summary ...”

A Motivational Thought

The speaker can close by exhorting the audience to rise to the situation, asking for a voice vote or statements eliciting support.

Action-oriented Ending

The speaker can also end by asking directly for an outcome—this could be a sales order, a work plan, or a goal-setting exercise. Here, the audience is required to commit to an idea or strategy.

GETTING READY TO DELIVER A PRESENTATION

After planning the purpose and content of the presentation and researching the audience, the next step is to deliver the presentation. This is the essence of the presentation. It is the “moment of truth” for the speaker because the delivery can make or break a presentation. If the delivery is smooth, the planning is justified, but if the delivery is flawed, even the most superior structure can fall flat.

Delivery Outline

Just before the presentation is given, the speaker should prepare a delivery outline. This is a point-wise enunciation of the presentation in the sequence in which it will occur. A delivery plan acts like a guide to the presenter, helping him or her time the presentation, incorporate games and exercises at appropriate junctures, and bring in enhancements where necessary. Often a one-page summary, the delivery outline is a handy device to aid the presenter throughout the presentation. The following is an example of a good delivery outline:

- **Topic:** Motivation
- **Audience:** Management students
- **Presentation time:** 40 minutes
- **Opening:** Statistics, throwing a question at the audience, discussion
- **Middle:** Point 1 situation 1; point 2 situation 2; group exercise, discussion; point 3 situation 3; point 4 situation 4; group exercise: discussion; Maslow and Hertzberg’s theories
- **Conclusion:** Summarizing the Indian scenario, employee retention through motivation, call to action for HR managers

Stage Fright and Speech Anxiety

Though presentations are a business reality, they are not always popular among business executives. Most people feel intimidated by the thought of speaking in public and prefer to avoid presenting. Speaking in front of an audience ranks as the number one fear in the world. However, even the best of speakers face some kind of anxiety. Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Bill Gates, and Winston Churchill have all confessed to a feeling of anxiety before a speech or presentation.

E. Sampson describes the four speaking stages⁴:

Stage 1

In the first stage, the individual resists a situation in which he or she will have to speak. The individual feels uncomfortable and panics at the thought of confronting an audience. He or she aims to avoid speaking in public as much as possible, even at the risk of jeopardizing career prospects.

Stage 2

The second stage marks a sense of resignation —admission to the fact that the presentation is important for enhancing career prospects. The speaker in this stage presents occasionally, as and when required.

Stage 3

At the third stage, the individual is mentally prepared to give as many presentations as possible. This builds confidence and communication skills in the speaker. There is no longer a feeling of resentment over an impending presentation.

Stage 4

The fourth stage is when the speaker actually “enjoys” the presentation. The presentation no longer remains a formal talk, but becomes a genuine way to reach out to the audience. The speaker displays passion, natural humour, ready wit, and poise.

To reach from Stage 1 to Stage 4 requires effective “mental management.” Overcoming the fear or phobia of speaking in public (glossophobia) is important to succeed in life.

People have many reasons for being afraid of speaking in public. These might include:

- Feeling that the audience is the enemy, and imagining that the audience will dislike one’s ideas.
- Being afraid of forgetting important points. The speaker might be afraid of the audience ridiculing him or her if something is forgotten midway.
- Presenters might be afraid of not meeting the audience’s expectations.
- Presenters might be afraid of the audience deliberately asking tough questions.

Experts suggest that it is actually good to feel some level of anxiety at the start of a presentation. Harnessing anxiety and converting it into positive energy is important. However, a person experiencing stage fright often falls prey to negative thoughts and harbours negative feelings about himself or herself and the audience. This results in loss of self confidence and consequently leads to a poor presentation.

How to Deal with Stage Fright Successfully

No matter how nervous the presenter is, the following tips might be useful in delivering a successful presentation.

Before the Presentation

- Consider the audience to be a friend and not an enemy. An audience always likes to give the speaker a fair chance. It does not reject or accept a speaker on frivolous grounds. If the speaker’s intentions are noble, the audience generally approves.
- Drink a glass or two of water to calm frayed nerves. Keep a glass handy.



Information Bytes 9.1

Symptoms of stage fright can include:

- Trembling hands
- Trembling voice
- Halting voice
- Choking voice
- Long gaps while speaking
- Dry throat
- Shifty eyes
- Tense expression on face
- Too much pacing
- High pitch
- No smile
- Expressionless face
- Wringing hands
- Drooping shoulders
- Sweat on face
- Clammy hands
- Dropping sheets/chalk/pen

- Stretch the facial muscles, perhaps by chewing gum.
- Positive self-talk helps. Tell yourself that you have done genuine and sincere work on this presentation and it is sure to get noticed.
- Breathe easy. Take a deep breath before starting.
- Do not over-prepare. Stop rehearsing at least two to three hours before a presentation.
- Do not attempt to memorize the presentation. If a presentation is memorized, even a minor slip can result in one forgetting the entire speech.
- Smile when entering the presentation venue. It instantly connects with the audience.
- Acknowledge the audience. Nod and greet them.
- Include pleasantries before starting. It helps build rapport.

During the Presentation

- Make eye contact.
- Speak slowly. Make a deliberate attempt to moderate the pitch of your voice and your speed.
- Do not panic if you forget something. Switch to another point, and the previous one will soon come to mind.
- Involve the audience. This eases the pressure on the speaker. You can do this by asking questions or by including an exercise, game, or quiz.
- Listen carefully and calmly to questions and counter-arguments. Do not interrupt the questioner by instantly answering, as this shows unwarranted defensiveness. The rule is to agree to disagree.

An Ideal Presenter

If a presenter is not familiar with the topic he or she has been asked to talk about, he or she might refuse to present or recommend someone else's name. If that is not possible, then the presenter needs to focus only on the essentials and the aspects of the presentation he or she is familiar with.

Presentations are important for professional success. A positive approach towards presentations helps in one's professional and personal lives.

- Good presenters are perceived as more intelligent and smart.
- Good presenters are perceived as possessing better leadership abilities.

- Good presenters are perceived as better candidates for recruitment as well as promotion.
- Good presenters are more confident.
- Good presenters possess a strong sense of self worth.

A confident person exhibits the following traits:

- A firm handshake
- Self-assured demeanor
- An easy and ready smile
- Ability to respond calmly to disruptions
- Ability to handle pressure
- Preparedness
- Positive attitude
- Willingness to take a risk

Body Language and Presentations

Body language refers to the non-verbal communication of an individual. It constitutes about 93 per cent of the impact on the audience. A speaker with superior content and credentials but with poor body language runs the risk of being perceived as a poor presenter. In contrast, a speaker with relatively inferior content and credentials but possessing excellent body language can be perceived as a superior presenter. However, this is not to suggest that good presenters need only to focus on body language and not on content.

Good presenters with excellent body language have self-awareness. This is the ability to objectively assess the following:

- How do I want to be perceived: honest, competent, confident, self-assured?
- What is the best way to make the audience understand my message?

Speakers range from being perceived as overly submissive to overly aggressive when presenting their material. These impressions are formed from the overt and covert signals that their body sends out during a presentation. This also determines the level of attention and credibility that a speaker deserves.

Much too often, people are unaware of the hidden messages they send out to others through their body language. Even if people are aware of these messages, they seldom do anything about them. They prefer to confine themselves to a set image. Caught in an “image trap,” these speakers continue to churn out dull, boring, and ineffective speeches. They seldom take risks in order to improve and be more adaptable. Few realize that their image can be reinvented from time to time.

Research shows that as individuals improve their body language, they become better communicators. According to Aristotle, a good communicator is always an individual with good intent. Understanding the behavioural traits of aggressive and passive individuals can help understand what is required of individuals as presenters. This works on the basic premise that aggressive and passive people are also aggressive and passive presenters.

There are three types of speakers:

- Aggressive speakers
- Passive speakers
- Assertive speakers

Generally speaking, both passive and aggressive speakers have certain drawbacks. Exhibit 9.8 points out the characteristic traits of aggressive and submissive speakers.

Characteristics of passive speakers	Characteristics of aggressive speakers
Soft voice	Loud voice
Expressionless face	Too many expressions
No smile	Excessive geniality
Little or no voice modulation	Too much voice modulation
Insignificant content	Fluffing and flannelling
Dull and insipid manner	Misplaced enthusiasm
Low on energy and enthusiasm	Voluble, if incoherent
Lacking creativity	Misplaced creativity
Lacking any visible effort	Unnecessary effort
Poor audience control	Tendency to dominate the audience and browbeat them

Exhibit 9.8 Comparison of Passive and Aggressive Speakers

In the middle of the continuum between passive and aggressive speakers are the rational or assertive speakers. These speakers have the following characteristics:

- A moderate tone of voice
- A measured approach to presentation
- Good preparation
- Calm attitude
- Capacity to handle pressure
- A sense of humour
- Moderate pacing
- Tact and understanding

The traits of aggressive speakers might include the following:

- Ego-centric
- Attitude of always being right
- Intolerant towards criticism
- Meticulous planner
- Rigid and inflexible
- Emotionally high strung
- Prone to extreme reactions
- Judgmental

The traits of submissive speakers might include the following:

- Possess an inferiority complex
- Eager to please
- Unsure about many aspects of presentation
- Too flexible
- Want to stay in the sidelines

The “2V Model” is an effective way to understand the finer nuances of body language. Our bodies transmit cues (the two Vs), which are received by the audience, who in turn respond to them in an appropriate manner. The two Vs are:

- Vocal cues
- Visual cues

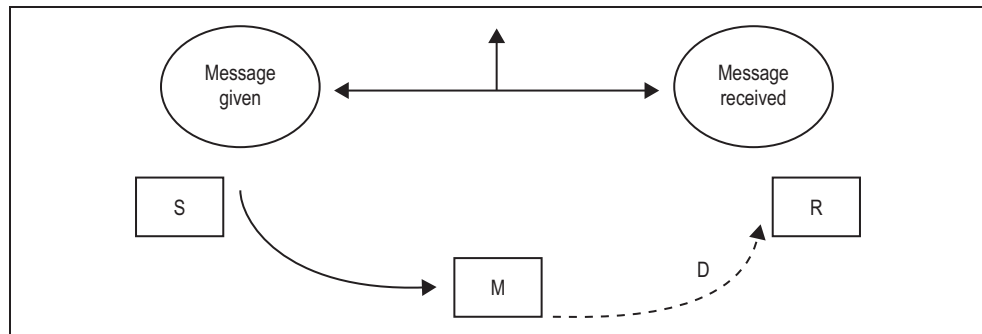
Exhibit 9.9 2V Model of Presentation

Exhibit 9.9 shows this model of presentation. There is interplay between the sender (S), receiver (R), and channel (M). Distortion (D) occurs because the receiver interprets the message on the basis of the cues given by the speaker: tone, voice modulation, attire, eye contact, facial expression, and gestures.

Vocal Cues

The vocal quality of the speaker determines the vocal impact he or she has. This is, in turn, affected by external factors. These are the physical setting, the time of day, the behaviour of the speaker, and so on. Vocal quality includes the following:

- **Tone:** People are most sensitive to the tone of the speaker's voice. It is the strongest vocal non-verbal cue. A seemingly simple statement such as "Get me a glass of water" can be said in a number of ways. The tone may be interpreted as rude, polite, demeaning, or uplifting by the audience. Some speakers possess a whining tone without realizing it. It always appears as if they are complaining about something. There are also defensive tones and tones laced with sarcasm. Such tones always manage to arouse negative feelings in the audience.
- **Pitch:** Pitch denotes the treble of the voice. A low pitch is too deep and appears to be almost inaudible. It gives the impression of "growling." A high pitch, on the other hand, is symbolic of nervousness. It gives the impression of squeaking. Both of these are irritants to the audience.
- **Volume:** Volume represents the "bass" effect. For a good impact, the volume of the voice must be adjusted to the size of the presentation venue or the number of participants. Too soft a voice may be associated with a passive personality and may be inaudible to the audience. On the other hand, too loud a voice is jarring.
- **Speed:** The speed is the rate at which the presenter is speaking. Too fast a rate may result in nobody understanding what is being presented. The audience may even think that the speaker is nervous. On the contrary, too slow a rate of speaking may produce a dulling effect on the audience. It might lull audience members to sleep. Moderation is the key to ensuring a positive impact. The voice must be modulated to enhance its quality. There are three stages to modulating one's voice. The first stage involves reflecting and assessing the quality of one's voice. The second stage involves taking corrective action, while the last stage includes revising and practicing the correct voice.

Strategies to Improve Voice Quality

The voice is like a musical instrument. Speakers can learn to string it in a number of ways. Indeed, our voices can be worked upon by exercising our voice muscles. This loosens or stretches the muscles surrounding the voice box or larynx. This makes the voice clear and flexible.

Voice Workouts

There are some strategies for improving the quality of one's voice. Practicing with a friend or a co-worker is a good way to make sure that a presentation goes smoothly. Most of these strategies have been adapted from theatre techniques:



Practicing voice workouts with your friend or co-worker is a good way to make sure that your presentation goes smoothly.

- Practice speaking in a classroom or hall and ask a friend to help. Tell your friend to successively sit further away from you. Repeat a sentence each time your friend moves further away. Do this till the friend reaches the seats at the back. This exercise improves the volume of the voice.
- Practice reading a text with clenched teeth. Do this at least three times in a row. This improves the timber of the voice.
- Practice saying “baaaaaaaaaa,” “beeeeeeeeeeeeeeee,” and “boooooooooooooooooo” at least three times each. The voice should go down to the stomach such that the stomach contracts. This improves the depth of the voice.
- Practice saying “Shankar, shut the door” in seven different ways. This improves awareness about the tone of one’s voice.
- Practice saying the following sentence, emphasizing one word at a time: “Did you lock the car?” This too creates awareness about one’s tone.
- Practice using a mock telephone and creating an artificial situation. This improves one’s tone as well as one’s sense of how to emphasize certain words.

Visual Cues

The visual appeal of a presenter determines the impact he or she has on the audience, at least initially. Visual cues include the components discussed in this section.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is the most important indicator of the credibility of a speaker. Good eye contact with the audience is essential to commanding attention, gaining interest, creating

desire, and generating action among the audience. A speaker with good eye contact is perceived to be well prepared, confident, and self assured by the audience. Good eye contact means that the speaker is looking directly at the audience and not glancing elsewhere. Shifty-eyed speakers, speakers with closed eyes, and those with fixed eyes are not liked by most audiences.

Many times, speakers concentrate on one side of the audience only and ignore the other. There are also times when the speaker stares fixedly at one member of the audience who is either known to the speaker or is a friendly member of the audience.

Good eye contact does not mean that the speaker has to look at all the members of the audience, one by one, for a fixed period of time. Indeed, this is not required at all and is not necessary. Instead, one can use the following ways to ensure good eye contact:

- Practice looking at the “triangular zone.” This is the professional gaze area that connects the eyes of the individual with the bridge of the audience member’s nose, in the shape of an invisible inverted triangle. Thus, the speaker makes eye contact without appearing to be staring at individual members of the audience.
- Find four friendly sets of eyes at the four corners of the presentation hall and make eye contact periodically with each of them. Do this in both the clockwise and the anti-clockwise direction. This gives the impression of covering the audience in all four directions. Exhibit 9.10 illustrates this further.
- Visualize the audience seated in the form of a rectangle or square. The row at the back and front are connected by a diagonal. The eyes should traverse to and fro in the form of a Z. This gives the impression of addressing all the members of the audience. Exhibit 9.11 illustrates this further.

Gestures

Gestures include the movements of the hands and legs while speaking. Excitable speakers generally use a lot of movement while speaking. In contrast, there are dull speakers who use little or no movement. Experts generally suggest a rule of thumb: be natural. Gestures cannot be contrived and manipulated. The speaker should use gestures that do not distract from the central purpose of the presentation. Moreover, the speaker should only use gestures that he or she is comfortable with and uses in everyday life.

- **Hand gestures:** Many times speakers do not know what to do with their hands. Should these be in the front? At the back? Folded across? Or clutching something like the table or a pen? What do you do with your hands when you are talking to somebody? Do exactly the same in a presentation. Hands movements should ideally combine grace and poise. Tightly clutching something, fidgeting, twiddling one’s hands, and changing postures repeatedly are signs of nervous distress. It is best to hold one’s hands casually with the palm facing upwards or use one hand to explain whatever is being said.
- **Leg movements:** Presenters sometimes face the following dilemma: how much pacing is acceptable in presentations? Should one walk fast or slow? Should one stand in the middle or at the sides only? Should one keep standing at one side or

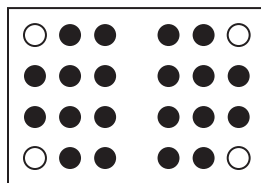


Exhibit 9.10 Four Friendly Eyes Approach to Good Eye Contact

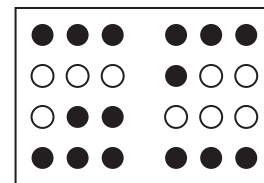


Exhibit 9.11 The Z Approach to Eye Contact

move to the other side as well? As mentioned earlier, leg movements must combine grace and poise. Leg shaking is to be strictly avoided. The legs should be neither too close nor too far apart. Too much pacing is akin to an angry tiger pacing inside its cage—it distracts the audience from the central message of the presentation as they can become engrossed in watching the pacing of the speaker. Moderate pacing is desirable. The speaker should not come between the audience and the LCD projector or whiteboard. This will block the view of the audience in case there is a visual display.

Facial Expressions

A smiling face attracts positive attention. A dull, expressionless face attracts boredom. A scowling face intimidates the audience. An animated expression enthuses the audience. Audiences are quick to respond to such vibes. A warm facial expression conveys the following things about the speaker:

- The speaker has confidence.
- The speaker cares about the audience.
- The speaker is conscious of the impact his or her message will have on the audience.
- The speaker is cool, calm, and composed in his or her demeanor.

Posture

We can often recall certain individuals based on their mannerisms, especially their posture. Think of a military persona and memories of a military gentleman with a straight back and an erect posture will immediately come to mind. Charlie Chaplin is also well known for the postures he presented in his epic movies.

Posture is an indicator of the attitude or predisposition of a speaker. A slumped posture indicates nervousness and unpreparedness, while a smart erect posture indicates confidence and preparedness. A posture wherein the shoulders are tilted back and the facial expression is haughty indicates overconfidence and a hint of arrogance.

Posture can indicate a speaker's offensive as well as defensive attitudes. An offensive attitude is when the speaker leans forward menacingly, with an intention to quarrel or start an argument. A defensive attitude is when the speaker leans backward to protect his or her turf. While presenting, it is wise to refrain from exhibiting offensive or defensive postures. Though refutation is an integral part of persuasive or proposal presentations, it must be conducted in a graceful manner.

Some suggestions regarding posture are:

- Suck your stomach in.
- Straighten your shoulders.
- Practice walking keeping the shoulders straight and stomach sucked in.
- Do not slouch when sitting on a chair; immediately correct yourself.
- Start exercising if you feel that you are overweight.

Space Management

Space management is the science of proxemics. How much distance should a presenter keep from the audience? Of course, much of this depends upon the size of the audience. The larger the size of the audience, the higher the formality and the greater the distance the speaker maintains from the audience. Speakers addressing large audience generally use a podium.

Apart from physical distance, space also signifies proximity. How close is desirable? In presentations, it is wise to respect physical spaces. A presenter should in no way violate the spatial privacy of the audience. Avoid walking into the space reserved for the audience.

Do not put books or stationary on the audience's desks without permission. Similarly, refrain from picking up the audience's belongings without permission. Make sure that the audience also respects your (the speaker's) physical space.

Attire

Professional attire is desirable for presentations. The audience judges a speaker based on his or her way of dressing. A sloppy dresser is one whose clothes are ill matched, too loose, too tight fitting, outdated, or out of place. A smart dresser is one whose clothes are neat, tidy, in sync with the setting, upscale, and trendy.

Clothes should not be too garish or outlandish. Neither should they be too expensive or loud. They need to be sober and well matched—after all it is a business presentation, not a fashion event.

Sloppy dressers run the risk of being perceived as sloppy and undisciplined in their professional life. On the hand, careful dressers are perceived as being neat, tidy, and well adjusted in their professional life.

Matching accessories must be planned for the occasion. Light make-up and minimal but elegant jewelry should be the norm for women. The selection of shoes or sandals and handbags should be meticulous. For men, a light-coloured shirt and dark trousers are advisable. They should select suitable shoes, socks, pen, and wallet ahead of time.

Vocal and Verbal Enhancements in a Presentation

Vocal and verbal enhancements in a presentation include strategies for dramatic effect discussed in this section.

Pauses

Pauses prompt the audience to think carefully about what is being said. It is a technique used to draw attention to an important point that either precedes the pause or comes just after it. It is an attention-grabber, especially when used in the middle of the presentation. To create the right impact, the pause must be just right—neither too short nor too long.

Repetition

The technique of repeating a point several times is used to emphasize the importance of what is being said. Repetition has good recall value. An example is: “Communication is critical, communication is personal, and communication is everywhere.”

Acronyms

Acronyms are words or abbreviations formed from the first letters of other words. This strategy helps in memory and recall of the key concepts used in a presentation. Acronyms are easy to remember and are used to convey concepts in a simple manner. For example, NPV stands for net present value and CRM is used in place of customer relationship management.

Alliteration

Alliteration is to repeat similar sounding words. The alliteration strategy aids recall. It also creates an interest factor in a presentation. An example is the following statement: “To alight, awaken, and arouse the fire within....”

Handling Questions

Every presentation is likely to generate a reaction. The reaction may be positive or negative. In presentations, it is wise to go by the 20/80 rule. This means that in an audience of 100 people, there will be about 80 people who will be moderately positive about the presentation, and about 20 people who will feel strongly about what has been said. Of these 20 people, 5 may really dislike the presenter's style and content, 5 may really love it, and 10 will want to ask the presenter something about it.

With regards to questions, an effective presenter is one who:

- Anticipates possible questions.
- Is well prepared to answer questions.
- Can handle awkward moments with ease.

The model of “Listen–Repeat–Address the answer to the whole audience” is an effective technique for answering questions and maintaining the interest of the audience.

It is a three-step process.

- The first step is to listen to the question carefully. Do not interrupt the questioner at this stage.
- The next step is to paraphrase the question. Paraphrasing the question means asking the questioner in your own words the essence of the question. This has an advantage. The speaker is able to correctly understand what the questioner is intending to ask. This reduces the chances of a misunderstanding. Second, this gives the speaker some time to mentally prepare a suitable response to the question.
- The third step is to give the answer to the entire audience. Sometimes speakers only address the response to the questioner. This makes the rest of the audience restless and talkative, reducing the seriousness of the presentation.

The audience appreciates honesty and genuineness. Do not underestimate the audience at any stage. Faking a response or pretending to know the answer when you really don't, does not cut ice with the audience. The following strategies may be helpful when you don't know the answer:

- Say that the answer is not striking you at the moment and that you would get back to the questioner at a later time (after the session). Then do get back to the questioner with an answer.
- Say that the question, though interesting, is beyond the scope of the present study/discussion; you could take an e-mail address and answer the question later if so desired.

At times, audience members can be downright rude. They may ask questions in an arrogant tone or with the intention of discrediting the speaker. They emerge as “know it alls” with the sole intention to degrade the speaker. Speakers should learn to recognize such people and not be intimidated by them. They exhibit a typical body language—tending to lean backwards, throwing scornful glances, appearing to share jokes with other members at the expense of the speaker, and in general looking disinterested. If you want to bring such a person to your side, you might consider the following steps:

- Acknowledge the question. Listen intently. At no stage should you let annoyance creep into your mind or tone.
- Appreciate the question. This has a neutralizing effect on the questioner.
- Answer the query posed by the questioner by giving justifications. Do not allow yourself to be drawn into debates. Presentations are conversations, not a game of one-upmanship.

You might also want to use offensive strategies to put down this person. If that is the plan, then you might ask a rebound question that the other person might not be able to answer. For example, say this offensive person has stated the following after your presentation on business communication: “I think all of us here feel that communication is rather overrated.” You might handle this by asking the audience vote on this. At such a time, the “all” may be reduced to just few or even nil. This has the effect of embarrassing the offensive person, who revels in audience support. Even if all the members of the audience raise their hands in response to the vote, tactfully express satisfaction at the fact that they have voiced their concern. You may now try to respond to this concern in the best possible way.

Having a one-on-one confrontation with the disruptive person is the last and least preferred recourse. You can ask the offensive member of the audience to leave the hall or scold him or her publicly. This is to be attempted in the rarest of cases, because a show of anger means that control has been allowed to slip out of the speaker's hand. This may have an adverse impact on the credibility of the presenter.

Preparing Visual Aids

An important part of presentations is preparing visual aids. Most audiences prefer a visual display as it helps them to recall key points. As a society too, we are pictorially driven. The increased use of mass media, especially the Internet and the television, are testimony to this. Most corporate meeting rooms are equipped with projectors, LCD display systems, multimedia systems, and the like. Business students are supposed to be well versed with creating and presenting visual aids.

However, the central tenet regarding visual aids is that they are to be treated as just that—aids. At no stage can visual aids supplant the speaker. Professional presentations are forums for business interactions in which visual aids are merely used to enhance the central message. They should not distract from the presenter or the central message of the presentation.

The main purpose of audio-visual aids is to:

- Reinforce stated facts.
- Clarify transitions.
- Aid in understanding ideas through additional points/illustrations.
- Introduce a new topic/theme.

Two types of visual aids are discussed here. These are:

- PowerPoint slides
- Handouts

PowerPoint Slides

Microsoft Windows includes PowerPoint software, which is used to prepare slides. The number of slides to be prepared ideally depends on the time the speaker has at his or her disposal. For a 15-minute presentation, six to seven slides are all that are required. For presentations up to 30 minutes, about 10–12 slides are desirable. For presentations running at 60 minutes, 15–20 slides are adequate. For presentations exceeding one hour, 20–25 slides would serve the purpose. The qualities of an effective PowerPoint presentation are:

- **Clarity:** A visual should be illustrative. In other words, the audience should quickly grasp the central theme of the visual. Graphs, charts, and other pictorial representations should enable faster understanding.
- **Conciseness:** A visual should not be verbose. Complex words, jargon, long sentences, and lengthy paragraphs make reading difficult and prolong understanding. To be effective, the visual should have about four to five phrases of three to four words each in bullet form. This facilitates easier understanding and enhances recall.
- **Simplicity:** The visual should be simple and understated. Including two to three colours in muted themes lets PowerPoint slides add a professional touch to the presentation. Special care must be taken with respect to the background, colour contrast, and background theme so that they are not gaudy.

Exhibit 9.12 shows a slide that is difficult to read and absorb. The paragraph format makes it difficult to read. The author uses two separate ideas here: when to use the direct format as well as where to place messages. This is confusing. As a result the slide is not very effective.

Audience Analysis-steps to Organize the Document

Use the direct pattern when the audience is informed, supportive and eager to have results first. In the direct pattern the main idea comes first in the letter or the report.

Exhibit 9.12 An Ineffective Slide on Audience Analysis

**Audience Analysis
Organizing the Document**

Use the direct pattern when the reader is :

- Informed
- Supportive
- Eager to have results first

Exhibit 9.13 Example of an Effective Slide

Exhibit 9.13 presents the same message in a better way. The author now uses just one idea here, namely, when to use direct pattern. Bullets are also used, which enhances the message’s readability.

Similarly, the slide in Exhibit 9.14 is an illustrative one. It enables the audience to “visualize” the central message. We can see that both the messages are extremely well illustrated (when direct pattern should be used and how it is used). This slide has an extremely high recall value.

Typically visuals have a heading that announces their theme. An effective title is one that is precise, uses phrases (rather than sentences), and manages to illustrate what the speaker wants to convey. Exhibit 9.15 shows a slide with an ineffective title. Even though the title is precise, it is not illustrative. Exhibit 9.16, on the other hand, shows a slide with an effective title. The title is precise as well as illustrative.

To facilitate quick understanding, the message should highlight the key point and be easy to understand and register. It can either be text driven, data driven, or process driven.

- **Text-driven messages:** A text-driven message is written in a paragraph or bullet format. Usually definitions, quotes, and policy statements are written in paragraph form. Bullets are used when the message has to be systematically broken down so that each of the components stands out clearly. Exhibit 9.17 provides examples of text-driven slides.
- **Data-driven messages:** Data-driven messages use pictures such as charts, graphs, and visuals to depict the message. These are typically used to depict quantitative aspects of the presentation. Pie charts are used when a single characteristic has to be broken down to show its composition. It also shows how one part is related to the whole. Bar charts and line charts are used to depict a progression where one or more variables are affected by other variables. They exhibit changes over time or frequencies as well as comparisons over multiple items (for instance, sales in the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009). Exhibit 9.18 shows a data-driven slide.

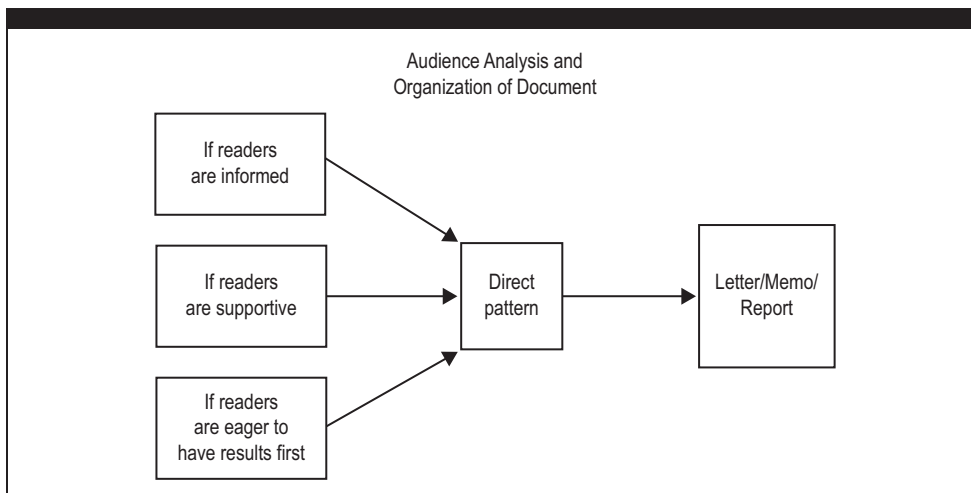


Exhibit 9.14 An Effective Slide on Audience Analysis

Exhibit 9.15 Ineffective Title for a Slide on Mass Communication

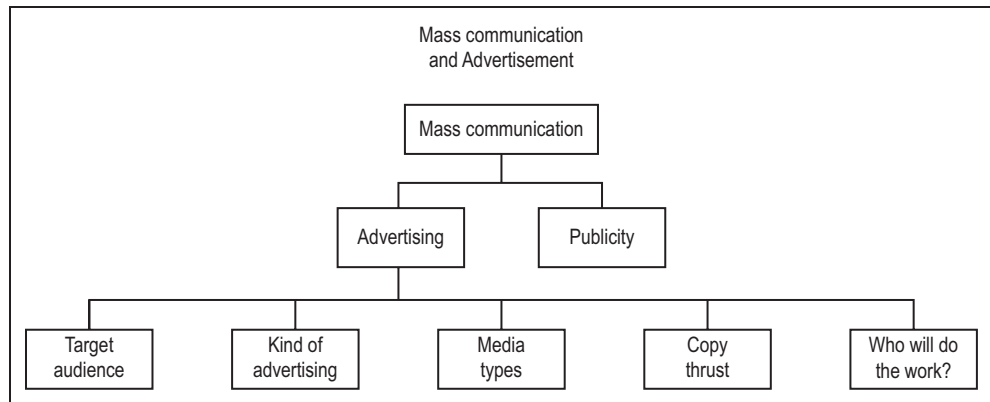


Exhibit 9.16 An Effective Title for a Slide on Mass Communication

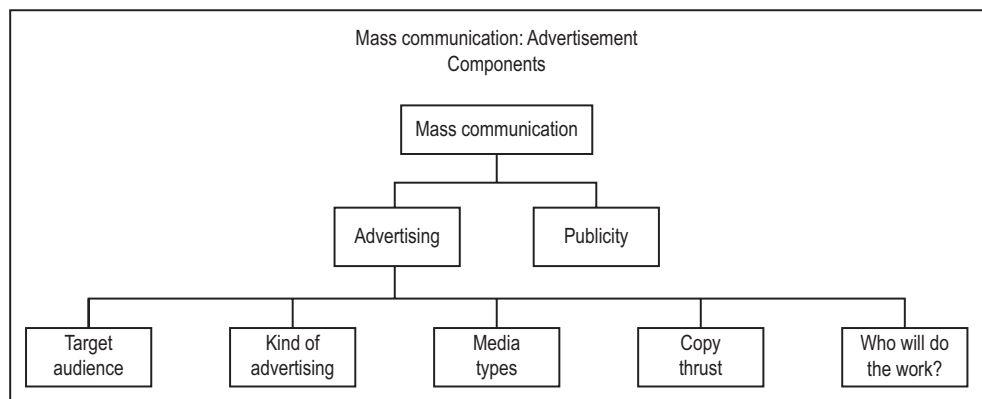


Exhibit 9.17 Text-driven Messages

Impact on Organization

- Improved profits
- Skepticism among employees
- Negative interpretation of news
- Rumors
- Lower productivity
- Increased absenteeism

Process-driven messages: Process-driven messages explain a process through a flow chart, organization structure, or simple illustration (for example, a Venn diagram or pyramid).

The peripherals are the minor issues that need to be addressed before the slides are ready. These include the following:

- **Colour combination:** Light backgrounds with dark text aid in visibility. No more than two to three colours should be put on any slide. Garish colours should be avoided. Sometimes the presenter matches the text colour scheme with that of the slide background.
- **Font type and size:** Fonts such as Arial should be used for multimedia presentations as these are sans serif fonts that make the letters look sharp and clear. The golden rule for font size is that it should match with the strength of the audience size. A font size of 18–20 is the minimum.

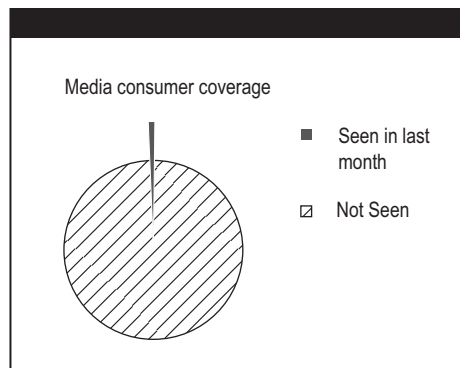


Exhibit 9.18 A Data-driven Slide

- **Density:** Too few slides make the presentation appear dull and non-illustrative; too many slides can mar the spontaneity of the speaker. A balance between the two approaches is suggested. Generally not more than 10 slides are required for a 20-minute talk. Problems arise when speakers treat the audio–visual aids as the entire presentation rather than as an aid in the truest sense of the term.

Handouts

Presenters often choose to give handouts to their audience. The purpose of handouts is essentially to reinforce the points mentioned in the presentation, give additional inputs not mentioned in the presentation, present a summary of the presentation, and give the audience a sense of satisfaction (as a tangible “take-away” from the presentation).

Ideally, the handouts should be given at the end of the presentation. This prevents the audience from poring over the handout while the presentation is in progress. This distracts the speaker.

Handouts may also be given during a presentation to introduce a point or elucidate it further. Often presenters give complex mathematical data or tables in the form of handouts as these illustrate the points to a better effect.

Handouts must not be lengthy as they can bore the reader. A short, two-to-three page document is sufficient for the purpose.

SUMMARY

- In cutthroat, competitive times, a poor presentation can mar one’s career prospects. On the other hand, a good presentation can boost one’s standing in the organization.
- Effective presentations need considerable planning and forethought. In this chapter, the importance of presentation strategy has been emphasized in detail. The chapter gives clarity on what exactly constitutes presentations and how they are different from ordinary speeches, talks, and lectures. What should not be done in presentations has also been discussed.
- The audience can range from friendly to hostile, and appropriate strategies to deal with specific audiences have to be framed.
- There are three important elements of presentation planning: collecting information for the presentation, organizing the presentation; planning for the opening, middle, and closing of the presentation. One needs to adapt the qualities of an effective presenter if one has to present well.
- Considerable emphasis has to be placed on the delivery of a presentation. Delivery is an important part of a presentation because it is the “moment of truth” for the speaker. The best-planned presentation with superior research can go awry as a result of poor delivery. This is why a delivery plan is a helpful guide to the presenter through the presentation. Effective delivery creates a favourable impact on the audience.
- An effective orator uses his or her delivery to influence the audience. There are two important components of delivery: managing stage fright and using appropriate body language. An important component of delivery, which is confidence, has also been dealt with adequately in this chapter. Presentation delivery also takes into account aspects such as handling questions and creating visual aids to sustain the interest of the audience.
- Special attention has to be given to designing audio–visual aids and handouts. These are integral aspects of modern, technology-driven presentations.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. In what ways is a presentation different from public speaking?
2. Enumerate the difference in approach in the three types of presentations (informative, persuasive, and motivational). Are all presentations motivational in nature? Why or why not?
3. Explain three opening strategies for an informational presentation? What is your opinion on the use of humour as an opening strategy for a training programme for middle management?
4. What does PACT signify? How is the purpose of a presentation different from its subject?
5. Describe the advantages of a summary as a closing? When should a call to action be used to close presentations?
6. “Brevity is the soul of wit” according to Shakespeare. Explain with reference to presentations.
7. What are the important elements of PowerPoint slides?
8. Name the sources of information you would utilize to collect material on the following themes:
 - A presentation on convincing your employees to register for the stock option scheme
 - An academic presentation on leadership skills for managers
 - Presenting a new investment plan for your company to a group of customers
 - Explaining the fundamentals of the revolution of the Earth as a teacher
 Suggest two opening strategies and one closing strategy for these presentations.
9. What strategy would you adopt for the middle section of your presentation on the following themes:
 - A bank promoting the student loan scheme to a group of students entering the first year of management
 - An academic presentation on creativity
 - A social organization promoting post-natal care for rural women

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Satya is worried. She works at a prominent multinational firm, Pegasus, which deals with international clients on a regular basis. Yesterday her supervisor called her to tell her that she had to go to Germany in two days to market their firm to the client. The deal is important not only for the money but also for the prestige it entailed. Originally Bhushan was in charge of this project but he has jaundice and the onus is on Satya now to deliver. Satya has no clue about the client and, worse, has never given a presentation where such high stakes were involved! She cannot back out at this juncture either, as it could hinder her career.

Now that you have an idea about Satya’s dilemma, can you apply the fundamentals of presentations as discussed in this chapter to solve her problem? What strategy should Satya adopt? How should she structure her presentation? How should she overcome her nervousness? How should she prepare slides and handouts? How should she approach the question and answer session?
2. A management graduate, Rajat, has recently joined Aristech as an assistant manager. One of his tasks is to routinely provide the status of projects to his immediate supervisor as well as the general manager (projects). For his first presentation, Rajat prepared 40 impressive slides with appropriate audio-visual enhancers. He memorized the technical details until he knew them by heart. He estimated that since he had a good 35 minutes or so for the presentation, he would stick to the general to specific format of delivery. However
 - his first presentation was a disaster (to put it mildly)! The general manager did appreciate Rajat’s hard work but asked him to cut out the jargon. He was impatient with the details and constantly interrupted Rajat and told him to “come to the point.” The general manager also asked many questions pertaining to the theme of the presentation, but Rajat did not have answers for many of them. How was he supposed to know the sales of the previous years when he himself had joined the company six months ago? The final straw came when the general manager asked Rajat’s immediate supervisor to train him on presentation skills and left the room. Rajat was devastated. This was not what happened in business school!
 - What do you think went wrong with the presentation?
 - What type of audience analysis could Rajat have done?
 - If you were Rajat’s immediate supervisor, what would you advise him to do?
3. Your marketing professor has given you a presentation exercise. The title of the project is “Coke versus Pepsi: The Battle Continues.” What could be the proposed objectives of your presentation? Are these objectives different from the subject of the presentation?
4. You are the corporate communications director of your company. You observe that the company’s Web site (select a Web site) is poorly organized and could do

- with a better display considering that your organization needs the publicity. Persuade the top management to revamp the Web site by making a presentation.
- Select a recent technological innovation that is useful for business. Your team has to present this tool to a company's top management and persuade them to procure the same for their company.
 - The World Bank has agreed to grant substantial financial aid to social agencies that campaign for the eradication of polio. As a prominent social service organization (an NGO), you must present your pitch to the World Bank team comprising two Indians, an American, and a Cuban. Devise a presentation strategy.
 - You have to market a new type of home exercise kit (select a Web site) to prospective buyers. Devise a presentation for Rotary Club members (Mumbai chapter).
 - Identify the best kind of graphic to illustrate the following data. Also prepare a data-based PowerPoint slide for each. Explain at least two of the following by framing an appropriate message:
 - Proportion of every state rupee spent on education, social service, transportation, debt, and other expenses.
 - The structure of the academic, administrative, and operations divisions of a college, from the president to the department chairs and division managers.
 - Figures comparing the sales of DVDs, colour TVs, and laptops over the past ten years.
 - The sales of Alien International for the years: 2008, 6.7 million; 2009, 5.4 million; 2010, 3.2 million; 2011, 2.1 million; 2012, 2.6 million; 2013, 3.6 million; 2014, 4.5 million; 2015, 7.3 million; 2016, 5.6 million.

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

- Imagine you have to present your company's insurance plan to the retired population. What conclusions can you draw about the audience? Based on your analysis, prepare the pitch of the presentation. Visit the following Web site for details: <<http://www.icicibank.com>>
- The pulse polio initiative has to be explained to a rural area in your state. What background information can help you to decide your pitch? Look up <<http://indiagovernance.gov.in/bestpractices.php?id=143>> for details.
- With the help of a corporate Web site of your choice, prepare two text-based and two process-based PowerPoint slides on the following themes:
 - Introducing your company to Japanese professionals; you represent a successful Indian firm looking for a possible expansion into East Asia and hopeful of a tie-up.
 - Training your employees to use videoconferencing facilities.
- Access the following link: <<http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/PresentationNerves.htm>>. The author recommends six techniques to harness nervousness and bring it under control. Assess the techniques and outline their usefulness.
- Access the following link: <<http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/art1.html>>, written by Gerard M. Blair. In his introductory paragraph, Blair says, "Management is the art of getting things done. A presentation is a fast and potentially effective method of getting things done through other people. In managing any project, presentations are used as a formal method for bringing people together to plan, monitor and review its progress." What are the ways in which presentations are important for business? Write a memo outlining the same to your instructor.
- Access the following link: <<http://www.m62.net/powerpoint-slides/management-presentations/>>. What guidelines are the authors suggesting for PowerPoint presentations?
- Go to the following Web site: <<http://www.karlonia.com/2007/10/11/example-speech-on-business-communication/>>. Now comment on the speaker's style of delivery with reference to vocal, visual, and verbal enhancements.
- Go to the following links: <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/105740/Bill-Gates-Speech-at-Harvard>> and <<http://www.it.iitb.ac.in/~aditya/abdulspeech.htm>> and comment on the opening styles of each of these speakers. Comment on the closing styles too.
- What tips does author Nick R Thomas suggest to give effective workplace presentations? How does non verbal communication affect presentations? (Visit: <http://www.theguardian.com/careers/top-tips-for-improving-your-presentation-skills>; also visit: <http://www.forbes.com/2010/02/24/effective-presentation-skills-leadership-careers-rosenthal.html>)

FURTHER READING

- Moss, G., *Communication Secrets* (Chennai: Vijay Nicole Imprints Pvt Ltd, 2004).
- Sampson, E., *Creative Business Presentations* (London: Kogan Page, 2004).
- Lesikar and Flatley, *Basic Business Communication* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2005).

ENDNOTES

1. Taken from <http://www.whimsy.org.uk/book.html>, accessed on July 7, 2011.
2. Based on excerpts from D. Ehninger, A.H. Monroe, and B.E. Gronbeck, *Principles and Types of Speech Communication*, 8th edition, (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1978) 142–163; S.E. Lucas *The Art of Public Speaking*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Humanities/ Social Sciences/ Languages, 2003). pp 353–361.
3. Baden Eunson, *Communicating in the 21st Century* (Richmond, Victoria: John Wiley and Sons, 2005).
4. Sampson, E., *Creative Business Presentations* (London: Kogan Page, 2004).

CASE STUDY 1

Abe's Dilemma...

Summary

This case scenario highlights the important role of preparation and planning in business presentations, especially when the audience is neutral to negative or hostile. The focus of the case is on presentation structure.

Introduction

Honda's company's COO for Asia and Oceania region, Noriaki Abe, is serious about developing a market for small cars in India. He is keenly looking to develop a business strategy for this segment. He jots down few points which he feels very strong for India's positioning in the next five years:

- He would like to focus on products rather than on volumes
- Doesn't want to bring products similar to Maruti Suzuki
- Unique Honda positioning like the BR-V compact SUV, which gets into a highly competitive segment
- India is a big country with a large population
- India is the fourth biggest market for Honda after the US, China, and Japan
- Motorization will grow even more significantly
- India is a critical market for global operations
- Tapukara plant in Rajasthan has total capacity planned 3 lakh units by middle of 2016

- Development capabilities from the domestic operations
- Improve the overall competitiveness of the products
- India is a growing export hub for components. South Africa and other nearby Asian countries are markets
- Recently, Renault has launched a compact car Kwid, which has seen robust bookings

This case study is based on secondary data and has been adapted from the following link: http://auto.ndtv.com/news/honda-considering-small-car-for-india-1237836?utm_source=ndtv&utm_medium=top-stories-widget&utm_campaign=story-10-http%3a%2f%2fauto.ndtv.com%2fnews%2fhonda-considering-small-car-for-india-1237836; Oct 29, 2015; <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/honda-not-for-bringing-in-marutilike-models-in-small-cars/article7818039.ece>; Oct 29, 2015.

Problem

Honda's president and CEO, Takahiro Hachigo, is highly sceptical of this idea. His view is that Honda should not compete on volumes; rather it should focus on 'product'; he wants to steer clear of Maruti's positioning. He is also hesitant to sanction funds for this ambitious plan.

Questions

1. Plan a presentation to convince the CEO that this is indeed a good plan. What persuasive appeals should be used?
2. Plan an outline of the presentation. You may collect additional evidence from other reliable sources.

CASE STUDY 2

The Sudden Presentation

Summary

As a professional working for a big consulting firm, Raghav had shown exemplary analytical skills during his first year at work. He had also demonstrated good communication skills; hence, he was hand-picked by senior partners in UK for an assignment in London. Raghav was able to quickly understand client requirements and was well accepted by a diverse team. But his real test comes when his manager puts him in an unusual situation. Help Raghav figure his course of action.

Introduction

It was a cold December morning in London and Raghav was dressing up for his first monthly update meeting with the 'Head of Risk' of a Forbes 100 Bank who was his client. Also, attending the meeting would be several stakeholders who have hired the consulting firm for which Raghav works. Raghav was excited, since he had put in a lot of effort in coming up with excellent insights from the company's archives. He was sure that his manager, who was about to make the presentation to these stakeholders today, would be ecstatic with the amount of success achieved by his team of analysts in the first month itself. After all, if this sales pitch goes well, the company could win a long-term contract with the bank for all their consulting needs.

Raghav was a 23 year old graduate from IIT Delhi. He was promoted out of turn to represent his company in London. He was a fast learner respected by his peers for his creative thinking. His team had two other people supporting him in his work, Mike, a 40 year old Data specialist, who was instrumental in providing Raghav with all the data that he needed for his analysis and Neha, who had put in a few hours of extra work every week in making sure that the analysis conducted by Raghav made business sense. She was a senior analyst who understood the client's primary business.

The three of them were led by Geet Maurya, who was a 32-year-old graduate from IIM Bangalore. Geet was in London for two years now and used to work on multiple client engagements. He was married and was expecting his first child anytime soon.

Problem

It was a big day for the four of them. Strangely the reasons were different. While Raghav was all dressed up and getting together his paper work, he receives an SMS from Geet - "Wife in labor, rushing to hospital, won't be able to make it to the meeting. Please handle".

Raghav was in a state of shock. He was clueless about his next move. For one, he had never made presentations to such high profile people before. Moreover, he was not sure of the end-to-end content in the slides as Geet had designed them. Raghav was certainly not prepared for this.

There were plenty of questions crossing Raghav's mind at this time. What even more worrying was that Geet's phone was not reachable. What should Raghav do in this situation? Whom should he discuss the problem with and how? Should he go ahead and give the presentation or request the stakeholders to move the meeting to a later date? The stakeholders have flown in from various cities just for the purpose of this presentation.

Impact

Raghav was also worried about the consequences of not being able to pitch properly. Will it impact the future of the project? Also will moving the presentation to a future date be an indication of the lack of communication within the company? A consulting company has its reputation at stake. This impacted his performance. The client was unimpressed with his last minute efforts.

Questions

1. What are the key essentials in an impromptu presentation?
2. What would you advise Raghav?

CASE STUDY 3

Persuasion Gone Wrong

Summary

Rajat Gulati is a budding entrepreneur in his own right. He wants to start his own toy factory and to fund his business, he approaches a venture capitalist and pitches his ideas to him so that he could convince them to invest in his idea. He was quite an innovator. He plans to use new artificial

intelligent processors in his toys which would differentiate his toys from others. His idea is new and his dreams are big. But will he be able to convince the venture capitalist?

Introduction

It was a bright sunny Monday morning. Rajat rushed as it was a big day for him. His newly registered firm High-Tech Play had a new barrier to cross. He had taken an

appointment with Mr Sheikh, a venture capitalist in You Win Ventures. Sheikh was an experienced man. He had been in the industry for the past 20 years. It was known that he could tell whether a start-up would fail or survive in the first 30 seconds of the pitch-in by the firm's representative.

Raghav was ambitious. He had recently left his well established job at Infrotec as a developer. He wanted to be his 'own boss'. Therefore, he decided to open a new firm where he could use his skills, knowledge, and experience. He had used all his savings in this start-up, HighTech Play. The idea was brilliant. Raghav, along with another friend, Vinay would be starting a toy factory. The USP would be the inclusion of artificial intelligent processors in the toys to control their movement and action. This was a first of its kind to hit the market.

Problem

Raghav had done his mathematics carefully. He had figured out that he would need another 1 million dollar to make his dreams a reality. He got in touch with his cousin, who advised him that he should approach a well known venture capital firm for investments. Therefore, arrangements were made and an appointment was taken with Sheikh, one of the most experienced and well known faces of You Win Ventures. The day had arrived; the meeting was scheduled at 8:00 AM at the office of You Win ventures. Raghav arrived on time. After the greetings, Sheikh told Raghav that he only had 30 minutes to pitch in his story as he had to leave immediately to meet up with another client in another city.

Raghav was shocked. He had prepared his presentation for two hours. In fact he had even more material to speak upon. But he kept calm. There was so much at stake. He could not risk anything.

So, he began:

"In today's world, the consumer is king. And when we are talking about toys, we are talking about children. There-

fore, HighTech Play presents a unique and differentiated experience to the children with its toys. We will be using our latest development, the 44XRAI processor in our toys to create this difference. Our processors will give the toys the power to think and play intelligently with the children."

Raghav continued. He realized that already 15 minutes had passed and he had not even introduced his flagship toy, Pink the Panther. Therefore, he rushed, "and yes to top it all, we have our main product, Pink the Panther who is so life like that it will soon replace pets at home." At this moment, Sheikh checked his watch and got back to listening to Raghav. At the back of his mind, he wondered when Raghav would come up with statistics and market potential data so that he could quickly come to the conclusion whether this product had a potential.

30 minutes had passed and Raghav had not even completed half of his presentation. He was too obsessed with his product. He knew he was a genius. Therefore, he took the liberty to extend the time limit. 10 minutes later, Sheikh had to stop Raghav. He told him that he was getting late and that they should have this discussion some other time. The truth was that Sheikh had already rejected Raghav's idea. But just to be courteous, he told Raghav that they would surely meet sometime later.

Impact

Raghav failed to convince Mr Sheikh about his brilliant new venture idea. But more importantly, he could not deliver what could have been a new trend in the toy industry. He was short of the necessary funds to kick start his pet project.

Questions

1. How could Raghav have structured his presentation to suit the time constraints?
2. What 'winning pitch' could Raghav have employed to grab the deal?

QUOTES

"There are 5 key aspects for an effective presentation:

1. *The presenter should be very clear as to the purpose of meeting. It could be training, performance review, brainstorming session, product launch, etc.*
2. *Presenter should be very specific, loud and clear, and engage with the audience.*
3. *He/she should be dressed well as per occasion/purpose of the meeting. It adds up to his or her confidence.*
4. *The presentation should be very crisp (KISS - keep it short and sweet) with more of relevant visuals and pictorial representations.*
5. *In the last, he or she should summarize the presentation with key points, which can be pondered over by the audience.*

—Praveen Sharma,
Director of Sales and Marketing,
Renaissance Hotels.

Chapter 10

INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS WRITING

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the value of writing.
- Appreciate the difference between business and academic writing.
- Understand the essentials of business writing, particularly business grammar.
- Learn about lower order concerns and higher order concerns in business writing.
- Appreciate the rules of cultural diversity when writing documents.
- Follow ethical writing norms.

“Good writing consists of trying to use ordinary words to achieve extraordinary results.”

James Michener¹

INTRODUCTION

The value of the written word can never be discounted. We refer to the writings of Aristotle, Socrates, and the Indian scriptures often, and they continue to influence us in more ways than one. Indeed, when there is a clash between oral and written communication, the preference is often for the latter. In business, written communication is used for the following:

- To record the minutes of minutes
- To convey routine information/instructions via e-memos, memos, faxes, and e-mails
- To convey formal information (for instance, specifications, procedures, and regulations) to internal and external customers via letters
- To display notices at shop floors and offices
- To distribute information about the company via newsletters and bulletins
- To convey ideas, research results, or future prospects via reports and proposals
- To connect with geographically dispersed teams via instant messaging and chat systems
- To present clear legal notices and briefs
- To design interesting press releases for the media

In broad terms, the written form of communication serves the following important functions:

- To keep a record of internal communication documents
- To inform a large number of people simultaneously
- To connect with geographically dispersed teams
- To persuade people

William Zinsser’s well-known guide to writing, *On Writing Well*,² advises one to write tightly and brightly. This is especially relevant in a world where time is a premium. Writing is difficult, even for the most seasoned professionals, and the more one does it, the better one gets at it. Writing is essentially rewriting. According to Zinsser, being a writer isn’t about being a certain kind of person, it’s about doing the work. Style is “sounding like you on the page, not like anyone else.”

Writing is valuable. Better writers make better explainers, better persuaders, and better thinkers. Writing is a skill that permits us to market our ideas effectively. Being able to write well also reduces the chances of a misunderstanding and improves the chances of an idea or proposal being adopted.

Good writing is an indicator of an organized mind that is capable of arranging ideas in an orderly and systematic manner for the reader's benefit. It presents an image of professionalism and reliability of the sender. It is in effect a carrier of "meta messages" from the sender to the recipient.

Clear writing leads to clear thinking. Unless an idea is clearly expressed, it remains vague and ambiguous. Writing imparts structure and coherence to the thought process. In fact many great speakers write their ideas down before expressing them to the audience.

Indian scriptures abound with examples of the benefits of the written word. Chanakya, the master strategist of the Maurya era propounded 13 matters that may arise out of writing in addition to six qualities of excellence in writing³ These six qualities are:

- Subject matter
- Connection
- Completeness
- Sweetness
- Exaltedness
- Lucidity

POOR WRITING AND LIABILITY

Doing business today requires writing in plain language. Poor writing results in costs no company can afford to pay. Poor writing increases the liability and risks of the organization. Computer manufacturer Coleco lost USD 35 million in a single quarter in 1983—and eventually went out of business—when customers rushed to return their new Adam brand of computers after the instruction manual was found unreadable. Similarly, an oil company spent hundreds of thousands of dollars developing a new pesticide, only to discover that the formula had already been worked out five years earlier by one of its own employees. However, the report about the findings had been so poorly written that no one had bothered to read it.⁴

Recruiters writing in the *Wall Street Journal's* career site say that their number one pet peeve is poor writing and speaking skills. "It is staggering the frequency of typos, grammatical



Information Bytes 10.1

The National Commission on Writing (in the United States) says in a report that good writing skills are at least as important in the public sector as in private industry. Poor writing not only confuses the general public but also slows down the government as bureaucrats struggle with unclear instructions or have to redo poorly written work.

This year, the commission surveyed human resource directors who oversee nearly 2.7 million state government employees, and found writing skills even more important than in the private sector.

While two-thirds of companies surveyed in the 2004 report said writing was an important responsibility for workers, 100 per cent of the 49 states responding to the anonymous survey said it was an important responsibility. More than 75 per cent said they take writing skills into account when hiring.

Source: Associated Press, "State Employees' Lack of Writing Skills Cost Nearly \$250M," *USA Today* (July 4, 2005), available at http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-07-04-employees-lack-skills_x.htm?POE=NEWISVA, accessed on June 22, 2011.

errors and poorly constructed thoughts we see in emails that serve as letters of introduction,” says Chris Aisenbrey, director of global university relations at Whirlpool Corporation. “We still see a tremendous amount of email from students who are writing to the recruiter like they are sending a message to a friend asking what they are doing that evening.”⁵

Good writing is finding a balance between incomprehensible jargon and a professional, yet casually authoritative, tone.

TECHNOLOGY AND WRITING

Economies across the world, and especially in India, are slowly becoming fundamentally knowledge and information based. This in turn is driving the need to communicate expeditiously and in a manner that disseminates knowledge and information succinctly, without ambiguity and across linguistic, cultural, and geographic boundaries. New technologies have revolutionized the way we communicate. As our need to communicate grows, these tools grow more sophisticated, allowing us better quality and volume of communication. Since we are using technology more frequently than talking and listening in the workplace, our daily reading and writing has also increased. However, whether this constitutes productive reading and writing is debatable. When it comes to newer forms of written communication such as e-mails, text messaging, and instant messaging, strange abbreviations, symbols, and emoticons pass for words and have gradually found acceptability.

This is even more prominent at the workplace, as official communication has come to mean a phenomenal number of e-mails exchanged every day, irrespective of whether



Nowadays, official communication has come to mean a phenomenal number of e-mails exchanged everyday, irrespective of whether the recipient is on the other side of the globe or in the next cubicle.

the recipient is on the other side of the globe or in the next cubicle. Blogging, which is now more popular than it has ever been, is the corporate world's latest vehicle to harvest ideas, share information, and stay connected. Innovative e-mail and text messages are being used for organizational broadcasts and brand-building endeavours for employees as well as customers. Gone are the days of evaluation meetings that happened once a year. A variety of online discussion forums have paved the way for greater democracy in the workplace. Traditional public relations have been replaced by newer strategies powered by the spread of new media. Companies are increasingly realizing that they have to be their own newspapers.

Technology has definitely shortened response time. Communication nowadays is more informal and conversational. This has facilitated the speed as well as the process of communication. However, one has to remember that this has to be achieved without compromising on the quality of the message.

Experts suggest that far from devaluing the English language, these technologies are, in fact, spawning the revival of reading and writing in the present generation. These technologies have turned the ability to read and write into a distinct social advantage.

ACADEMIC WRITING AND BUSINESS WRITING

Workplace writing includes letters, memos, e-mails, reports (informational or analytical), proposals, manuals (employee policy, instruction, and so on), job descriptions, performance evaluations, brochures, fliers, and financial analyses, among others.

In a professional context, more care is required as far as the writing style is concerned. This is because official communication is stored and retrieved for later reference. Much writing is wasted if concerns related to sensitivity and grammar are not addressed properly. The fallout of hasty communications is that it can skew connotations because of the brevity imposed on the communication. This has forced professionals to be conscious of framing messages appropriately, especially in cross-border communication.

At the workplace there are two kinds of writers: professional writers and professionals who write. Professional writers include technical writers, legal writers, advertising copywriters, and others whose job descriptions focus on writing activities. These writers are in the minority. The second group includes accountants, technicians, managers, and administrators—in short, anyone whose primary occupation is something other than writing. Individuals in the latter category soon discover that the quality of the writing they produce on a daily basis determines how knowledgeable and insightful they are perceived to be and how easily they get promoted.

Most of the time, the writer is juggling contradictory ideas about style, rhetoric, presentation, and the level of detail to be used. To make their writing “look good,” writers are often encouraged to adopt the latest formatting techniques. However, business readers like writing that is clear. Even though readers want the bottom-line first, writers are criticized if they do not give sufficient background information. The end result of skipping the background information is a badly organized letter or memo lacking in clarity and conciseness.

In fact, the simplest and most effective way to approach business writing is to start from these four realities:

- Business readers are context and content driven.
- Business readers are pressed for time.
- Business readers want the “facts first.”
- Business readers want solutions.

Good writing is context driven. What works in an academic setting may not work in a business setting. Busy executives are different from academic professors in that they are more pressed for time and may not feel the need to read the entire message. An executive will give

POINT	Effective written communication requires having a good command over the English language.	Good English is not necessarily purposeful English. Good communication is message oriented than language oriented It is audience driven, and is focused on delivering results.	COUNTERPOINT
	It is always better to go from the general to the specific while communicating.	It is always better to ask the audience their preference. Effective communication will depend on whether the audience wants to go from the general to the specific or vice versa.	
	Writing is a tedious task to be avoided or delegated to other people at the first opportunity.	Writing is a vehicle of self-expression. It reveals one's true character and is a passport to promotion.	
	No one reads anything nowadays.	There are people who form impressions about others based on how they write.	

up on message piece of writing if it is too wordy and verbose. On the other hand, the academic professor has to read all that is written. The rule “less is more” does not apply to academic writing. Moreover, in academic writing it is the professor who decides the length of the document, while in business writing it is the executive who decides how much is to be written.

Business writing involves incorporating the varied perspectives of all those who read the message. It involves taking into account the sensitivities of a considerable number of people, as the document has to be acceptable to a wide audience. In contrast, a student is writing only for the professor, who gives explicit instructions on how the assignment should be completed.

Executive writing tends to be more conversational than academic writing. In business writing, active voice verbs and a first-person account makes writing energetic and action oriented. Academic writing, on the other hand, veers towards passive voice and third-person statements.

For the content-driven reader, language is merely a mechanism for the smooth transmission of ideas, thoughts, and strategies. It must not draw attention to itself. Rather, it should project ideas in an intelligent and organized manner.

Writing to impress is different from writing to express. Many times, executives use complex, multi-syllable words that confuse rather than clarify. Jargon should be used only when the reader has the same background and understands the context in which it is used. On most occasions, simple words that express the sentiments of the writer in a lucid manner should be used instead of jargon.

Business writing must be result driven. Most communications at the workplace—informational, persuasive, or collaborative—are transactional as well as transformational. In other words, they are result oriented. If readers are merely informed and not transformed, then communication has not really taken place. To illustrate this, imagine that a new office policy has to be announced via e-mail. If the sender simply gives the information in a routine manner, then it is not particularly effective. But if the sender provides information on the new policy by suggesting how the reader can benefit from the change or how readers' lives will be simplified as a result of the new rule, then true communication has taken place. In other words, involving the reader is a foolproof way of gaining commitment.

ROADBLOCKS TO WRITING ON THE JOB

There are two roadblocks to writing on the job—“writer’s block” and “mind block.” These are the result of the education and the professional background of the writer.

Educational Barriers

One of the most significant barriers to good writing is the competency (or lack of it) in the English language. The quality of young professionals is highly variable, in part due to

a faulty education system. While English syllabuses in schools and colleges may not be lacking in content, the testing system lacks structure and substance. The four components of English: reading, writing, listening, and speaking are rarely concentrated upon in equal measure and this leads to an inconsistency in the learning process. Few actually read for pleasure these days. All these factors have an impact on writing skills, and the result is a half-baked comprehension of the language. In India, some states changed the age and level at which English could be introduced in schools, resulting in lower confidence levels regarding the language.

Professional Barriers

At times engineers, chartered accountants, and other “numbers” people who work in the technology sector are unable to create clear, cogent prose. They are more interested in design and in constructing equations rather than writing. The following example will make this clearer. “The PE 144e laser jet printer is an upgradation on the PE 10 desk jet with advanced scanning and hypertext options.” The problem with this type of writing is that their non-technical colleagues care little about how the system works and are more interested in what the system can help them accomplish. Being unsure about how to communicate their ideas to non-technical persons results in such individuals preferring to stay in their select comfort zones. This is the problem of the “mind block.”

The good news is that writing skill can be learned. Practice, feedback, and review of one’s own writing in comparison with the best practices can help one learn a professional writing style.

GRAMMAR

This section covers key elements of punctuation, grammar, and the mechanics of business writing. The emphasis is on suitable editing and fine-tuning of text for tonal and grammatical consistency. Not all elements of grammar have been covered; this is not because they are not important, but because a select few have a noticeable impact on business writing. The chapter also covers elements of document design so that the writing is presented in a professional and appealing manner.

Punctuation: Background

Punctuation essentially is a courtesy. Though considered trivial (there is considerable difference between “Let’s eat grandma!” and “Let’s eat, grandma!”) it helps to convey the essence of the message and makes it easy to read. This is particularly important for today’s busy executive.

Punctuation marks are like signals to the reader. In oral communication, we pause, stop, or change our voice and inflection. Punctuation does the same in written communication. Appropriate punctuation is used to clarify or emphasize meanings. Commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, and hyphens are some of the commonly used punctuation in business.

The earliest writing had no capitalization and no punctuation marks. This worked as long as the subject matter was limited to select topics. Writing in ancient times was concerned mostly with recording transactions. Punctuation first came to be used when the written text required signifying breaks and pauses to make sense of the sentence or paragraph. The Greeks and the Romans adopted symbols to indicate pauses. The use of punctuation was standardized with the invention of the printing press.

Punctuation follows some rules. These rules vary with language, location, and time, and are constantly evolving. For example, some language forms such as those used online have different rules.

Commas (,)

A comma is a punctuation mark used to separate various parts of a sentence. The following rules about using commas might be useful in writing grammatically correct sentences.

Rule 1

When starting a sentence with an introductory phrase, use a comma after the introductory phrase. Some examples are:

- Known for its strong fundamentals and consistent performance, your company had another remarkable year in Fiscal Year 2006–2007.
- Under the McKinsey-led review of the Council in 2001, it was suggested that we should aim for at least 30 per cent of our work to be endowment-supported.
- According to the UN, more than 28 per cent of people in India remain below the national poverty line.
- With its business growing steadily in the 1980s, TCS became the hub for inducting new technology knowledge to India as it started creating the ecosystem for Indian IT professionals with focused academic–industry partnerships, beginning with IIT Bombay and IIT Kanpur and followed by a slew of other engineering colleges.

Rule 2

Use commas to set off expressions that interrupt the flow of the sentence. A phrase that is inserted to qualify a sentence and without which the sentence is still complete should be set off by commas before and after the phrase. A few examples are:

- Revenue as reported was USD 91.4 billion, up 4 per cent, excluding PCs from our 2005 results.
- Daily Bread, another acquisition made last year, is engaged in the business of premium bakery products.

However, the following example might be confusing because even though it exemplifies the rule, it has too many sentence breaks: “In a nutshell, to sum up what we have achieved, we are proud to share that your company is the No. 1 player in PCs, mobile phones, projectors, and multi-function devices (MFDs), and No. 3 in servers as well as laser printers, which we just launched this year.”

Rule 3

Use a comma to separate two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (*so, and, or, but, for, nor*). Remember to place the comma before the conjunction. You can omit the comma if the clauses are both short. Some examples are:

- We noticed the difference in their work and the work of many others who were earnest and had done their best, but who did not have the training to do the job well.
- There is a difference between the trained worker and the merely enthusiastic worker.

Rule 4

To avoid confusion, use commas to separate words and phrases in a series of three or more.

Sometimes writers leave out the last comma as can be seen from the following example: “Through its teaching, training, research and field action, the Institute has attempted to address a wide spectrum of issues in rural and urban India across diverse spaces such as communities, families, prisons and custodial homes, the criminal justice system, hospitals and health systems, industries, disaster situations and academia.”

Rule 5

Use either a comma or a semicolon before introductory words such as *namely, that is, for example, or for instance*, when they are followed by a series of items. An example is: “There are two ways in which we can solve the problem, namely motivating employees and rewarding them.”

Colons [:]

Think of colons as a gate inviting everybody to go in. These are used when you want to emphasize what comes after. The following rules might help you use them correctly.

Rule 1

The information preceding the colon is a complete sentence, and what comes after the colon can be a phrase, another sentence, or a word. An example is: Our commitment to our clients' success is deeply rooted in our unique value proposition: we bring together the best talent in the industry; unparalleled predictability, rigor, and process; and a global footprint to create the greatest possible return on our clients' investments."

Rule 2

Many business documents include bullet point lists preceded by a colon. The information before the colon may or may not be a complete sentence. If the information before the colon is not a key sentence then the bullet points that accompany the key sentence need to complete the thought. Consider the following example:

Pursuant to Section 217(2AA) of the Companies Act, 1956, the directors, based on the representations received from the operating management, confirm that:

- In the preparation of the annual accounts, the applicable accounting standards have been followed and there are no material departures;
- They have prepared the annual accounts on a going concern basis.

Note the use of a semicolon after the first bullet point statement.

Semicolons [;]

A semicolon is used to indicate a close relationship between two sentences. The following rules might help you use it correctly.

Rule 1

A semicolon is often used in place of a full stop or a coordinating conjunction. Examples are the following sentences:

- The NCAER of 2006 remains true to the vision of its founders; we continue to believe that diversified support is the best guarantee of both accountability and independence.
- Water and sanitation: Domestic water use pattern in major cities in India; community mobilization for drinking water and open defecation-free villages; and status of garbage workers in Mumbai.
- TCS became the world's first organization to achieve an integrated enterprise-wide maturity level 5 in both the capability maturity model and the people capability maturity model; these are frameworks conceptualized by the Software Engineering Institute at Carnegie Mellon University to benchmark and appraise the software and people management processes of an organization.

Rule 2

Sometimes a sentence has sub-parts that need to be divided by a semicolon rather than a comma. This is especially common when the sub-parts themselves have commas. An example is the following sentence: "Other important drug-affected countries in the hemisphere also reported seizing impressive amounts of cocaine: Bolivia, 10.7 metric tons; Peru, 15.6 metric tons; Venezuela, 54.2 metric tons; Mexico, 21 metric tons."

Rule 3

In some cases the conjunction *and* is used at the end of the sentence after the semicolon, in the second to last bullet point. An example is the following:

Recent adjustments include:

- Our plans announced in May 2006 to reduce our IT spending by consolidating 85 data centres worldwide into six state-of-the-art centers in three U.S. cities; and
- Our plans announced in July 2006 to reduce our real estate costs by consolidating several hundred real estate locations worldwide to fewer core sites over the next four years.

Inverted Commas (‘/’ and “/”)

This is another term for quotation marks. These highlight key points and denote words said by others. When attributing words to authors other than yourself, use double quotation marks. Also use double quotation marks when highlighting a single key point in a sentence. When highlighting several key points in a sentence, use single inverted commas. This works when there are many such key points to be included in the sentence. Consider the following examples:

- “Sustainable development” was placed at the heart of the WTO’s founding charter in 1994. Governments rejected trade that would lead to the depletion of natural resources, calling instead for their “sustainable” use. In 2001, they went further when they pledged to pursue a sustainable development path by launching environmental negotiations as part of the Doha Round. This is the first time in the history of multilateral trade talks that such negotiations have been pursued.
- The “war on terror” continued to claim lives and to be associated with forced disappearances, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- TCS won the Recruiting and Staffing Best in Class Awards (RASBIC) 2008–2009 for ‘Best Use of Technology in Recruiting’ and ‘Most Innovative Programme/Initiative in Recruiting’ and also received the Finalist Award for the ‘Best Employee Referral Programme’ at ERE Expo 2009 by showcasing the ‘Bring Your Buddy Programme.’
- “Maitree,” the unique association of employees and families, reaches out to address large-scale societal problems through active employee participation.

En Dashes and Em Dashes (– and —)

An en dash is used to depict ranges and to depict that the two words joined by the en dash have same weightage. For example, “This can be done in 6–10 years” or “the blue–green algae thrives in ocean water.” An em dash, on the other hand, can be used as parenthetical punctuation in a sentence. An example is “the company grew—and there are people who disagree with this—by 15 per cent in 2009.”

DEVELOPING WORDS, SENTENCES, AND PARAGRAPHS

According to legendary investor Warren Buffett, one should never invest in a company whose words one doesn’t fully understand. Choice of words is very important for successful communication. In order to make messages easily comprehensible, one should use familiar words and simple language. Surveys have revealed that people would actually be much more interested in investing and saving if they actually understood what finance companies were talking about. For example, if the words “good fortune” suffice in a particular case, then the more long-winded “serendipity” need not be used. Similarly, “reading through the text” can be used in place of “perusal.”

It is also a good idea to avoid redundant words. For example, “free gift” doesn’t make any sense since gifts are free by definition. Similarly, in “colour blue,” the word “colour” is redundant since “blue” is obviously a colour. It is also a good idea to not use obsolete phrases. Most people use archaic words when communicating with others. This is because people perceive such language to be formal. But most of the time, archaic language appears and sounds unnatural, especially when simpler alternatives exist. Clichéd words like *hereby*, *deliverable*, *contextualize*, *deliverable*, and *therein* should ideally be avoided. It is best to sound conversational rather than prosaic. Receivers respond best to simple and conversational language. Exhibit 10.1 provides some examples of such phrases.

Use Concrete Words

Business readers are pressed for time. Brevity and conciseness will always appeal to such readers. They appreciate writing that is specific and unambiguous. Good writing must give clear directions to the reader. Instead of using words like *many*, *some*, *few*, *significant*, *soon*,

Exhibit 10.1

Obsolete Phrases and Their Preferred Modernized Forms

Obsolete phrase	Preferred modernized phrase/word
By a factor of two	Double
Fewer in number	Fewer
If conditions are such that	If
In the neighbourhood of	Near
The question as to	Whether

early, and *high*, one can use precise data. Thus, “many students turned up on the exam day” can be rewritten as “516 students turned up on the exam day.” Similarly, “he called me early” should ideally be written as “he called me at 4 am”.

Use Jargon With Care

Jargon or technical language loses its significance if used in a setting other than strictly technical. It is specialist language, which bonds people belonging to the same profession/expertise. It promotes common understanding and quick appreciation of details.

However, in settings other than strictly technical, overuse of jargon may result in pompous expressions that hinder common understanding. Jargon-filled expressions appear incomprehensible to the intended audience and fail to achieve their objective.

Most people know more about Al Gore and his Oscar-winning film on climate change than they do about the Fourth Assessment Report of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UNIPCC) released in 2007. This is not to undermine the efforts of the UNIPCC—media reports suggest that nearly 3,000 scientists worked to put together this monumental report. But what makes Al Gore special is that he has managed to make the issue of climate change a part of “dinner table conversation.” According to a newspaper report, Al Gore won the Nobel Prize simply because he has been able to reach out to people across cultures and continents on the issue of climate change—even people who are unaware of the scientific reasons for global warming. “even if they don’t understand the science behind the issue.” He has actually been able to effect a change in the lifestyle and thinking patterns of young and old alike.

Effective communication requires reaching out to others convincingly. Media reports on climate change are filled with jargon like *adaptation*, *mitigation*, *carbon sequestration*, *emission commitments*, *protocols*, and *sustainable development*, all of which makes no sense to the average reader, as more entertaining and informative stories capture public attention. Often the public is left to decipher acronyms like UNFCCC, COP, MOP, and SAABSTA LULUCF, which are so cryptic that only experts can comprehend them. The reader is left to wander in a maze of legalese. Gore winning the Nobel Prize is testimony to the importance of effective communication in spearheading a successful movement.

Use Active Verbs

Using the active voice is always preferable to using the passive voice. For example, the sentence “This challenge can be met with confidence because of the strong foundation that was built during the first half of this decade” should be rewritten as “I am confident we can meet this challenge because of the strong foundation we’ve built during the first half of this decade.”

Active voice consists of active verbs in which the personal pronoun is highlighted. Sentences that use the active voice give a sense of accomplishment and convey confidence to the reader. The active voice is stronger, direct, and more vigorous than the passive voice. The passive voice, in contrast, sounds dull and uninspiring. Moreover, as in the example used in the previous paragraph, the person taking responsibility is not clearly specified (who meets the challenge?) in active voice.

“Meet” is an active verb that denotes energy and enthusiasm, conveying confidence; “was built” denotes a past action. In comparison “have built” denotes an action that will continue in the future as well.

However, passive voice also has its uses, especially when the subject performing the action is not important, or is relatively unknown. Sometimes it is obvious that the action has been performed by an individual or department and it may not require more specific mention. Passive voice is also used when one has to de-emphasize negative or unpleasant ideas. For example, “The accounts department conducted the audit smoothly” can be rewritten as “The audit was conducted smoothly.”

Use *I* and *We* Correctly

First-person pronouns should be used sparingly when the document is technical in nature. Also avoid the use of the “the author” or “the researcher” when writing to your colleagues, superiors, and subordinates. Use of *I* indicates authority, responsibility, and accountability on the part of the sender. *I* is used commonly in routine business messages such as memos, letter, or short reports. The use of *we* occurs when the sender refers to collective actions and opinions, especially when teamwork is involved.

Use of the third person occurs when it is not important to indicate the source of the writing or when the writing is formal/legal.

Avoid Discriminatory Language

Language used in business should be sensitive and bias-free. Many of us don't think much about the words we choose to write. There are expressions that might be biased in terms of gender, race, caste, country of origin, disability, and age. Most firms promote diversity at the workplace and strongly resist the bias created by these expressions. When we write, especially in a professional context, we should make sure that our message does not exclude, stereotype, or offend anyone's sensibilities. At times this may have legal implications as well. Exhibit 10.2 gives us some examples.



Writing, especially in the professional context, should be free from bias and should avoid offending anyone's sensibilities.

Exhibit 10.2

Biased Phrases and their Preferred Forms

Biased phrases	Preferred phrases
Office girls	Office workers
Policeman	Police officer
Chairman	Chairperson
Salesman	Salesperson
An Indian executive is heading the call centre	An executive heads the call centre
Mr Johnson, a black man, has applied for the post	Mr Johnson has applied
Runk, 55, took over the company's leadership	Runk took over the company's leadership
She is crippled by ...	She has ...

Developing Sentences

The subject, the verb, and the object are the three things that determine how clear a sentence is.

Subject-Verb Distance

Experts suggest that the number of words between the subject and the verb should be reduced for greater clarity. For example, in the sentence “HP wants to create the best technology on the planet,” the subject (HP) and the verb (to create) have virtually no gap between them. However, in the sentence “HP, which has made solid progress towards becoming the world’s leading IT Services company, wants to create the best technology on the planet,” the subject and the verb are separated by fourteen words. This makes the sentence unnecessarily long, unclear, and verbose.

Emphasis

Every sentence has an important message to be emphasized. The writer must be clear about the main idea that needs to be conveyed. For example, let’s say one has to communicate to employees that the board meeting is going to be held at 4 pm and that employees need to be prepared with all necessary documents. If one writes “The board meeting is at 4 pm today, and you are requested to kindly come prepared with all necessary documents,” the emphasis is on the meeting and not on the preparation of necessary documents. If, on the other hand, one writes “Please come prepared with all necessary documents for the board meeting scheduled at 4 pm today,” it emphasizes the preparation and not the time of the meeting. This longer sentence not only changes the main idea to a dependent clause but also includes unnecessary words.

You also need to show a relationship between sentences. Consider the following information:

- The board meeting is going to be held at 4 pm today.
- Please read the agenda carefully.
- Please come prepared with all necessary documents.

This information can be written in many ways, including the following:

- The board meeting is going to be held at 4 pm today, and you are requested to read the agenda carefully so that you come prepared with all necessary documents. (29 words)
- Please read the agenda and come prepared with necessary documents for the 4 pm board meeting today. (16 words)
- The board meeting is at 4 pm today. Please read the agenda and come prepared with all necessary documents. (18 words)

Use appropriate transitional words or phrases to bridge one idea to the next. They help to provide coherence and direct the readers to a logical conclusion. If you want to expand an idea, you can add the phrases “in addition” or “furthermore” at the beginning

of the next sentence so that a link is established. Experts recommend a sentence length of anywhere between 20 to 25 words as a good match for the short-term memory of busy readers.

Whatever style you adopt, be sure that your intended meaning is clear and you use as few words as possible.

Consider the following example:

“We offers an entire spectrum of industrial solutions, from storage to material handling to process equipment and many, many more.”

The sentence is faulty on two counts. First, there is the glaring mistake, “we offers.” It should either be “we offer” or “this company offers.” Second, the entire spectrum of the company’s industrial solutions should have been mentioned. The last phrase, especially, should conclusively indicate where the spectrum ends. The phrase “many, many more” appears colloquial. A more professional ending would be desirable.

An improved version of the sentence could be:

“Godrej offers an entire spectrum of industrial solutions, from storage to material handling to process equipment and manufacturing.”

Sentences: The Long and Short of It

A sentence is a series of words that explore a *single* idea. Generally speaking, a short sentence works well at the start of a paragraph or speech as it grabs the audience’s attention, and at the end, where it summarizes and signals completion. With short sentences, the listener understands everything more easily. They are easy to remember, easy to understand, and result in more powerful communication.

Commonly, short sentences have a subject, a verb, and an object. Sentences become confusing when they incorporate too many ideas, that is, too many subjects, too many objects, and too many verbs. Generally, longer sentences can be broken down into smaller sentences.

Rule 1

To shorten sentences, reduce or eliminate flowery or descriptive terms. For example, “During the preceding year, the company was able to accelerate productive operations, which was predicated on the assumption that the company was operating at a financial deficit” can be rewritten as “Last year, the company was able to speed up operations. This was based on the belief that the company was losing money.” Phrases that have been shortened in the second sentence are:

- During the preceding year
- Operating at a financial deficit

Rule 2

To shorten sentences, convert them into two separate sentences.

- **Long:** At Cancun in September 2003, ministers instructed that their officials continue working on outstanding issues, and that this work be coordinated by the General Council Chairman in close cooperation with the Director-General, with the aim of taking the necessary action by December 2003 to enable members to move towards a successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations.
- One sentence, total number of words: 57
- **Short Version 1:** At Cancun in September 2003, ministers instructed that their officials continue working on outstanding issues, and that this work be coordinated by the General Council Chairman in close cooperation with the Director-General. This was done with the aim of taking the necessary action by December 2003 to enable members to move towards a successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations.

Two sentences, total number of words: 32 and 28

Topic of sentence 1: Ministers’ instructions

Topic of sentence 2: Desired end result

- **Still Shorter (Version 2):** At Cancun in September 2003, ministers instructed that their officials continue working on outstanding issues. This work would be coordinated by the General Council Chairman in close cooperation with the Director-General. This was done with the aim of taking the necessary action by December 2003, to enable members to move towards a successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations.

Three sentences, total number of words: 15, 16, and 28.

Topic of sentence 1: Minister's instructions

Topic of sentence 2: More information about minister's instructions

Topic of sentence 3: Desired end result

Either of the short versions can be used. Additionally, a third version with four sentences can also be used.

Rule 3

While short sentences can be effectively used, too many short sentences tend to confuse the reader. At times, a simple sentence must be expanded. This contradiction in writing styles can easily be explained by examining the following example.

- **Short:** Runk, 55, will focus on enterprise sales revenue and margin, market sales coverage in global and enterprise accounts, and mid-market coverage, working with HP's channel organization.
- **Long:** Runk, 55, will focus on **expanding** enterprise sales revenue and margin, **optimizing** go-to-market sales **coverage** in global and enterprise accounts, and **improving** mid-market coverage, working with HP's channel organization.

These add-ons are called qualifiers and add weight to the sentence. Here is another example of how qualifiers can be used effectively:

- **Short:** The United States and other nations supply the world with goods and services.
- **Long:** The United States and other **wealthy, well-educated nations** supply the world with goods and services **steeped in knowledge**.

The sentence has been extended by either qualifying the noun or the verb with descriptive words and phrases.

What about our earlier discussion on shortening sentences? A simple rule can be stated here: when in doubt, leave out the add-ons and stick to simple sentences. Extra words such as *expanding*, *optimizing*, *coverage*, and *improving* give the reader a vivid picture and contribute to the overall picture. However, qualifiers must be used carefully. The following is an example of a sentence that does not work well:

“Runk, 55, a sober man and very sensitive to the needs of the employees, will focus on enterprise sales revenue and margin, market sales coverage in global and enterprise accounts, and mid-market coverage, working with HP's channel organization.”

Qualifiers should add precision, evidence, and technical information to writing. The above add-ons do not do this. More popularly used in fiction writing, they convey emotion and mood to the reader, rather than facts. Also avoid the use of *very* in business writing as it weakens the sentence: it neither adds precision nor is it technical.

An example of how short sentences used effectively in a paragraph can create a powerful communication is seen in this statement by A.G. Lafley, the Chairman of the Board, President, and Chief Executive of Proctor & Gamble:⁶

“P&G's billion-dollar brands are platforms for innovation. They are global leaders. Consumers want them in their homes. Retailers want them in their stores. They enable us to bring innovation to consumers around the world effectively, efficiently, and profitably. They make consumers' lives a little better every day.”

Direct and Indirect Statements

Direct statements come to the point clearly and immediately. Indirect statements use phrases like “It should be noted that...,” “It has come to the attention of the board that...,” and “To illustrate the point...”

Instead of writing “Two benefits of listening can be suggested” (7 words), it is better to simply write “Listening has two benefits.” The second sentence has four words. The sentence “In light of his consultations, the chairman reported to an informal TNC meeting on 24 July that the situation was very serious” is an indirect one. Its direct version would be “The chairman reported to an informal TNC meeting on 24 July that the situation was serious.”

Most long reports use indirect statements to provide an appropriate tone and level of formality. Some companies are signaling a change in this trend though. The annual reports of multinational companies such as Unilever and Proctor & Gamble are almost conversational in style and content.

Positive and Negative Expressions

At times, the tone of some sentences appears to blame or accuse readers. The writer may inadvertently appear to suggest that the reader is lying or complaining. The writer is generally unconscious of the effect of his or her words. Sometimes, phrases read as commands and ultimatums, alienating the reader in the long run. Loaded phrases can make readers angry. Examples are:

- You failed to...
- Your letter dated ... claims that...
- Kindly ensure compliance with the orders, failing which...
- You have forgotten...

Avoid angry reactions and restrict the use of negative words and expressions. Frame sentences using positive expressions. Suggest alternative ways to do a particular thing. Focus on what can be done instead of what cannot be done. For instance, “We cannot mail the order as you failed to provide the address” (a negative statement) could be rewritten as “Kindly provide your mailing address so that the order can be mailed to you” (a positive statement). Similarly, the negative statement “All employees must sign the attendance register before 9 am sharp, failing which one day’s leave will be deducted” should ideally be written as “So that attendance records are duly maintained, employees are requested to sign the attendance register at the allotted time. It is in the employees’ interest to maintain the sanctity of office rules for attendance.”

Organizing Paragraphs

Sentences must be organized into meaningful paragraphs. Paragraphs help the reader to understand the writer’s message in totality. The general rule that exists for paragraphs remains the same:

- Each paragraph must contain a single thought or idea (unity principle);
- Each paragraph must have a topic or key sentence that indicates the theme of the message; and
- Each paragraph must connect logically with the previous paragraph.

The ideal paragraph should be short, around four to five lines. A paragraph with more than seven lines is considered long and should be revised. However the criteria for length differ across forms of business writing. For reports, a paragraph can be longer and a length of seven to eight lines is justified. Beyond 12 lines, a paragraph is considered long and should be examined for unity and coherence. This is because reports are lengthy and filled with detail.

For letters, memos, notes, and circulars, the ideal paragraph length is around four lines. These forms of writing have short opening and closing paragraphs and a longer paragraph in the middle. This is attractive to the reader, as the opening paragraph acts as a verbal signpost of the main message that follows it. The closing paragraph is a summary or a call for action. Consider the following example:

“Writing in college and writing on the job differ in many ways. The two types of writing are directed toward different readers who possess different qualities; they serve different purposes and they take different forms. To be successful when they become workplace writers, students must understand the differences in the two kinds of writing and adapt appropriately.

In college, teachers and classmates read what you write. These people have at least as much education as you. Writing in the workplace is intended for your boss/supervisor, coworkers, subordinates, clients, customers, suppliers, vendors, lawyers, technicians, sales and marketing representatives, government workers, stockholders, investors, and the general public. These readers may know less than you do about a topic and may have significantly more or less education than you.”

The *topic sentence* announces the key idea to the reader and ideally should be placed at the beginning of a paragraph. In an indirect plan of writing, however, the topic sentence is placed at the middle or even at the end of the paragraph. This is the sequence in which the previous example was constructed:

- Writing in college and writing on the job differ in a number of ways. (topic sentence)
- Key idea is expanded.
- Evidence supporting key idea is described.

However, the paragraph appears to be too lengthy (126 words and 7 sentences) and can be shortened. One way to do this is to divide the paragraph into two or more logical parts:

“Writing in college and writing on the job differ in many ways. The two types of writing are directed toward different readers who possess different qualities; they serve different purposes, and they take different forms. To be successful when they become workplace writers, students must understand the differences in the two kinds of writing and adapt appropriately.

In college, teachers and classmates read what you write. These people have at least as much education as you. Writing in the workplace is intended for your boss/supervisor, coworkers, subordinates, clients, customers, suppliers, vendors, lawyers, technicians, sales and marketing representatives, government workers, stockholders, investors, and the general public. These readers may know less than you do about a topic and may have significantly more or less education than you.”

The first paragraph gives a general idea about the difference in writing on the job and in college and, after a brief explanation, explains the importance of being aware of such differences. The second paragraph expands on the subject set by the first paragraph and illustrates the difference in the two types of writing.

Note that the topic string (old to new information; basic to complex; past to present; present to future; advantage to disadvantage) makes paragraphs more coherent. The following paragraph will demonstrate this point further:

“‘Sustainable development’ was placed at the heart of the WTO’s founding charter in 1994. Governments rejected trade that would lead to the depletion of natural resources, calling instead for their ‘sustainable’ use. In 2001, they went further when they pledged to pursue a sustainable development path by launching environmental negotiations as part of the Doha Round. This is the first time in the history of multilateral trade talks that such negotiations have been pursued.”⁷

This paragraph shows a movement from the past to the present, which is always a good strategy as it indicates a movement towards progress. Not all paragraphs follow a similar trend. Sometimes, paragraphs are organized into numbered or bulleted lists. This type of paragraph follows a typical style. It starts with the topic sentence, goes on to explain and expand the key ideas, and then states the conclusion.

Most memos, e-mails, and reports use this paragraph form in place of or along with the narrative/prose format. Such a format facilitates quick reading and understanding, especially when the direct style is used to present information. Consider the following example.

“Competition is a normal part of business. We aim to compete and give value to our consumers, customers, and shareholders in three ways:

- by continually developing new and improved products;
- by sharing our innovations and concepts with our businesses all around the world; and
- by striving to lower the costs of our sourcing, manufacturing, and distribution processes while still maintaining and improving the quality of our products.”



Communication Bytes 10.1

Always structure your prose according to readers' expectations:

- The subject should be followed by the verb as quickly as possible.
- The topic sentence should come first to provide the reader context and links to earlier points.
- Every phrase, clause, sentence, and paragraph should have a single point only.
- Some new information should be provided at the stress position, such as at the end of the paragraph.

The topic sentence suggests that there are three ways the company wants to compete and give value to its stakeholders. The bullet points provide the evidence for this claim.

MESSAGES

The most successful business messages are those where the information is tailored to suit the needs of the audience.

Sender-centric and Receiver-centric Messages

Receiver-focused messages adapt themselves to readers and give them benefits where necessary. Sentences are constructed in a manner that appeals to the sensibilities of receivers. In contrast, sender-centric messages are focused on the sender. They highlight the sender's benefits rather than the receiver's. Sender-centric expressions border on pomposity at times. Exhibit 10.3 shows the differences between these two types of messages.

Information Patterns

There are two ways to present information to readers—direct and indirect.

The direct pattern is suitable when:

- Readers are to be informed.
- Readers are in a neutral or positive frame of mind.
- Readers want the facts first.
- Good news has to be conveyed.

The indirect pattern is suitable when:

- Readers have to be motivated or persuaded.
- Readers are in a negative frame of mind.
- Readers want the background details first.
- Bad news has to be delivered.

Sender-centric messages	Receiver-centric messages
We appreciate your interest in being employed by our firm.	This is to acknowledge your application for the position of...
We appreciate the displays you created for the "summer promotion campaign." We are told that it is receiving numerous compliments from customers.	The displays you created for the "summer promotion campaign" are just beautiful. Several of the sales personnel told me that they have received numerous compliments from customers.
We write to you to express our...	The news of your promotion came as a happy surprise. Please accept our...
I have scheduled your classes from...	Your classes commence from...

Exhibit 10.3

Examples of Sender-centric and Receiver-centric Messages

The memo in Exhibit 10.4 gives an example of delivering bad news. The indirect pattern is adopted so that employees do not become unmotivated. The memo in the indirect form presents the information in the following sequence:

- Evidence
- Topic sentence: key point

If the same memo is presented using a direct pattern then it would present the information in the following sequence:

- Topic sentence
- Evidence

This approach may hurt employee sentiments, particularly on the sensitive issue of celebration at festival time. Exhibit 10.5 illustrates this further.

Aristotle, Greek philosopher and master of the theory of persuasive communication, outlined three elements of a persuasive message: logos, pathos, and ethos.

- Logos: logic and reasoning
- Pathos: emotional appeal
- Ethos: credibility of the sender

Most messages contain elements of all three, at least as far as spoken messages are concerned. Written messages use varied appeals to get the message across. Emotion or pathos as the Greeks called it is not expressed as naturally in written messages as in spoken messages. The reason is that written messages are perceived as being more formal in tone, to be stored and retrieved for future use. Emotions relating to sympathy, happiness, joy, pride, exhilaration, excitement, anxiety, and worry are expressed using appropriate terminology so as to not appear “over the top.”

The extract in Exhibit 10.6 has all the ingredients of an effective message in the form of a report addressed to shareholders. The opening paragraphs are emotional as the chief mentor is looking back on the years gone by (pathos). This is followed by “evidence”—the facts and logical arguments illustrating the growth of Infosys. Examples are quoted to illustrate the happy and the not-so-happy events (logos). Ethos is reflected in the persona of Narayana Murthy, Chairman and Chief Mentor, Infosys. He represents Brand Infosys in totality.

Exhibit 10.4

Internal Memo—Indirect Pattern

To: All staff
From: Management
Date: 17/10/2007
Subject: Festival celebration by staff

As you are all aware, autumn is the busiest season of the year. Every year it is a struggle for management and supervisors to find the time and energy to organize the Annual Staff Festival Celebration. Due to extra sales activities and the bumper festival sale scheduled for November, we are truly pressed for time.

This year, therefore, we have decided to postpone the celebration until after our busy season. We apologize that the celebration will have to wait till the new year, but we assure you that it will be worth the wait. Those interested in volunteering to help out with the event can call Ms Sahai, our reception coordinator.

I am sure that the super sales in the bumper festival season will add to the merriment in the festival celebration.

Thank you,

S.M.

Exhibit 10.5
Internal Memo—Direct Pattern

To: All staff
From: Management
Date: 17/10/2007
Subject: Staff festival celebration

This year, we have decided to postpone the Annual Staff Festival Celebration until after our busy season. We apologize that the celebration will have to wait until the new year.

Every year it is a struggle for management and supervisors to find the time and energy to organize the Annual Staff Festival Celebration. Due to extra sales activities and the bumper sale scheduled for November, we are truly pressed for time.

The festival will be organized sometime in late January. Those interested in volunteering for the same may please contact Ms Sahai.

I am sure that the super sales in the bumper festival season will add to the merriment in the festival celebration.

Thank you,

S.M.

Exhibit 10.6
Example of an Inspiring Speech

Completing 25 years is a watershed event in a person's life. It signals the arrival of a strong, confident young person, who is ready to take on bigger challenges. Energy, enthusiasm, confidence, idealism, daring, openness, and curiosity find utterance and fruition. Nothing seems impossible. This is the time you move on to higher aspirations, and learn to accept failures with equanimity.

We need all of this and more for Infosys to achieve bigger and more ambitious targets. This journey of 25 years has been a symphonic marathon. It has been symphonic because every Infoscion, a maestro in his or her own right, subordinated individual interests to work as part of a fine team and produced spectacular results year after year. It is a marathon since we have a long way to go before we hit the tape.

There have been many happy events during these 25 years. Prominent among them are: enrolling the first customer; the rationale for the same; the arrival of the first employee; the signing of the first million-dollar contract; opening of the first sales office abroad; installation of our first computer—a DG MV/8000; inauguration of the Electronics City campus, the Global Education Center, and the Infosys Leadership Institute; CMM Level 5 certification; listing in India and on NASDAQ; our first acquisition (in Australia); founding of the Infosys Foundation, Progeon, Infosys Consulting, and Infosys China; and reaching the magical figure of one billion dollars in sales. There have been a few sad moments as well—the departure of valued colleagues; the deaths of a few young Infoscions; and the loss of a few major contracts despite our best efforts.

A great corporation must live for hundreds of years. Hence, we are still very young, but these initial years have taught us several lessons. These lessons are valuable not just for our future journey but for other corporations in the country and perhaps, the world.

—N. R. Narayana Murthy, Chairman and Chief Mentor, Infosys

(Source: Taken from <http://www.infosys.com/investor/Reports.asp>, accessed on June 21, 2011.)

DOCUMENT LAYOUT

Document layout becomes increasingly important as a document nears its final form. Layout gives emphasis and clarity to the document. One can emphasize content by arranging the physical appearance and arrangement of the document page. Effective layout reduces the density of technical material by simplifying the material, highlighting the key points, and giving an attractive look and consistency to the whole document. Good page layout helps readers find the message easily and understand its importance in the larger scheme of things. Layout includes the following:

- Subject headings and sub-headings
- Chunking
- White space
- Typography

Headings and Sub-headings

Headings are broad categorizations that signify the structure of the document. Experts recommend the use of frequent headings to indicate themes and sub-themes. Headings relieve the monotony of reading continuous text and give direction to the flow of thought. They act as signposts that signal the beginning and conclusion of a particular thought or idea. Headings are popular in reports and proposals; they are now increasingly being used in letters, memos, and e-mails as well.

Sub-headings help the reader to shift emphasis from one point to the other within a broader heading. They help the reader navigate through the document. They also help the reader to skim through the most important parts and sub-parts of a document.

Heading should be specific. There are two types of headings:

- Descriptive headings
- Functional headings or talking headings

Descriptive headings use terms that express words in absolutes. Some examples of descriptive headings are: “methodology,” “survey results,” and “findings.” Exhibit 10.7 gives examples of descriptive headings.

Functional headings, on the other hand, are conversational in style. They appear to talk to the reader. Some examples are “What customers feel” and “Motivation: Good or Bad?”

Headings must be useful to the reader. At times, simple heads like “Findings” are too generic. It is more useful to specify the content that will follow the heading. Examples of more detailed headings are “Findings: Sales” and “Ways to Improve the Dealer Network,” which is more informative than simply writing “Recommendations.”

Headings have levels: topic headings, second-level headings, and third-level headings. Heading levels are illustrated in Exhibit 10.8.

Exhibit 10.7
Examples of Descriptive
Headings

INTRODUCTION

Groupware is promoted as a tool for facilitating teamwork and capturing and managing an organization's “knowledge base.”...

BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive reviews of the theories of media richness, social influence, and critical mass can be found in the paper by Fulk and Boyd...

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES SUGGESTED BY MEDIA RICHNESS THEORY (MRT)

Media richness theory proposes two principal categories of influences on an individual's use of computer-mediated communication

Source: Haolou, Camell, and Shah, “Use of a Groupware Product: A Test of Three Theoretical Perspectives,” *Journal of Computer Information Systems* (2006) 35.

First-level heading**Second-level heading**

Everybody knows Ramesh.

Second-level heading

Ramesh is a boy.

Third-level heading: Ramesh is a very good boy.

First-level heading**1.0 Second-level heading**

Everybody knows Ramesh.

1.1 Second-level heading

Ramesh is a boy.

1.1.1 Third-level heading:

Ramesh is a very good boy.

Exhibit 10.8

Examples of Different Levels of Headings

Chunking

Chunking divides the subject matter into meaningful paragraphs and bullet points. Executives, especially, like to read things that are broken up into smaller sections so that they can quickly understand the crux of the issue.

White Space

White space is good for business writing. Executives do not really like to read reams of never-ending paragraphs. The quantity of white space required can be judged by using the print preview option of the word processor. Space management is required at the margins (margins should be set at 1–1.5 inches), between lines (single, 1.5, or double spacing), and between paragraphs.

Typography

Typography refers to concerns relating to font type, font size, and typeface.

Font Type

There are two font types: serif fonts and sans serif fonts:

- **Serif fonts:** These are fonts that have small “feet” or structural embellishments at the ends of the strokes. Times New Roman is a serif font. These afford easy reading, especially when the document has to be read as a hard copy. Serifs allow our eyes to move quickly from word to word and sentence to sentence and thus help create a linking effect.
- **Sans serif fonts:** These are fonts that do not have serifs. Arial is an example of a sans serif font. These fonts facilitate reading via an electronic medium such as via e-mail and on PowerPoint. They make the lettering stand out clearly.

Font Size

The standard font size for text is 12. Headings and sub-headings can have relative font sizes such as 16 and 14. PowerPoint slides must follow a simple rule, which is to adjust the font size to the size of the audience as well as the size of the conference hall/meeting room.

Typeface

Typeface incorporates ways to emphasize text. Text can be emphasized in a number of ways. The following example should illustrate this further:

“Here I have *italicized* the word for understanding. In this sentence I have underlined the text for emphasis. I can also demarcate a word by a ‘single’ inverted comma. Sometimes I **highlight** the text by making it bold. I can also change the colour for emphasis. Too much emphasis can *really* **confuse the reader** and should be ‘avoided’”.

READABILITY: HOW CLEAR IS YOUR WRITING?

A useful tool to measure the readability of a sample of English writing is the Gunning fog index. It indicates the number of years of formal education required by a person to easily understand the text on the first reading. The test was developed by Robert Gunning, an

American businessman, in 1952⁸. A text suitable for a wide audience generally requires a fog index of up to 12.

An algorithm is used to calculate the Gunning fog index:

- Take a full passage without deleting any sentences.
- Find the average sentence length.
- Count the words with three or more syllables (complex words), not including proper nouns, familiar jargon or compound words, or common suffixes such as -es, -ed, or -ing as a syllable.
- Add the average number of words per sentence and the multi-syllabic words.
- Multiply the result by 0.4 (known as the fog factor).

While the Gunning fog index is a good indication of reading difficulty, it still has limitations. Not all multi-syllabic words are difficult. For example, the word *asparagus* is generally not considered to be a difficult word, even though it has four syllables.

Consider the following paragraph:

“In order to facilitate an efficient report and fuel thought processes prior to the June 25 orientation, I want you to provide a brief overview of discussions recently carried out at the director and manager levels within the process. To accomplish this goal, please prepare to provide a readout of your findings and recommendations to the officer of the Southwest Group at the completion of your study period. As discussed, the undertaking of this project implies no currently known incidences of impropriety in the Southwest Group, nor is it specifically designed for any. Rather, it is to assure ourselves of sufficient caution, control, and impartiality when dealing with an area laden with such potential vulnerability. I am confident that we will be better served as a company as a result of this effort.”

The following facts can be concluded from this paragraph:

- Total number of words: 133
- Number of sentences: 5
- Average number of words per sentence: 27
- Multi-syllabic words: 26 (excluding proper nouns, compound words created by shorter words, or multi-syllabic words created by -es or -ed endings)
- Average number of words per sentence (27) + multi-syllabic words (26) = 53
- 53 multiplied by 0.4 (fog factor) = 21.2 (fog index) (very high)

Exhibit 10.9 gives examples of various newspapers and magazines and tells us about their readability level based on the Gunning fog index.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Information has to be shared globally for products and services sold worldwide. There are a multitude of communication challenges to deal with. To ensure that communication glitches are minimized between cultures, the following checklist can be helpful:

- **Define acronyms clearly:** Some acronyms and abbreviations are culture specific. In fact, even individual businesses can have particular jargon, which must be defined when communicating externally. For instance, “POS” can mean “point of sale” or “proof of summons” depending on the context.
- **Avoid humour:** Some words and puns are region specific. The English language has words that might mean different things to different people. For example, “in the red” suggests difficulty in India and the United States, but has a positive connotation in China.

	Fog Index	Grade level	Readability level
	17+	Post graduate	
	16	Graduate	
	15	College third year	<i>The Economist</i>
	14	College second year	
	13	College first year	
DANGER LINE	12	12th grade	<i>Economic Times</i>
	11	11th grade	<i>Times of India, Time, and Newsweek</i>
	10	10th grade	<i>Reader's Digest</i>
	9	9th grade	<i>Good Housekeeping</i>
	8	8th grade	Novels
	7	7th grade	
	6	6th grade	Comics

Exhibit 10.9
Gunning Fog Index and Reading Level

- **Be careful with numbers, measurements, dates, and times:** Date format is different in different countries. In the United States, the month/day/year format is used (for instance, 08/04/09 in the United States refers to August 4, 2009); in India the date/month/year format is used, which means that 08/04/09 could be interpreted as April 8, 2009. In order to reduce misunderstandings, one should always quote the complete date in one's writing (August 04, 1999), and indicate clearly the measurements, currency, and units used in the document.⁹

ETHICAL WRITING PRACTICES

Writing must follow ethical guidelines. This is essential when preparing labeling for products and services as well as in documentation.

Ethical practices include the following:

- Give complete and accurate information about products and services to customers. This will help the customer make informed decisions about the purchase. This avoids harmful litigation later and builds trust with the brand in the long run.
- Give accurate financial information in simple language to investors. Companies hide behind complex language and numbers that make financial documents virtually unreadable.
- Avoid gender-specific, ageist, and racist language.



Information Bytes 10.2

Various countries have different ways to write times of the day. In the United States, people write it as 6:20 pm, while in France people write the same time as 18:20. In Germany people write it as 18.20, in Canada people write it as 18h 20, and in India people write it as 6.20 pm.

SUMMARY

- Writing is considered more difficult than speaking. In writing, one has to plan, compose, and edit the document thoroughly before it is ready for presentation. To express one's thoughts clearly without the support of audio-visual cues is clearly a challenge for many people.
- Workplace writing includes letters, memos, e-mails, reports, proposals, manuals, job descriptions, performance evaluations, brochures, fliers, and financial analyses, among others. "Writer's block" and "mind block" are two roadblocks to writing on the job.
- Punctuation marks follow some rules that vary with language, location, and time, and are constantly evolving. A comma is a punctuation mark used to separate various parts of a sentence. Colons are used when you want to emphasize what comes after. A semicolon is used to indicate a close relationship between two sentences. Inverted commas highlight key points and denote words said by others. An en dash is used to depict ranges and join two words having the same weightage. An em dash is used as a parenthetical punctuation in a sentence.
- One should use concrete words, active verbs, and avoid discriminatory language in business writing.
- Documents can be sender-centric or receiver-centric, of a direct pattern or an indirect pattern. A good layout provides clarity to the document.
- Gunning fog index is a measure of readability developed by Robert Gunning.
- Business writing must always follow ethical guidelines.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. In what three ways is business writing different from academic writing?
2. What is the impact of technology on business writing? Do you think that writing trends have undergone a change?
3. What are the pitfalls in business writing?
4. Indicate the types of errors in the following phrases/sentences:
 - Speaking in public is more difficult than to write in private.
 - The business environment is not conducive to advance planning.
 - Deepak's office was painted, had paneling done on it and dusted last week only.
 - The meeting was called by the Boss on Friday.
 - The fact still remains that this product is not picking up in the market.
 - All cultures blend together in this company.
 - Challenges of the intellect excite me to a considerable extent and it is my wish that I join a well reputed postdoctoral course to enable my ambition to be fulfilled.
 - The male supervisor aged 56 years must be offered the VRS by our organization.

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What are the characteristics of the Gunning fog index? Select a paragraph from a class assignment that you have submitted to your instructor and calculate the Gunning fog index. Do you feel that you have written concisely and accurately? How can you improve the readability of your documents?
2. Review the following sentences and correct for active and passive verbs, positive and negative sentences, word redundancies, and conciseness:
 - Decisions in regard to the launch of the new business newsletter rests with the top management.
 - Our poor knowledge about the condition in the rural areas of Bihar precluded a determination of committee action effectiveness in fund allocation to those aspects requiring need of assistance.
 - A review was done of the records of the library.
 - The report was read by me.
 - The information herewith present in this report is to the best of my knowledge true and accurate reflection of the actual situation.
 - Don't write in the negative.
3. Revise the following wordy sentence, and comment on the sentence length and the number of multi-syllabic words used.

"I would like you to take into consideration the following points, which I know will assist you in better applying new AIICTE rules and regulation currently burdened by the need to execute all data manually and on paper rather than through standardized electronic transmissions."

4. Improving readability: Find out the Gunning fog index for the following paragraphs (See Exhibit 10.10). Make the paragraphs clearer by improving their readability.

Paragraph 1

Sir,
Ramifications of yesterday's revised implementation schedules are significant because doing as requested by management could lead to missed deadlines as well as the potential for production malfunctions. I respectfully request that management reconsider these suggestions taking into consideration the short term longevity of our employees, many of whom are newly hired. Instead I am of the opinion that any inconveniences our company might experience due to revising the schedule will be offset by the inestimable values that we will derive. I am cognizant that changes are challenging to make, but management might consider doing so at this point in time to benefit employee morale.

Paragraph 2

The partnership your company has created with Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and the Naandi Foundation to supply iron-fortified Tiger biscuits to supplement the Mid-Day Meal program in schools, has been recognized as a unique program globally by GAIN.

(Source: Britannia Investor's Zone. Available at www.britannia.co.in/investorzone_bonus_financial_ar.htm, accessed August 1, 2011.)

Exhibit 10.10

5. Sudipto Ray, an HR manager, is deeply anxious. The financial crisis has severely impacted business and Amigo Airlines (a private carrier) is in serious danger of becoming extinct. Unless some cost-cutting initiatives are taken, nothing can be done to revamp the airline and retain its former glory. The recent meeting has made matters worse. Senior officials are in favour of laying off thousands of workers who work as ground staff. A few of them might be retained at lowered wages, but this seems a distant possibility too. Worse, the union is creating tremendous problems. Sudipto anticipates huge opposition to the management's plan of systematic layoffs and sit-at-home options.

The onus is on Sudipto to break the news to around 123 workers who are to be laid off in the New Delhi region. These are the workers at ground level, working as foremen, canteen bearers, laundry workers, in staff management services, and so on. There are also 11 managers who have to be told to stay at home without pay for at least a year. Bad news is tough enough, but to give it to people one has worked with is tougher still.

How should Sudipto break the news? Write an e-mail to break the news to the concerned people.

6. The business school you head is yet to receive approval from the governing body. The application brochure has to be sent soon. You are confident that you will get the approval. The question is should you print "approval awaited" on the brochure or "approval granted"?

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Refer to the Web site <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/587/01/>. There is a section on understanding the audience and the topic of a written assignment. Do you think the topic of writing is interwoven with the audience? In what ways?
2. "Style" in business writing refers to the shape, voice, and force of sentences." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Refer to the Web site at: <http://www.techcommunicators.com/pdfs/sharp-01-good-biz-style.pdf>
3. The Web site http://www.act.org/workkeys/assess/bus_writ/errors.html refers to five types of common business writing errors. Can you think of more errors that we can add to the list? Also give examples as illustrated in the Web site.
4. Business grammar norms have changed over the years. Describe few changes and how these influence business communication. For more information, visit: http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/09/18/441408533/please-dont-have-a-temper-tantrum-about-the-pleonasm-in-this-headline?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=20150919; also visit: <http://www.tickld.com/x/90-of-people-cant-pronounce-this-whole-poem-you-have-to-try-it>)

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SCENARIO 1

Ata Consultancy Services (ACS) Youth Survey

Your Task

You have been assigned to write a two page inductive style report based on the data shared with you below. Your report would highlight the impact of technology on the lives of youth and what this implies for mobile companies looking to expand their network. Your report must include a title and a summary. You may add information where necessary.

The data has been commissioned by ACS consultancy (See highlights below).

Released on October 6, 2015

1. 89% students in Lucknow are on Facebook as against 80% last year (national average of 83%).
2. 61% students in Lucknow own a smartphone (national average of 59%).
3. 80% students have internet access at home (national average of 72%).
4. The internet access from schools is at 31% in Lucknow, (national average of 14%).
5. Use internet for research in school subjects 83% (National average of 74%).
6. Tablets are emerging as preferred gadgets 19%, in Lucknow (national average of 18%).
7. Two out of five students in Lucknow use Twitter (national average of 29%).
8. LinkedIn's usage at 11.82% has increased from 4% last year.
9. Almost 50% students here use email to communicate (national average of 42%).
10. Facebook and Twitter are the preferred communication modes in the city, closely followed by SMS.
11. Besides, three out of five students in Lucknow own a mobile phone 61% (national average of 65%).
12. Every second student in Lucknow owns MP3 players/iPods 50% (metro average of 45%).
13. In Lucknow, students are increasingly using internet for emails 53%, music 49% and movies 47%.

SCENARIO 2

The New Boss at Maruti Suzuki

Background

Toshihiro Suzuki was in his twenties when his father Osamu Suzuki decided to take a huge risk and set up a car plant in India in the early 1980s, in partnership with the Indian government. Maruti Suzuki was then a virtually unknown entity, and a far cry from the automotive giant that it is today. As the 57 year old now steers Suzuki and Maruti after being appointed as president and COO of Suzuki Motor Corp, 'TS', as he is known within the Japanese company got this advice from his father (and company chairman) about India and Maruti: "You should be careful before speaking in India".

Despite this, TS admits that Maruti faces competitive challenges and will need to work harder to maintain the pace of profits. Competition is getting tougher in India with the entry of other manufacturers. We have to deliver more than what a customer expects when it comes to sales, service and product capability. Instead of feeling satisfied about our position, Maruti needs to focus more on delivering superior products as well as providing an enhanced sales and

service experience. It has become tougher to win over customers. The company has to strengthen efforts to increase profitability and business. Generating profits is certainly getting tougher due to competition. The Toyota Daihatsu deal poses a big threat, not only for India, but for other markets too. We have been selling compact cars, and now we aim at customers who buy vehicles that are slightly bigger than compacts. These could be vehicles of four metres in length or slightly longer. We have products such as Swift, Dzire, Ciaz and soon to be launched Vitara Brezza SUV. We would like to expand here.

Your Task

The new boss has asked for a report on the potential of the 'larger than compact car segment' in India. He expects that the report to be deductive in orientation and facts driven. He also expects that the report should be short, upto 6 pages with attachments if necessary.

Adapted from: It is now tougher to win over customers: Toshihiro Suzuki; Pankaj Doval / TNN / Feb 3, 2016, 02.29 AM IST / Economic Times.

SCENARIO 3

Report: Recommending more Layoffs at Yahoo!

Background

Yahoo is laying off about 1,700 employees and shedding some of its excess baggage in a shake up likely to determine whether CEO Marissa Mayer can save her own job. The long anticipated purge, announced on Tuesday, will jettison about 15% of Yahoo's workforce along with an assortment of services that Mayer decided aren't worth the time and money that the internet company has been putting into them. Even after the mass firings are completed by the end of March, Yahoo will still have about 9,000 workers, three times the roughly 3,000 people that the company should be employing, based on its steadily declining revenue.

Your Task

You are the personnel director at Yahoo and have to write a report commissioned by Mayer on why close to 6000 employees at Yahoo need to be relieved from their services for the company to be viable. Some facts and opinions may help to draft this short, deductive style report (upto 6 pages, with any number of attachments)

1. Mayer hopes to sell some of Yahoo's unwanted services for about \$1 billion, though she didn't identify which

ones. In an apparent concession to some shareholders, Mayer also said Yahoo's board will mull "strategic alternatives" that could result in the sale of all the company's internet operations.

2. Analysts have speculated that Verizon, AT&T and Comcast might be interested in buying Yahoo's main business, despite years of deterioration.
3. Mayer expressed confidence that her plan to run Yahoo as a smaller, more focused company "will dramatically brighten our future and improve our competitiveness, and attractiveness to users, advertisers, and partners."
4. Yahoo's stock shed 34 cents to \$28.72 extended trading after details of Mayer's latest turnaround attempt came out. The stock has fallen by more than 40% since the end of 2014 as investors' confidence in Mayer has faded.
5. Some of Yahoo's most outspoken shareholders, such as SpringOwl Asset Management, already have concluded that Mayer should be laid off too. Mayer, a former rising star at Google, who helped Google eclipse Yahoo, has given no indication she intends to leave.
6. "We would like to see a higher stock price, and we think Marissa and her current management team have become a hindrance to that," said Eric Jackson, Spring Owl's managing director. He declined to disclose the size of Spring Owl's Yahoo investment.

7. Yahoo's stock dipped 25 cents to \$28.81 in extended trading after details of Mayer's latest turnaround attempt came out.
8. Yahoo's revenue has been shrinking through most of Mayer's reign, even though she has spent more than \$3 billion buying more than 40 companies, while bringing in new talent and developing mobile applications and other services designed to attract more traffic and advertisers.
9. The decline has persisted while advertisers have been steadily increasing their digital marketing efforts. Most of that money has been flowing to Google and Facebook, two companies once far smaller than the now 20 year old Yahoo Inc.
10. Yahoo's fourth quarter report provided fresh evidence of the company's deterioration. After subtracting ad commissions, revenue plunged 15% to \$1 billion compared with the previous year the biggest drop since Mayer became CEO in July 2012. Things continue to look bleak, as Yahoo forecast a net revenue decline of 12 to 17% this year.
11. The Sunnyvale, California, company reported a fourth quarter loss of \$4.4 billion, reflecting the eroding value of its services. The amount included a \$1.2 billion hit for acquisitions made under Mayer, including a \$230 million decrease in the value of blogging service Tumblr, which the company bought for \$1.1 billion in 2013.

(Adapted from The Hindu, SCI-TECH » TECHNOLOGY SAN FRANCISCO, February 3, 2016; Updated: February 3, 2016 09:39 IST Yahoo to cut 1,700 workers; shareholders want CEO laid off too. Visit <<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/yahoo-to-cut-1700-workers-as-ceo-tries-to-save-her-own-job/article8186844.ece>>

Chapter 11

THE WRITING STRATEGY

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the purpose of writing with reference to the context.
- Tailor your writing to meet the audience's needs and expectations.
- Organize and arrange the information in a systematic manner.
- Adopt persuasive approaches in writing, wherever necessary.

“But words are things, and a small drop of ink, falling like dew upon a thought, produces that which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.”

Lord Byron¹

INTRODUCTION

All communication is information, but not all information is communication. In business it is important to know that not everything that is available has to be communicated. Busy businesspeople often resort to shortcuts to business writing. Anxious to cover all points, they may hurriedly use blanket generalizations when writing a memo, letter, or report. At times they may not quite know what to do with all the material they have generated. The result is a confused, hugely irrelevant document that lacks focus. This results in the reader being bored, as most readers can only absorb limited information.

In contrast to spoken communication, written communication appears difficult. This is because the written word is more formal and stays on record. Moreover, the written word cannot adjust to the mood and reaction of the recipient. While spoken communication relies heavily on the facial expression and body gestures to convey the exact message, there is no such provision in the written word. It is often received cold. Thus, written communication reduces the power of explanation when compared to the spoken word. For instance, it is difficult to give bad news through this channel of communication.

Written communication demands a sufficiently high competency in writing skill and knowledge of English language and usage. This is especially important today with most of communication being via the new media such e-mail and texts. The new technologies demand that paragraphs be compressed into short, meaningful expressions to facilitate quick understanding.

Planning a communication strategy is, thus, imperative in organizations if one has to build and sustain relationships and get work done in the shortest possible time. A communication strategy has three elements: purpose, audience, and context. The message that has to be delivered depends on a clear understanding of these three elements. The message has then to be “framed” accordingly.

ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Communication strategy has various elements, all of which come together so that effective communication can take place.

Purpose

No business writing can be effective if the author writes without a clear sense of purpose. Is the goal to pass on or transmit instructions or requests down the chain of command? Is it to

POINT			COUNTERPOINT
	All writing should be spontaneous and unplanned.	Business writing should be highly structured and result oriented.	
	Writing is essentially sender-centric and based on the needs of the sender.	Writing is always receiver-centric and focused on getting the message across.	
	All writing has the same purpose – to get the work done.	Writing is dependent on the purpose. Different purposes demand different approaches.	

inform staff on new policies, arrangements, developments, or processes? Is it to encourage or reassure staff in certain circumstances and to persuade and motivate them to work as individuals and as part of a team? Or is it to provide information to consumers about the products and services offered by the organization? Whatever the goal, it is best to write it down in a sentence or two so that a clear picture is created *before* writing the document.

Audience Analysis

Audience analysis is the process of gathering information about the people reading the document. It helps to create user-focused communication and tailor the writing to the needs and expectations of the intended recipient(s). It also helps to fine-tune the thought process.

Research indicates that audiences characteristically pay greater attention to messages that are consistent with their values and interests. Research also indicates that audiences like to see messages that they are really interested in. This selective attention and selective exposure is the core of audience psychology. A strategic communicator must, therefore, establish



Understanding the needs of the client and for framing the report objectives.

“personal relevance” as directly and clearly as possible. In addition, a message can stand out by contrasting it with other messages or ideas with which the audience is familiar. A message is made relevant by emphasizing the main points early, using examples and illustrations, and paying attention to the way the document is organized.

In speaking situations, maintaining audience attention requires using a speaking rate that sustains interest—not too fast, nor too slow, but somewhat varied to emphasize key points. It is also important to pause to indicate transitions and give an outline or preview of the talk that clearly identifies the main ideas that are discussed. In writing situations, maintaining audience attention requires paying attention to how the document looks, in addition to what it says and how it says it. The visual impact of a document can be improved by using headings, arranging the text so it is visually easy to follow, paying attention to the size and look of the letters, and checking for spelling and grammatical errors.

The Business Document's Life Cycle

From the point of view of the audience, a document's life cycle comprises three parts: the development stage, the reading stage, and the action stage. Business writing today calls for understanding and cooperation between the writer, the reader, and the person who will be affected by the document being written.

The development stage involves the individual who assigns the task, the primary and secondary audiences, and the writer. The reading stage involves the primary and secondary audiences, and the action stage involves the primary, secondary, and even other audiences (tertiary audiences) who may be affected by what is written in the particular document.

Development stage: In the developmental stage the writer must have frequent contact with the assignor as well as the primary and secondary audience members. A “5W 1H approach” (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How) is helpful here. For example, when designing a business proposal, a vendor must find out all that is possible about the client company so that a persuasive proposal can be framed.

Reading stage: In the reading stage the document is read by the intended audience and moves back and forth among various levels. Thus a complex maze of primary and secondary audiences is created. The writer must know who will be reading the document as this will help him or her to frame sentences accordingly.

Action stage: The action stage is where the writer is signifying the future course that the reader must adopt. Decisions, policies, and implementation plans are made on the basis of information contained in that particular communication. The writer must know that his or her writing affects the lives of the primary, secondary, and tertiary readers and must take this seriously. For example, let's say a memo is to be crafted informing employees that they must work on two Sundays a month for the next three months. The issue is sensitive and would affect employees in a big way. Before crafting the message, it would augur well for the writer to keep in touch with the primary, secondary, and tertiary audiences to know how best to persuade them and minimize antagonism.

Another example where it is important to receive feedback from audiences is when writing product descriptions or manuals on processes and procedures. It is important to understand the experience level of the audience in this situation, as it helps determine the appropriate level of detail, the amount and the complexity of examples, and the vocabulary to be used. In addition, this is also important to understand the tasks to be performed by the users of such manuals. This helps in determining the scope of the document.

Writing for a Standard Audience

There are times when one does not know anything about the reader or user. In reality, it is not easy to figure out what the audience already knows or wants. On these occasions, audience analysis is more an educated guesswork than a precise strategy. The writer in this case should write for a “standard audience.” A *standard audience* is one that is neither an expert nor a complete beginner, but is somewhere in between. This way, the document does not appear



Information Bytes 11.1

Lenny Laskowski presents an interesting framework of what an audience analysis involves using an acronym. According to him, the following features come together to create a perfect audience:

Analysis
Understanding
Demographics
Interest
Environment
Needs
Customized
Expectations

Source: A.U.D.I.E.N.C.E. Analysis—It's Your Key to Success. Available at <http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Laskowski4.html>, accessed on June 22, 2011.

too basic (so as not to offend the expert), nor too verbose (so as not to be totally incomprehensible to the beginner).

Audience analysis is also used to create customer “personas” as a consistent point of reference, especially in market research and related studies. Sample customers of a particular company or brand are interviewed to obtain information on their needs and aspirations. A persona is created on the basis of this exploratory exercise. Personas serve as representations of the customer groups and are used to create a shared understanding of a particular company’s target audience. Writers in the advertising business spend tremendous amount of resources unearthing information about their target audiences.

Types of Audience Analysis

There are two basic types of audience analyses: formal and informal. Formal audience analysis includes:

- Demographics, including age, gender, size, regional diversity, income, and occupation
- Surveys that assess values, interests, belief systems, knowledge and experience, and cultural connotations
- Focus groups and in-depth interviews

Informal methods of audience analysis include:

- Information gained from listening to others in classes or meetings, and paying attention to the questions asked by fellow students or colleagues
- Examining newspapers and magazines read by the audience
- Interviewing audience members informally
- Talking with others who have spoken to similar audiences
- Library research
- Direct observation

Context

Context is the circumstance around which any event occurs. It is the setting that influences the performance or the outcome of a process. It is also the backdrop against which something can be attempted. Understanding the context means understanding the backdrop against which writing is being attempted. In fact, no business writing can take place without understanding the context. Often a writer attempts to understand the context from his or her own

standpoint. Involving others in situational analysis helps to build a better understanding of the context or situation.

Understanding the context means taking into account the following:

- Time given for the writing task; the urgency of the situation.
- What has previously occurred to solicit the writing?
- What feelings and emotions are currently prevailing regarding the topic at hand?
- What documentation is already present?
- What are the relationships between different pieces of information?

Since business writing is both content based and context driven, writing for business varies from situation to situation. Understanding the situation is the first step in deciding and formulating a response.

THE MESSAGE

A *message* is a thought or an idea expressed briefly with a definite beginning and an end. It is the medium of communication as well as the information itself. A good message has the ideal combination of correct words and meaningful sentences expressed in the form of coherent paragraphs (discussed in Chapter 10). Exhibit 11.1 illustrates the components of a message.

Selecting the most appropriate medium to convey the message is based on the following:

- Why do we need to communicate? (To inform, persuade, or build goodwill)
- Whom do we need to communicate with? (Colleagues, co-workers, supervisors, customers, dealers, suppliers, cross-cultural audiences)
- What is the size of the audience? (An individual, a department, a group, all the employees in a company)
- What is the amount of detail required? (Minimal to large)
- When should the information be delivered? (Now, today, tomorrow, in a week, in a month)
- Where should the information be delivered? (In an office, at a desk, at one's place of residence)
- What is the relationship with the audience/intended recipient? (Informal or formal)
- How should the message be delivered? (E-mail, memo, letter, notice, report)

Message preparation, according to the noted philosopher Aristotle, involves three important aspects:

- Invention
- Arrangement
- Style and presentation

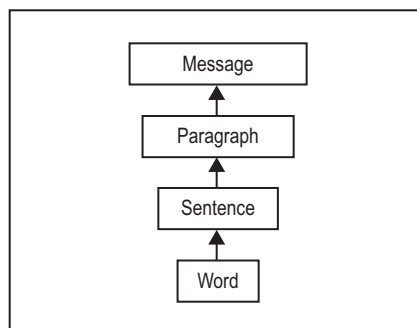


Exhibit 11.1
Components of a Message

As mentioned in Chapter 10, an effective way to begin a document is by stating the topic sentence early on and then elaborating on the theme by adding evidence. This helps the reader scan the relevant point quickly and arrive at a decision. If there are several key points, then one can order the points in order of importance, where the most important point comes first.

Sometimes, audience agreement to a suggested course of action is solicited. In this case, the speech closing should be made by adding an element of persuasion. At the end of the speech, the speaker should reiterate the benefits of opting for a particular course of action. Aristotle believed that persuasion relies on proof relating to logic, emotions, and ethics. Positive impressions are created if the message is framed according to the understanding of others.

To summarize, it is important to make the documents focused by doing the following:

- Clearly indicating the topic sentence that is being presented
- Incorporating three to four important points in support of the topic sentence
- Planning the logical sequence and presentation of these points
- Adding an element of persuasion to the message
- Concluding by reinforcing and summarizing the message

Consider the following example:

“With the objective of emphasizing the role of improvement initiatives in Tata Steel’s ever-growing aspirations, “Aspire T3” was launched. Aspire T3 has the following features... This initiative focuses on motivating employees in dedicating themselves to the three Ts: TOC (Theory of Constraints), TQM (Total Quality Management), and Technology.”

Now, let us try to analyse this paragraph. The first sentence is the topic sentence:

“With the objective of emphasizing the role of improvement initiatives in Tata Steel’s ever-growing aspirations, “Aspire T3” was launched.”

The important points supporting that topic sentence are:

“Aspire T3 has the following features...” (Indicating why it is an improvement and what it will improve).

The concluding line sums up the theme of the paragraph and also answers the question “why”: “This initiative focuses on motivating employees in dedicating themselves to the three Ts: TOC (Theory of Constraints), TQM (Total Quality Management), and Technology.”

DIRECT AND INDIRECT APPROACHES

If a memo deals with a dry or routine message such as adherence to office timings, then find a way to talk about it in a more humane and interesting manner that will garner respect for the appeal. Instead of starting with a curt reminder of the office timings, gain the attention of the audience by making an appeal to preserve the sanctity of office professionalism or giving an example where adherence to office timings has produced a desired result. This is called the indirect approach to writing, as the main point or the key message comes at the end. (This has also been discussed briefly in Chapter 10.) A “buffer” or “cushion” is added in the initial writing stage to “set the stage” for giving bad news, delivering routine messages, reminding people of office rules and regulations, refusing a request, and so on.

While drafting the delivery of bad news, the introduction is very important. It sets the context in which the bad news is delivered. It can include some praise, a review of a task that went well—in general, something positive. The bad news then is placed in the middle of the document. This is followed up by the reasons for the bad news and a conclusion with a proposed remedy or an alternative plan of action. Keeping a long-term perspective when bad news is to be delivered helps make the bad news appear as part of a larger context. Again, this has to be done with genuine and honest intentions. When communicating with an internal audience, use language that sincerely projects regret and sympathy, making a connection that conveys genuine emotional reaction with the reader. Exhibit 11.2 shows a message delivering bad news. However, the actual writing approach used in this exhibit is direct, while it would have served its purpose better if it had used the indirect approach.

Dear Sir,

We regret to inform you that accommodation is not available on the requested dates at the Palace Hotel. However, we can offer from two standard apartments from 9/12/07 to 12/12/07. One apartment can accommodate two adults and both the apartments are without a kitchen. The charges are INR 750 per night per room. This is the only resort near the Ajanta caves.

You have an outstanding bill of INR 500 as well. Please clear the same so that we can confirm your booking at the earliest.

Note: Please also update us with your current address and contact numbers to serve you better.

With regards,
Palace Hotel

Exhibit 11.2
Direct Message Delivering Bad News

In contrast, when a report, proposal, or plan is to be presented, adopt the direct approach to writing, where the main point or the key idea comes at the beginning. Exhibit 11.3 gives an example of an informative message with a direct approach towards delivering the news.

Exhibit 11.4 gives an example of an informative message delivered in an indirect manner.

FRAMING: AN IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION SKILL

A manager's role is to encourage and motivate employees to perform optimally to achieve a common goal. This requires a variety of communication skills, written as well as oral. According to Melissa Raffoni, a manager's ability to "frame" an issue effectively is the most important communication skill.² According to her, framing or reframing an issue is the essence of targeting a piece of communication to a specific audience. She compares framing to a metaphor, the art painting canvas which is framed so that the essence of colours used in the painting—in essence the visual impact—comes across clearly to the audience.

In other words, framing an issue means choosing the right way to influence the target audience so that they see the subject in the context the sender wants them to. Many managers lack the basic skill of framing. This is because they tend to focus on their singular concerns

Dear Sir,

As our new letterhead indicates, we have recently changed the name of our business from India Tourism to India Adventure Travels.

There has been no change in management, and we will be providing the same products and fine service on which we have built our reputation in the industry. We would appreciate it if you would bring this announcement to the attention of your accounts payable department and direct them accordingly.

Thank you for being one of our valued customers. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

With regards,
Ashish Sharma

Exhibit 11.3
Direct Message Delivering Information

Exhibit 11.4
An Indirect Message Providing
Information

Dear Sir,

This is to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of January 3, in which you requested a three-month extension on your loan, number A110.

After careful review, we regret to inform you that we are unable to grant you any further extensions for the repayment of your loan.

We are sorry about the difficulties you are experiencing, but we must insist on receiving your payment by February 1, 2011.

We hope that you will be able to find another solution to your problem.

With regards,
Imperial Capital Bank,
New Delhi

and fail to factor in the concerns of others when addressing a communication issue. This is especially true in diverse teams.

For example, consider a writing task that has to be done by the manager. He or she is to write a memo to persuade all salespeople to reduce their expenses towards travelling and to economize. Not surprisingly, these messages are hardly popular among employees; the first task of the manager then is to frame the message in a tone that elicits cooperation rather than aggression. His or her frame will include the following considerations:

- What is the purpose of my communication? (To inform, persuade, or collaborate?)
- Why am I writing this now? (Any specific incident? A missive from someone higher up? A cost-cutting exercise?)
- What do I want the reader to do after reading the memo? (Save money? Provide details of expenses? Cut short on sales calls?)
- Have I incorporated the perspectives of the reader? (Are they hostile to the idea? Upbeat about it? What are their views on this subject?)
- What is the impact of the message on them? (Financial? Flexibility issues? Personal autonomy?)
- What is in it for me? (Will they respect me more or less? Will they understand my perspective? Will they feel positive about me?)
- What is my ethos? (Am I credible? Do they trust me?)
- How do I frame the message so that my credibility is enhanced? (Direct beginning or indirect beginning?)

Once these questions have been analysed, the manager must frame the perspectives according to the context. Raffoni claims that the best leaders are those who change the frame to suit their leadership style.³ In their book *Primal Leadership*, Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee state that the best leaders act according to one or more of six distinct approaches to leadership: visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter, and commanding. Their research found that the leaders who achieve the best results are the one who effortlessly switch from one style to the other depending on business needs. Framing shapes a manager's communication to reflect the leadership style he or she requires with respect to a particular situation.

Written communication is not complete until the intended message has reached the recipient, until the recipient has read and understood it and is willing to act on it. Depending



Written communication is not complete until the intended message has reached the recipient, and has been understood and acted upon.

on the goal of the communication and the relationship the manager shares or would like to share with the audience, he or she may need to choose different methods of communicating. Sometimes a long memo is appropriate; at other times, a quick e-mail is better. The manner in which the document is worded also differs from one document type to another.

Exhibit 11.5 is a formally worded memo that uses formal words and expressions. The writer gives some background as well, as an endnote to the memo. The subject line is detailed

To: Bob Stevens, Vice President
From: Aarti Surendra, Senior HR Manager
Date: November 12, 2009
Subject: Review of proposal (Campus recruitment)

Please find attached a copy of the proposed campus recruitment plan for the region of South India. Based on our discussions held last Tuesday, I have incorporated last year's data as well.

I look forward to your comments and suggestions.

Regards,
 Aarti Surendra

Encl: Proposal

Exhibit 11.5
 A Formal Memo

and given due emphasis. The tone is brusque and commanding. It suggests that the relationship between the two interacting parties is a professional one and that the writer's audience is distanced by either age or seniority, or both.

In contrast, the memo in Exhibit 11.6 is quite informal, almost bordering on friendly. There is no background and no endnotes. Though a command is made, it is in a light and friendly way. At the end, an option is given that suggests openness and team spirit. This suggests that the relationship between the two interacting parties is professional yet friendly, and no hint of distance by age or seniority is clearly visible.

Now, consider Exhibit 11.6. It shows an e-mail about the same topic. However, the tone is informal and friendly. This is not to suggest that an e-mail is necessarily a less formal medium than a memorandum; it simply illustrates the difference between a formal tone and an informal tone as used in business writing. It is another issue that electronic media lend themselves to greater informality than printed media. This especially happens when the writer knows the audience well and relates well to him or her.

Experts suggest two ways to help frame messages accurately. These are:

- The mental map
- Pyramid strategy

The Mental Map

The *mental map* (or a mind map, as mentioned in Chapter 9) is a process that allows ideas to develop randomly at first. Later, these ideas are categorized, grouped, and regrouped according to the topic and the audience. For example, let us say you have to present a paper at a conference. The theme is “Cross-Cultural Issues Faced by Expatriate Companies.” As a first step, you might list the points that may be covered. The mental map might include:

- Defining expatriate companies
- What does cross-cultural imply?
- List of possible issues:
 - Cultural
 - Social
 - Language
 - Family
 - Education

Exhibit 11.6 An Informal E-mail

From: Aarti Surendra <aart@itech.co.in>
To: Bob Stevens <bob@itech.co.in>
Date: Thursday, 12 November 2007, 9:00 am
Subject: Meeting

Bob,

Let's meet at 11 am today to discuss the campus recruitment plan. Please send me a confirmation if this suits you.

Thanks and see ya!

Aarti
 Senior HR Manager
 ITech Systems, Badarpur
 New Delhi - 110011

- Food
- Work ethic
- Possible discrimination
- Any research conducted
 - Process
 - Findings
- Remedies
 - Legal
 - Support system: host company, peer group
- Examples; stories; data

Exhibit 11.7 explains this point clearly. The central idea or the topic is represented by the box in the middle. The other connections are the key points. Each key point has further sub-points within it.

A mind map is, therefore, a mental image or picture of the form and organization that your writing will take. The information that is required must be filled in once it is known who the audience is and what creative pitch is to be adopted when writing for the conference.

Now the process of framing can begin after considering the following:

- What is the purpose of my communication? (To inform)
- Why am I writing this now? (For a conference)
- What do I want the reader to do after reading this? (Show interest)
- Have I incorporated the perspectives of the reader? (How much do they already know? Is my perspective different?)
- What is the impact of the message on them? (Does it force them to think in a new direction?)

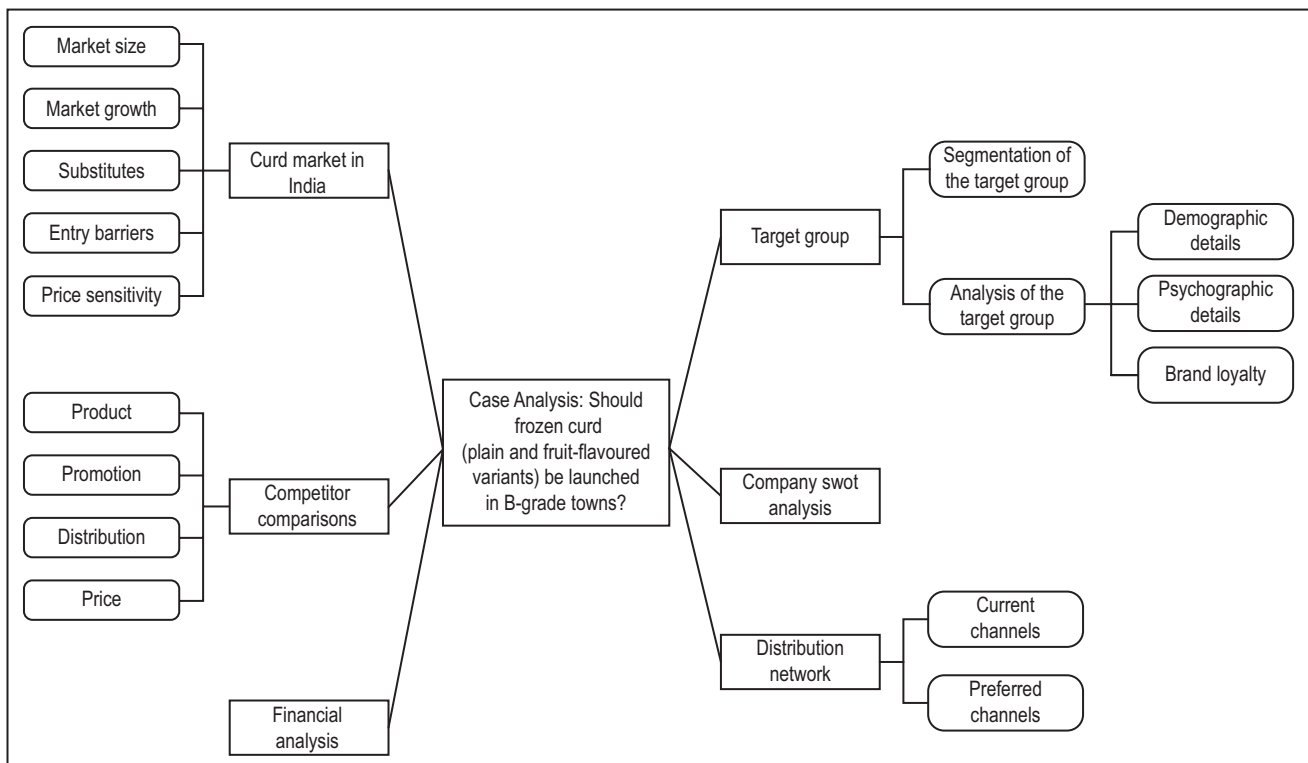


Exhibit 11.7 Example of a Mind Map

- What is in it for me? (Reputation, credibility)
- What is my ethos? (Genuine thoughts, ideas; acknowledge work previously done; research quality)
- How do I frame the message so that my credibility is enhanced? (Creative opening, updated examples, real issues, genuine concern)

Exhibit 11.8 shows two different frames that can be constructed based on these questions.

Minto's Pyramid Principle

The classic business writing text *The Minto Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing, Thinking and Problem Solving* by Barbara Minto is a compelling read.⁴ Barbara Minto's *Pyramid Principle* is a treatise on hierarchically structured thinking. It offers simple advice to readers regarding organizing information. The advice is that for effective, structured writing, the thinking process must be structured.

To put this into practice, writers must first craft key phrases (and not sentences). This information should then be split into smaller points or manageable "chunks." Second, the chunks should be arranged from top down such that the most important point is placed at the top and the remaining points are arranged below in the form of a pyramid. The information each point must develop and support the points above it. This is important as it maintains continuity and flow of thought. Exhibit 11.9 illustrates this further.

Exhibit 11.8
Examples of Framing

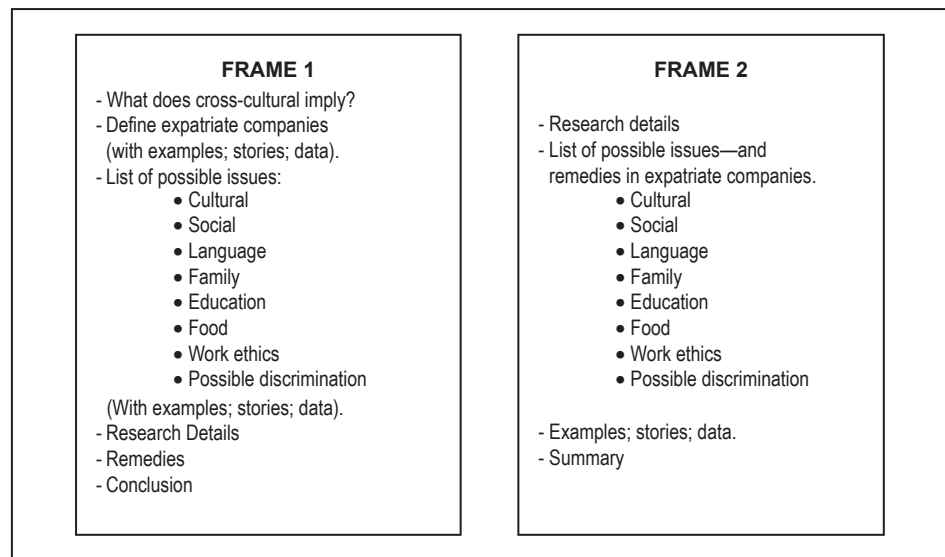
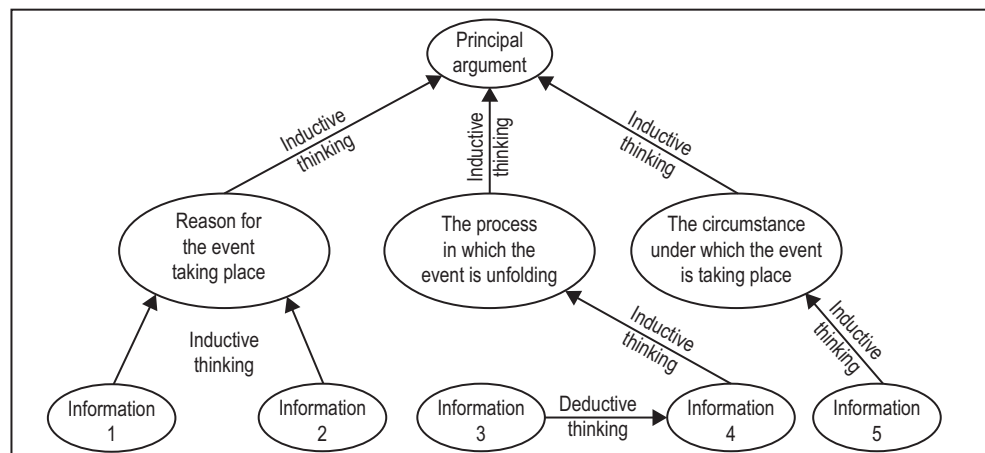


Exhibit 11.9
Minto's Pyramid Principle



PARTS OF A DOCUMENT

The three parts of a document are:

- The introduction
- The middle
- The close

The Value of Introductions

Introductions are vital for a document to be taken seriously. Many executives build on the introduction rather gradually and fail to establish the relevance and the utility of the document as a whole. Introductions set the tone of the document and help the reader decide whether he or she wants to read the entire document.

An ideal introduction has four elements:

- **Purpose:** This is the reason for communicating. It could be a problem or a crisis; a meeting; or a question that needs an answer.
- **Query:** What should we do in these circumstances? This may be explicit or implied.
- **Context:** This is an explanation of the background and the current status quo, which is disturbed and requires a resolution.
- **Response:** This is the solution, an answer to a complication.

Exhibit 11.10 illustrates a good introduction to a document.

N.R. Narayana Murthy's speech in Chapter 10 is another example of the question–goal–situation–response. The goal there is implicit.

The Middle Section of a Document

The middle section of a document provides the facts and evidence. Evidence includes supporting materials such as statistics or examples that provide credibility to business writing. Specifically, these supporting materials include:

- Statistical data such as percentages, ratios, fractions, or absolute numbers.
- Tables, charts, and graphs that express data in a diagrammatic manner such as via pie charts, bar charts, line graphs, flow charts, area maps, and so on.
- Examples, stories, and illustrations such as stories of company activities and quotes from company officials.
- Quotes from authorities and well-known specialists in that subject area.

In Exhibit 11.11, the statistical data supports the topic sentence (given in bold).

Exhibits 11.12 and 11.13 show us examples of tables and charts as evidence, respectively.

The purpose of this document is to set down a few rules regarding the use of e-mail communication in the university. The university already has a system that is responsible for the proper delivery of electronic messages throughout the campus. This is necessary to support the university's mission of providing cutting-edge education. However, as e-mail usage has increased over the last few years, a large number of messages end up being unnecessarily sent to too many members of the community. There have been complaints from concerned community members to this effect. Thus, the Office of Information Technology has established a set of guidelines for our e-mail system. We suggest you use them in order to communicate more effectively.

Exhibit 11.10
Example of a Good Introduction

Exhibit 11.11

Example of Statistical Data in a Document

On July 1, 2006, nine months after closing the acquisition, we completed the largest wave of business systems integration so far. We integrated systems in 26 countries, spanning five geographic regions, representing about 20 per cent of sales. This brings the number of integrated countries to 31; we are now taking orders, shipping products, and receiving payments as a single company in these countries. We managed these conversions with minimal business interruptions, which reinforce our confidence that we can successfully integrate the vast majority of remaining countries over the next six months.

Source: Procter & Gamble, 2006 Annual Report. Available at <http://www.pg.com/annualreports/2006/pdf/pg2006annualreport.pdf>, accessed on June 22, 2011.

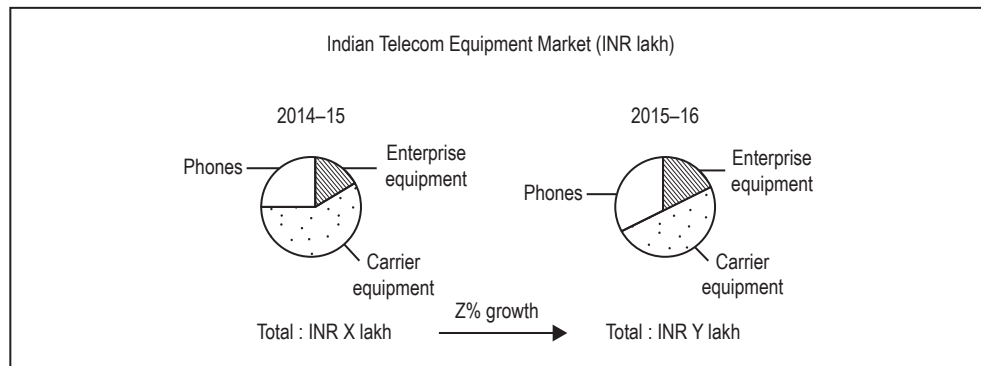
Exhibit 11.12

An Example of a Table as Evidence

Internet services	As on March 31, 2015
Number of ISPs	XYZ
Subscriber base	XYZ million
Annual growth rate	X per cent
Broadband connections	XYZ million
Dial up	XYZ minutes
Total revenue for 2005–2006	INR XXX million

Exhibit 11.13

Example of a Chart as Evidence



The Conclusion of a Document

The conclusion is often the most remembered part of a document and merits special attention by the writer. A conclusion provides a sense of closure to an essay by summarizing the answers to the question that was “opened” in the beginning of the document. In certain fields of writing such as scientific writing or research, the conclusion indicates further areas of research or the limitations of the study. It may also be a call to action on the part of the recipient.

The conclusion indicates why the topic or theme is significant. At this stage of the document, no new idea, argument, or evidence is introduced. In essence, the purpose of the conclusion is to make the reader feel that something of value has been gained from reading the document.

An ideal conclusion should:

- Show the readers why the document is important and what it will do for them.
- Synthesize the main points.

- Gives the readers something to think about.
- Demonstrate how the ideas discussed will work practically in the field.
- Echo the introduction and answer the question posed in the introduction.

Exhibit 11.14 might illustrate this further. It is an extract from a research paper on computer-mediated communication.

LOGIC, ORGANIZATION, AND PERSUASION IN WRITING

Logic, organization, and persuasion are the three pillars of good business writing.

Logic

Clarity, relevance, consistency, use of appropriate form, variety, and adequate information are important elements for effective writing, and the proper use of logic helps writers achieve them. Logic is the study of arguments: sets of statements in which some members offer support or evidence for their thesis. Every argument has a main point, called the conclusion, which is supported by other statements. The argument's conclusion, in terms of writing, is based on the topic sentence or thesis statement, depending on the nature of the written work.

There are two types of logic: deductive and inductive.

Deductive Logic

In any kind of communication, written or spoken, the sender must be able to justify facts, inferences, and conclusions by presenting clear arguments. Often the practice of “syllogism”

Introduction

This paper examines the trends relating to the increased use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) at the workplace especially in the Indian context. A research study on the use of e-mail by Levitt and Mahowald in 2001 concluded that more than 10 billion e-mails were being exchanged daily, worldwide, and predicted that the quantity would increase to 35 billion by 2005. The momentum of growth is expected to continue further. Statistics, counting, and extrapolations by the Radicati Group, Palo Alto, a California-based technology market researcher, estimates that the number of e-mails sent per day to be around 210 billion (August 2008). Radicati predicts that in 2009 workers will spend 41 per cent of their day handling e-mails. Stimulated by decreasing cost, increased accessibility of information, and the rapid exchange of information (Siegel et al. 1986), the increased use of CMC has resulted in the decline of other forms of communication such as face-to-face meetings and one-on-one conversations (Thomson and Feldman 1998).

Conclusion

The present challenge for organizations using CMC is to capture the essence of face-to-face interaction (social and emotional cues, non-verbal gestures, facial expressions, reciprocity, social interaction, shared understanding) and, at the same time, eliminate the disadvantages inherent in asynchronous mediums (only one-on-one interaction, delay, spatial and geographical distances). Media satisfaction impacts the adoption, application, and use of CMC at the individual level. To facilitate effective workflow and task completion, familiarity with the media must be developed among participants. This is especially true for the government-owned enterprises in India where media familiarity is abysmally low. Teams and individuals must learn to use new media in a much better way. In reality, senders are often forced to use less rich methods of communication with limitations on feedback, multiple cues, message tailoring, and emotions. Media accessibility by itself does not imply media satisfaction, task satisfaction, and job effectiveness. The processes for group cohesion must be developed and here the intervention of a skilled leader is necessary to facilitate a smooth communication interface.

Exhibit 11.14
Example of an Effective
Conclusion

is followed, where there is a major premise followed by a minor premise, which leads to a conclusion by the process of deduction. An example is the following deduction:

1. All parents must set ground rules regarding courtesy for their children.
2. Ria is a well-mannered child.
3. Therefore, her parents must have set ground rules for her child to follow.

For an argument to hold true, the general statement should be valid, the minor premise should be true, and the application should be based on preceding statements. The conclusion is then valid, as it is deduced from an orderly and coherent set of relationships.

Consider the following example:

1. Every parent must set ground rules regarding courtesy for children to follow.
2. Gita is a parent.
3. Therefore Gita must have set ground rules for her child to follow.

This proposition is fallacious because the minor premise is not an application of a general rule. Gita may or may not have set ground rules for her children.

Other arguments that are fallacious fall in the following categories:

- **Non-sequitur:** This is when the conclusion does not follow logically from the premise. Example: Hillary Clinton looks like the no-nonsense type. India will benefit greatly from that.
- **Ad hominem:** This is when someone argues against the person opposing them instead of discussing the issue. Example: She is too glamorous...we can't elect her as the president.
- **Red herring:** This is when someone distracts the attention of the audience by focusing on a minor or irrelevant issue. Example: The product did not work as the packaging was too bright for the general public.
- **Post hoc ergo propter hoc:** This is when someone assumes that a certain event is the cause of something unrelated. Example: She got the job because she wore the pink dress.
- **False analogy:** This is when someone wrongly assumes that because two things are alike in some way, they must be alike in all ways. Example: X and Y are from the same college. Therefore, Y must be as aggressive as X is.

Inductive Logic

Where the process of conclusion about an event or activity is based on specific evidence or premises that are closely linked together, the argument is said to be inductive in nature. Unlike the deductive process, this requires evidence to arrive at a conclusion. Consider the following example:

1. Japan's unemployment rate has increased to 5.7 per cent.
2. Massive deficit driven government stimulus spending.
3. Consumer prices continue to fall, continuing Japan's dangerous deflationary spiral.
4. Therefore, Japan is showing evidence of an approaching recession.

Organization

Effective organization helps the reader see the main point of the writer and the logical arguments that help arrive at the conclusion. There are many types of organizations plans:

- **Sequencing:** This is when the ideas are arranged in a sequential plan, one after the other. The events can be described chronologically or as a process.
- **Categorical:** This is when the ideas are placed as parts and sub-parts. There is a main category and sub-categories. This could include divisions, functional areas, functions, and so on.
- **Causal:** This is when the ideas are placed as cause and effect, where reasons are given for each phenomenon. For instance, lower wages result in the strike of pilots.



Communication Bytes 11.1

In persuasion, start with the prospect, not with the product. Stress the benefits, prove your case, establish credibility, and appeal to the feelings, beliefs, and values of the audience.

- **Spatial:** This is when ideas are divided along geographical lines instead of events; examples are eastern and western divisions.

Persuasion in Writing

Logical arguments along with a clear organization provide a sound basis for persuasion. Experts recommend that to be persuasive one has to first establish credibility (what the Greek philosopher Aristotle refers to as “ethos”) and then provide sound reasoning supporting the main arguments (“logos”). The reader must be persuaded to draw a conclusion by deduction or by induction. Finally, the writer must convince the audience to take a decision or an action based on the arguments.

To be persuasive, one should present the problem in brief, include the reader’s stake in the solution of the problem, and supply arguments in support of the same.

Typical persuasive writing has the following structure:

- **Attention**
 - Relating to the audience; involving the audience
 - Illustrating the importance of the topic
 - Employing creative opening strategies (useful in marketing of products/services)
- **Need**
 - Describing the problem/need for change
 - Giving examples
 - Analysing data
 - Giving testimony
- **Satisfaction**
 - Stating the action/change to be induced
 - Discussing the implement plan; Giving many or one solution
 - Providing a theoretical demonstration
 - Giving examples
 - Examining facts/testimony
- **Visualization**
 - Positive method: describing the situation if change is accepted; vividly illustrated
 - Negative method: describing the situation if change is not accepted; vividly illustrated
 - Contrast method: combining the negative and positive approaches
- **Action**
 - Making a call for action
 - Making the call urgent and immediate

The amount of background detail given is dependent on the purpose and the audience. For example, a new product or service would require considerable background detail, but a supplier who has been dealing with the company for considerable time need not provide as much detail.

SITUATION STATEMENT

Writing a situation statement helps to focus on your writing. Exhibit 11.15 gives an example of “pre-writing,” which will help you draft a persuasive letter/memo or report.

Here are some examples of situation statements:

- I want to argue in favour of reduced lecture hours in MBA classes.
- I want to argue in favour of doing away with the lecture pedagogy in MBA classes.

You have to convince the reader who might not be favourably inclined towards the proposition. In order to write an effective, persuasive message, anticipate and overcome objections that the reader might raise. In thinking about the reader, ask questions like the following:

- What ideas do they have about the topic?
- What arguments do they have against my idea?
- What line of reasoning have they chosen?
- What influences the reader most?

Making a pros/cons chart will help identify areas that can be addressed in the message. Exhibit 11.16 gives you an example of such a chart for the following subject: “Arguing in favour of shorter lecture hours in MBA classes.”

Now review the original proposition for possible revision. Try to also think about ways to refute the arguments that the reader might have.

Exhibit 11.15
An Example of Pre-writing

Purpose: I want to argue in favour of _____. (What do I hope to accomplish? Why is it important? What benefits would be realized? What problems would be eliminated? What questions would be answered? How would other people be affected? What obstacles must be overcome?)

About you: Why do you want to argue in favour of _____? What makes your opinion important? How would the decision affect you?

About your reader: I need to convince _____. (Who is the person that has the power to change the situation? Why would they want to listen to your idea?)

Exhibit 11.16
An Example of a Pros/Cons Chart

Pros (For)	Cons (Against)
Students can concentrate better as their attention span is limited.	Less than one hour is too little time for meaningful interaction in an MBA class.
Students can devote time to other academic activities.	Exercises, activities, and case discussions cannot be carried out.
Students can finish lectures quickly and can accommodate one more lecture.	Students already have the entire afternoon for doing academic and other work.

SUMMARY

- Planning a communication strategy is imperative in organizations if one has to build and sustain relationships and get work done in the shortest possible time. A communication strategy has three elements: purpose, audience, and context.
- Audience analysis is the process of gathering information about the people reading the document. It helps to create user focused communication and tailor the writing to the needs and expectations of the intended recipient(s).
- A message is a thought or an idea expressed briefly with a definite beginning and an end. A good message has the ideal combination of correct words and meaningful sentences expressed in the form of coherent paragraphs.

- Framing an issue means choosing the right way to influence the target audience so that they see the subject in the context the sender wants them to.
- The mental map is a process that allows ideas to develop randomly at first. Later, these ideas are categorized, grouped, and regrouped according to the topic and the audience.
- Barbara Minto's pyramid principle says that for effective, structured writing, the thinking process must be structured.
- The introduction, the middle, and the close are the three parts of a document and logic, organization, and persuasion are the three pillars of good business writing.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Why is written communication considered a more difficult process than spoken communication?
2. What are the three phases of the document life cycle?
3. You have to inform your workers of a Diwali bonus and cash rewards to deserving salespeople. You have an array of media to choose from: e-mail, instant messaging, voice mail, the notice board, fax, and a memo. On what basis would you select the media for this message and why?
4. Why is the ability to "frame" an issue considered an important skill for communicators? What are the merits of such an approach?
5. Arrange the following information in the proper format of an introduction:
 - Scientific results of a study show that feral sheep move from east to west.
 - Movement mapping charts migration.
 - Migration theorists developed a number of tools in the nineteenth century
 - Migration theorists developed "movement mapping."
 - Migration theorists in the nineteenth century conducted research on the movement of sheep.
 - Feral sheep move from east to west, rather than north to south.

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Read the following communication scenario and answer the questions that follow it.

As the personnel manager of a software solutions firm, you have to draft a letter of refusal to an employee who is asking for sabbatical from the organization for a period of two years. The employee has been with the company for seven years now, but is rather indispensable. You are keen to retain her. She is excellent at software and data processing skills, and the company cannot afford to let her go for two years. You have to remind her that her promotion is due and that she may be elevated to a more senior position with corresponding remuneration.

 - Map the profile of the "audience" in this case.
 - What writing approach will you follow and why?
 - Draft a situation statement.
 - Frame the logic used in your writing.
 - Organize the document in terms of the introduction, the middle, and the close.
 - Compose the document.
2. Study the following argument:
 - Marriott Corporation experienced employee turnover and lower productivity.
 - Gaurav is an employee of Marriott Corporation.
 - Therefore, Gaurav is planning to leave this organization.
 - What is the flaw in the argument?
 - Revise the argument according to the model of deductive logic.
 - Revise the argument according to the model of inductive logic.
3. Your supervisor has asked you to prepare a report on exploring the feasibility of shifting office premises from the current location to an upmarket one (in the same city). Lay out an effective inductive argument based on this.

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. As a Public Relations Officer in the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department, you have been entrusted with the responsibility of drafting a promotional brochure for Uttar Pradesh Tourism. This is in light of the Olympic Games scheduled to be held in New Delhi next year. You have to design a purposeful communication message that is sure to attract visitors from abroad. The state boasts the magnificent Taj Mahal, numerous historical buildings, and *chikankari*. For more details log on to the Web site: www.upgov.nic.in. Devise a communication strategy to promote Brand Uttar Pradesh.

2. The Aditya Birla Foundation awards scholarships to deserving candidates for pursuing the two-year MBA programme. They follow a simple procedure. Each candidate has to fill in an application form accompanied by an essay or a statement of purpose (SOP). The SOP is a candidate's personal mission statement. A crisp document, it describes the candidate's personal as well as professional achievements. Assuming that you are keen to apply for the scholarship, frame a communication strategy for the essay. Also compose an SOP. For more information, refer to http://www.adityabirlascholars.net/about/The_scholarship.aspx
3. Look up the Web site <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/544/01/> and check the resource on "Developing an outline." The author lists four main components of effective outlines. In what ways do you think developing outlines is a useful strategy for writing?

FURTHER READING

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ENDNOTES

1. Lord George Gordon Byron, *Don Juan* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).
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CASE STUDY 1

Cross Functional Miscommunication: Failure to Put Words into Writing

Summary

This case is about the consequences of ineffective verbal and written communication among multiple departments. In a large organization where multiple stakeholders are often working on a cross functional project, unambiguous communication is crucial. Every individual's role in the project needs to be clearly defined and there should be complete

clarity in the way they will communicate internally as well as with external parties to achieve the objectives.

Introduction

RNT Motors was an Indian automobile company that manufactured passenger cars in the hatchback and sedan segment. In a crowded Indian passenger vehicle market, RNT was struggling to maintain its market share. Inability to gauge future customer demands and aggressive product launches by competitors had significantly eroded its

market share. The company was working on a new project, which had the potential to recapture a significant portion of the market share by enticing buyers who had a budget of ₹ 6-8 lakhs.

Problem

The project development was characterized by extremely strict timelines and a tight budget. Any deviation with respect to the above was taken seriously as the company could not afford any delays in the vehicle launch.

Three departments were primarily responsible for delivering the final product. They were, the benchmarking and testing department (B&T), design department, and integration department. B&T was responsible for identifying trends as well as testing the product. The integration department was responsible for getting the design implemented by co-ordinating with external agencies and the Design division was tasked with checking design feasibility.

Ajay worked in the B&T department. He had just joined the company and was a diligent and honest employee who did not like to skip details. Sanjay worked in the integration department and Prem worked in the design department. Both of them had been working with the company for more than five years. The design and integration departments were subdivisions of a larger department and were supposed to work closely together.

The conversations below took place at a time when the company was planning for an initial showcase of the product, and hence, adherence to project timelines was important.

Meeting 1:

Attendees: Ajay, Sanjay

Ajay: Hello, Sanjay. I called this meeting because I wanted to discuss the implementation of additional features in our new car. Where is Prem? I had sent him a meeting request as well.

Sanjay: It is quite alright. I will update him regarding today's points. Now, there had been no requirement for such features in the earlier stages of the project. However, let us discuss them at least.

Ajay: Our benchmarking and trend analysis shows that to do well in the market, our product must have features A and B. At the moment, feature A can be implemented. But for feature B, we will have a discussion with Prem and get the design team on board.

Sanjay: Okay, I will communicate the requirements to the supplier.

Ajay: Mark me in the e-mail and before you send out the requirement, just have a discussion with Prem.

After the meeting, Ajay sent a written communication to everyone stating the requirements only for feature A. He called Prem and they had an informal verbal discussion. Prem agreed to check the feasibility of feature B. Since Prem and Sanjay belonged to the same department, Ajay assumed that they would jointly take the decision.

Meeting 2:

Attendees: Ajay, Sanjay, Prem

Ajay: I have called this meeting because, after testing the updated calibration, I have found that feature B has not been implemented, although a discussion about the same had taken place in the earlier meeting. I cannot give the go ahead for the product without this feature.

Sanjay: As per the last written e-mail which you sent, the only requirement specified at that time was the implementation of feature A. The same was duly communicated to the supplier.

Ajay: I was not, but I had stressed upon the importance of having feature B as well. And I had requested you to talk with Prem. Did the two of you come to a conclusion on it?

Prem: Because you give the final clearance, I assumed that you would send an e-mail to everyone.

Ajay: You were supposed to co-ordinate with Sanjay and take the final decision. Now, how soon can we get the issue rectified?

Sanjay: Another official calibration release will take six-months. If we want to get it implemented before that, the supplier will charge us an extra ₹ 1 crore.

Impact

Due to unclear verbal and written communication between the three protagonists, the company suffered. If they chose to wait till the next release, then the car would be showcased with the feature, thus not exposing the company to potential questions by the media. On the other hand, the company would have to pay an extra ₹ 1 crore which could have been avoided. This came at a time when it was imperative to minimize project costs.

Questions

1. What is the importance of written communication in organisations?
2. What would you advise Ajay so that such a miscommunication does not occur again?

CASE STUDY 2

Message Distortion: Writing for Results

Summary

This case deals with the importance of conveying top down information in a company. Communication is taken for granted most of the times. This results in distortion of the message. Carelessly drafted e-mails, with scant attention to audience sensitivities and the purpose, creates tremendous confusions and misunderstandings.

Introduction

GlobeCaps is a pharmaceutical firm headed by CEO, Herb Giffens. Herb asks one of his staff members to deliver a message to the employees regarding witnessing a rare natural event, the solar eclipse in the company premises. Unfortunately the message was received in a manner totally contrary to what it was intended; it filtered down the organizational hierarchy in a completely distorted state.

The CEO was of the opinion that such an event would serve the purpose of bringing the entire workforce of his headquarters on the same forum and involve them in a rare one to one with the President; that it would create bonhomie and encourage informality in what was perceived to be a somewhat staid work culture of this company. He also wanted this to be motivating exercise where employees would gather and he would have addressed them, appreciated them and raised their morale.

He had trusted his subordinates to act responsibly and convey the message properly; what followed was an utter misrepresentation of the original message.

Problem

Below are the excerpts of e-mails between different authorities in the organization

E-mail 1

Chief Executive Officer to Manager

Tomorrow at 1 PM the new president will visit the plant. All employees are requested to be there at the site/workshop. Lunch time, consequently, will be deferred and will be from 2:30-3:00 PM, only for tomorrow. The CEO would also be there and would like to address the employees afterwards. Special lunch coupons may be collected from the canteen by the respective heads and distributed before 1 PM. I look forward to your kind co-operation and support.

E-mail 2

Manager to the Head of the Department

As the new President is visiting the plant tomorrow along with our CEO, all employees are requested to be there at their work stations. Lunch would, therefore, be from 2:30-3:00 PM instead of normal time. Please collect the food coupons from the main canteen before the arrival of the president.

E-mail 3

Head of the department to the Manager of the Shop Floor

All staff should meet tomorrow morning before 1 PM for collecting the lunch coupons near the canteen. This is because the lunch will be held from 2:30-3:00 PM instead of normal times due to the visit of the president of the company along with our CEO.

E-mail 4

Manager of the Shop floor to the Supervisor

Workers to assemble in the shop floor canteen for collecting their lunch coupons tomorrow, as the president is arriving tomorrow with the CEO, so there has been a change in the lunch timings 2:30-3:00 PM.

E-mail 5

Supervisor to the Employees

All workers (except contract) please collect lunch time coupons from canteen at 1 PM. This is only for tomorrow as the new president and CEO will be visiting.

As it is evident from the series of e-mails, the information that the CEO had set out to be delivered got bowdlerized to such an extent that the workers could barely figure out with what intentions had the CEO set out for the meeting.

The CEO had given a crisp, short, and detailed agenda for the entire meeting and had passed it to manager hoping that the entire message would be passed down efficiently and without alteration by the chain of command in the organization. Contrary to his beliefs, the information ended up being twisted and altered significantly, and substantially, at each level of the organization.

Impact

The message got terribly distorted. When the new President arrived, only the managers were there to receive him. There was a huge clamour for the food coupons at the shop floor canteen. The President was dismayed at the 'unprofessional'

work culture in the organisation. In the din, the CEO's voice could hardly be heard. The CEO could not have given the intended pep talk with the employees; most of the employees were busy with the food coupon distribution. Herb wanted to give a great impression of his plant to the newly appointed President; instead he ended up antagonising him.

Questions

1. What are the key considerations involved in writing organisational e-mails?
2. Who was responsible for the distortion of the message and why?

Chapter 12

BUSINESS LETTERS, MEMORANDUMS, AND E-MAILS

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the anatomy of business documents.
- Differentiate between the types of business correspondence.
- Enable effective writing of professional and clear business correspondence.
- Create documents that help achieve the objective of the organization.

“Employ your time in improving yourself by other men’s writings so that you shall come easily by what others have labored hard for.”

Socrates¹

INTRODUCTION

Even though most of us write fewer letters than before, letters still occupy a prominent place in professional life. They are permanent and have an enduring quality about them that is reassuring to others. Even if a verbal confirmation has been made about a promotion, a transfer, or a sales contract, “something in writing” is required to support the verbal claim. This makes the agreement legally valid as well.

A business letter (or formal letter) is a formal way of communicating between two or more parties. There are many different uses and types of business letters. Business letters can be informational, persuasive, motivational, or promotional. Whatever their purpose, they should be typed and printed out on standard 8.5 × 11-inch white paper. Business letters demand much from us, as we do not generally know the person to whom we are writing, and even if we do, we do not know them at a personal level. Written words, thus, are the primary means to influence a business reader.

Letters are not easy to compose. They are time-consuming and demanding. How often have you felt apprehensive writing a request for leave or an application for a job that you are interested in? Our future is dependent on the appropriate choice of words, the syntax and composition of the paragraph, and the structure of the letter itself.

Composing a business letter requires attention to the following details:

- **The purpose:** What is the aim of the letter? The objective should be presented in a clear and concise manner. Long-winded explanations bore the readers who are already pressed for time.
- **The audience:** Who is going to read the letter? The ability to identify the audience and tailor the writing to suit their needs is a highly valued skill. Determine the audience of your letter: is it the human resources manager or a group of engineers?
- **The context:** What is the background of the composition? Under what circumstances is the letter being composed?
- **The technique:** What conventions govern the writing? Tone, professionalism, and courteousness are important considerations in professional writing.

The process of writing a letter is:

- State your purpose in the opening sentence.
- Add evidence in the middle section, supporting your key point.
- Close with a few complimentary sentences.
- Reread your letter. Check for tone. Correct spellings and grammatical errors.

- Get a second opinion (optional, but strongly recommended).
- Revise.

The three parts of a letter are:

- The introduction
- The main body
- The conclusion

Once you know to whom you are writing and why, you have to actually start writing the letter. The following steps might be useful in getting started:

- **Start with the audience:** If you know the audience professionally, consider how the audience thinks, looks, and feels. Is it favourably inclined to your proposal or do you envisage opposition? When you start framing, what is it that needs to be told first? Do you need an introduction or have you already discussed the idea first? If you are writing an application, what is it that needs to be told first (since you do not know the audience at all)?
- **Use strategic formats:** When writing to inform, use the “Tell format” (tell–reason–action); for writing to persuade, use the “Sell format” (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action). Refer to Chapters 10 and 11 for more on writing strategies.
- **Create empathy:** This is the personal touch your letter can convey. For instance, if you want the prospective client to buy your product, why should they care to read your document? To use the cliché—what’s in it for them? Understand their problem and then offer a solution.
- **Identify the main idea:** What is it that you would like the audience to do after they have read your letter? Experts recommend the “10-second formula” for situations when you have trouble identifying the main theme. The writer has to pretend that he or she has only 10 seconds to explain his or her position. What the writer says in those 10 seconds is the main theme of the letter.
- **Start writing:** Begin with the introduction, move on to the middle, and then write the conclusion. Do not edit at this stage. Just let the ideas flow.

COMPONENTS OF A BUSINESS LETTER

Formal business letters are written on official letterhead. This has the address and complete contact information for the company. The other components of the business letter are discussed in this section.

The Date

There are three places where the date may be written. The first is on the right-hand side, in line with the addressee’s name and address; the second is on the left-hand side, above the addressee’s name and address; and the third is below the writer’s address/the complementary close.

POINT	Business correspondence is evocative, descriptive, and follows the narrative style.	Business correspondence is analytical. It is crisp and to the point as readers are pressed for time.	COUNTERPOINT
	Business correspondence follows a set template.	Business correspondence is conversational. Business writing varies from the conversational style often found in e-mails to the more formal style of orders and contracts.	
	E-mails and new media are informal in nature and language rules may be relaxed.	E-mails and new media tools are as official as print memos, notices, office orders, and circulars. The language expectations are the same as for traditional media.	

Exhibit 12.1

Salutations and their
Corresponding Closings

Salutation	Closing
Dear Sarvesh/Marjorie	Yours sincerely
Dear Mr/Ms Verma	Sincerely
Dear Sir/Madam	Yours faithfully

The manner in which the date is written is important. The format that should generally be followed is “May 17, 2010.” This format helps avoid the confusion caused by date formats followed in other cultures like the month–date–year format followed in the United States.

Inside Address

The address of the addressee (the person to whom the letter is addressed) should be written correctly. The address should be accurate and complete, and should include the appropriate title or designation, notation (such as Mr/Ms/Dr/Shri), and company name. Use of the term “Mrs” should be avoided.

Salutation and Complimentary Close

Exhibit 12.1 demonstrates the proper way to greet and sign off in a business letter.

The Title

Women are introduced or addressed using the title “Ms” in all spoken and written business communication. If they prefer to be addressed as “Mrs” or “Miss,” they are expected to inform their business associates accordingly.



Women are introduced or addressed using the title “Ms” in all spoken and written business communication. If they prefer to be addressed as Mrs or Miss, they are expected to inform their business associates accordingly.

Modern writing omits the use of “yours” in the closing, and ends with “sincerely” or “faithfully.” It may be wise to add “thank you” or “with kind regards” before the complimentary close, in case one is writing to superiors or if one is seeking a favour or an obligation. Modern writing also omits the use of a comma after the salutation. In the United States, it is customary to add a colon (:) after the salutation (as in “Dear Suresh:”).

Subject Line

The subject line is written after the salutation. It may be centrally aligned or left aligned. The subject line is short (just a phrase), indicates the reason why the letter is written (for instance, a request for extraordinary leave) or just the theme (for instance, extraordinary leave), and is either bold or in italics.

The Body

The body of the letter incorporates the text or the contents of the letter, which is usually in paragraphs (about three paragraphs). The introduction is of a shorter length. It introduces the purpose for writing the letter and gives a brief context for it. The second paragraph is the main body, and it elaborates on the purpose, giving evidence of the same. This section is replete with examples, facts, and logical arguments. The conclusion ends with a positive hope (if it is a request) or with an action agenda (if it is an informational letter). It is brief and perhaps the shortest part of the entire body.

The Signature

Sign the name after the closing. Add your name in print and your designation and contact numbers after the signature. If the reader needs to be informed about the title/designation, add it in parenthesis after the printed name (for instance, Preeta Jain (Dr)). The same rule applies for gender—add Ms after the printed name if required.

Enclosures

If the letter contains documents other than the letter itself, then these have to be indicated as enclosures (“Enclosure (1)”); if there is more than one additional document, the enclosures should be numbered. Follow this up with a list that indicates what is being enclosed.

Cc

“Cc” refers to carbon copies. When you send a copy of a letter to more than one person, you use this abbreviation to let recipients know who else has received the letter.

The Writer’s Address

The writer’s return address should be written in the top right-hand corner if the letterhead is not being used.

BUSINESS LETTER FORMATS

There are three major formats for writing business letters. They are:

- The block format
- The modified block format
- The indented block format

The Block Format

The block format is the simplest format for writing business letters. In the block format, all the text is flush against the left margin. The margins are justified. Exhibit 12.2 gives us an example of a business letter in block format.

Exhibit 12.2

Block Format: Business Letter

Return Address Line 1 Return Address Line 2
Date (Month–Day–Year)
Mr/Ms/Dr Full name of recipient Title/Position of Recipient Company Name Address Line 1 Address Line 2
Dear Ms/Mr/Dr Last Name:
Subject: Title of Subject
Paragraph 1
Paragraph 2
Paragraph 3
Closing (Sincerely...)
Signature
Your Name (Printed) Your Title
Enclosures (2)

The Modified Block Format

In the modified block format, if letterhead is not being used, the sender’s address, date (the date can go on either the left or the right side), the closing, signature, and printed name are all indented to the right side of the page (here the writer can use his or her discretion to make the document look presentable). Exhibit 12.3 gives us an example of a letter written in the modified block format.

Exhibit 12.3

The Modified Block Format

	Return Address Line 1 Return Address Line 2
	Date (Month, Day, Year)
Mr/Ms/Dr Full name of recipient Title/Position of Recipient Company Name Address Line 1 Address Line 2	
Dear Ms/Mr/Dr Last Name:	
Subject: Title of Subject	

(Continued)

PURPOSE OF A BUSINESS LETTER

There are various kinds of business letters for various purposes. Some examples are:

- Cover letters: for resumes, proposals, and reports
- Letters of enquiry
- Sales letters
- Offer letters
- Request letters
- Good news letters
- Bad news letters

Cover Letters

A cover letter is one that accompanies a resume when applying for a job. A cover letter is also important when submitting proposals and reports. A cover letter in reports is called a “letter of transmittal.” Exhibit 12.5 shows a conventional layout for a cover letter.

Letters of Enquiry

A letter of enquiry is when one approaches a company speculatively, and there has been no call for vacancy or advertisement for a quotation. Exhibit 12.6 gives us an example.

Exhibit 12.5

A Cover Letter

Identify yourself, state the purpose of the letter.

State your qualification, evidence of experience, achievements, any highlights in your career, as well as your personal qualities.

Talk about your CV, which should have your contact details for further information.

Sub: Application for the post of assistant sales manager

Dear Sir,

As a prospective management graduate in sales and marketing management, I wish to apply for the position of Assistant Sales Manager in your esteemed organization.

An engineer by qualification, I have completed my post-graduation in management from MDI, Gurgaon, in marketing management. I have always been keen to work in the sales department of a company, as I believe myself well-equipped to handle customers and clients in addition to being proficient in prospecting. You can refer to my earlier experience of four years in Larson and Toubro where, as a sales engineer, I managed to procure the maximum sales (in terms of volume) for my branch office. Amiable and courteous in my disposition, I believe in the virtues of time management and work ethics.

Enclosed, please find a copy of my resume for your perusal and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Neha Gupta

Exhibit 12.6

A Letter of Enquiry

Identify yourself. State your purpose as well as the specific details of your requirements.

Sub: Call for quotation

Dear Mr Sharma,

We are the publishers of a well-known magazine from Lucknow, which is a monthly publication. It comprises approximately 90 to 100 pages on A1 paper, and runs around 10 pages of full colour advertisements. We are on the lookout for a new printer, and invite you to send us quotations at competitive prices.

(Continued)

If we find your terms and pricing suitable, we will be glad to offer you a publishing contract of up to five years.

Kindly send us your quotations, latest by 31 May, 2010.

Sincerely,

Open Door Publishing

Exhibit 12.6 (Continued)

Explicitly state what you would want the reader to do.

Sub: Your letter dated 23 May, 2015

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for giving us the opportunity to serve you. We are enclosing our rate list as well as the pricing list of the printing paper. I will take this opportunity to inform you that we have published materials for prestigious management institutes in Lucknow, as well as a number of corporate houses (see enclosures).

We shall be happy to offer you a discount of 10 per cent on every thousand copies of the magazine.

I'm sure it will be a pleasure working with you.

Thanks and regards,

Nikhil Sharma

Exhibit 12.7

A Letter Replying to an Enquiry

Begin with thanking the client, and then go on to furnish your price, terms and conditions. Send samples with your mail, add referrals, and give evidence for the same.

Offer additional sops and assure the client of quality service.

The reply to enquiries must also be prompt and to the point. Exhibit 12.7 provides an example.

Sales Letters

Sales letters are persuasive letters. Their purpose is to solicit a sale or win a customer or contract. While soliciting can be done on the telephone, there are times when a sales letter can be used to reach prospective clients, particularly if a large group needs to be targeted.

A strong sales letter serves useful functions such as:

- Enhancing the brand image of the company.
- Emphasizing the sales message.
- Getting a “foot in the door”

On the other hand, a poorly written sales letter can mar one's business prospects and can even cost existing accounts.

Three popular categories of sales letters exist:

- **Introduction letters:** to introduce the company to a prospect and initiate an appointment.
- **Follow-up letters:** to reinforce a point made during a previous meeting.
- **Cover letters:** sent as a part of a larger package; these alert the reader to important deals or offers.

In a sales letter, try to answer questions that you yourself raise at the beginning of the letter. For example, one can start the letter by asking: “How do you think Megacorp can fulfil your desire for a world-class laptop?” and following this question up with “Here’s how...” Another way to do this is by saying, “You should feel confident about our product. Here’s why...”

Also address doubts that the recipient may have regarding your product. For instance, one can say, “Sounds unbelievable? I thought so too.”

List reasons that support your claim and use powerful statistics. Facts and figures, data, and positive reactions should be included to strengthen your claim and motivate the recipient to take action. For example, you could include the following statements: “Research shows that...,” “The 2010 KMPG Survey shows that eight out of every ten customers buy from Megamart.”

The “Features, Advantages, and Benefits (FAB) approach” is a popular way to sell. A *feature* is a quality or characteristic of your product or service. It describes the offering for what it is. *Advantages* list the value of the product in general. *Benefits* tell the audience what the product or service can do for them. When you are trying to sell, it is good to list features and benefits in bullet points. Benefits are the real value addition here. Merely listing features does not yield results. Exhibit 12.8 illustrates this further.

Exhibit 12.8

Example of a Letter to a Client

Address the recipient as friend. Ask a question that would result in you listing the main benefits of your offer.

Answer the question in one or two sentences. Explain why your product or service is essential or superior to other similar offerings. Address doubts.

Use easy-to-read bulleted points to point out why your product stands out.

Close by guiding the customers to action.

Megatel Corporation Limited
MEGATEL! MEGA DEAL! MEGA OFFER!

Dear Pankaj,

What would you do if we were to offer you a mobile phone as well as two software packages of your choice along with every laptop you buy? We know that you would jump at the offer! Well, this is not a dream, but a reality, a never-before combination from Megatel—the quality service company.

Our company boasts of the finest brands. Nowhere else will you find the coveted big five—Apple, HCL, Compaq, Sony, and Toshiba—under one banner. Not only that, the cherry on the cake comes from our offer of giving away any one cell phone set with this deal. These are not ordinary phones, but the top-of-the-line Nokia 3456 and Motorola 2567 phones. You’ll be spoilt for choice!

This is a special offer for our most valued customers on the occasion of our tenth birthday. Look at the benefits it gives you:

- We have 25 accredited service centres. This ensures that you’ll always have a service centre nearby.
- We have the latest software of your choice. We have something for everyone in your house—from games and educational software to SPSS.
- We give you personalized attention. We’re just a call away at our toll-free number: 05223-333-0033. Call us for prompt service!

So book your laptops right away. Search for details on our Web site www.megatel.org, or call our service representative Ashutosh at our toll-free number.

With regards,

Sirish Sahni,

Area Manager
Megatel Corporation Limited

Other sales strategies employed are:

- Referrals, testimonials, and endorsements: These help build credibility.
- Point out loopholes in the competitors' offerings.
- Free trials: These entice the client.
- Guarantees returns at ten times price: This refers to assured guarantees, extended warranties, services, and add-ons.
- Create a sense of urgency ("Act now to avail the best price!") by asking customers to contact you by a specific deadline.
- Bundle a premium as a reward for acting before the expiry of the deadline.
- Unit price: Sell at the smallest unit (not INR 650 for a carton, but instead INR 6.50 for one unit).
- Colour schemes: These add attractiveness to the offer.
- Postscript: This re-states the benefit and urgency of the offer.
- Envelope: It is the envelope that acts like the real salesman. Make the envelope look professional and official in appearance. Companies sending sales letters use teasers ("Open the envelope for a never-before vacation offer!") and labels ("Important. Urgent. Express.") to denote the urgency of the offer. Include a return address to make the letter appear less like junk mail.

Exhibit 12.9 gives us an example of an online sales letter.

Benchmark E-mail is the leading e-mail marketing service for creating dynamic marketing campaigns, and we would like to tell you more about what makes our service different.

Unlike many other e-mail services, everything we offer is Web-based. This means there is no downloading or complicated setup for you. The good news is that you can give it a try for 30 days at absolutely no cost to you. You can check out our pricing by visiting our Web site: www.benchmarkemail.in/ExtPricing

Another thing that makes us different? Affordability! Our plans start at just INR 475 a month. This includes all our standard features as well as 24/7 access from anywhere in the world, as long as you have an Internet connection. Our standard features include:

- Complete contact management
- Custom list builders
- Professional e-mail templates
- Drag and drop e-mail builder
- Real-time reporting
- List exporting
- Campaign scheduling
- Customer polling

With so much packed in one single service, it is no wonder that our clients are so satisfied with us! Here's what a happy customer has to say:

"Benchmark E-mail is easy to use and helps enormously. Once I jumped in and started creating and sending campaigns, I just couldn't believe how easy it was to manage and send all my e-mails. Our sales have increased 20 per cent since we started using Benchmark!"

So don't wait any longer. Go ahead and sign up for your 30-day free trial now! Just click on the button to the right.

With regards,

Nishant Rao

Exhibit 12.9 An Online Sales Letter

Exhibit 12.10**An Example of a Typical Joining Letter**

(Candidate's name and address)
(Date)

To,
(Employer's name)
(Designation)
(Company address)

Sub: Joining letter

Dear Sir,

I am delighted to inform you that I am joining <name of organization> from today as a trainee manager as has been mentioned in your appointment letter to me, dated 19 May, 2010, Reference number: <letter number>

I kindly request you to accept my joining letter.

With regards,

(Candidate's name)

Offer Letters

A job offer letter is a legally binding contract for employment purposes. It includes terms and conditions of the job; details about the compensation package; incentive schemes; job duties; reporting authority; and other service benefits applicable to the candidate. It is composed in block format and uses bullet points to convey important points. It usually has a section for acceptance or rejection of the offer as well.

Experts recommend including as many details as practical in the job offer letter or as attachments or enclosures, so that the candidate has enough information to make an informed decision.

Joining Letters

After the candidate indicates the acceptance of the offer letter, he or she is required to submit a joining report—usually a letter that indicates that the candidate has joined on a particular date and time. This is maintained for personnel records. Exhibit 12.10 demonstrates a typical joining letter.

Request Letters

A request letter, as the name suggests, is written to request information. The tone is polite and courteous. The opening is specific, indicating what is being requested and why. The letter ends with a polite acknowledgement of the grant of the request and the action required from the recipient. Exhibit 12.11 demonstrates this clearly.

Good News Letters

Good news letters are letters of congratulations and positive news, such as the granting of a request. A typical good news letter format consists of:

- Stating the good news at the beginning.
- Providing details about the good news: any conditions; procedures; clarifications; or limitations, if any.
- Closing with a call for action or an expectation.

Exhibits 12.12 and 12.13 give examples of two kinds of letters conveying good news.

Sub: Personnel records

Dear Sir,

I request you to kindly provide us with the following information so that we may update our personnel records:

- Number of permanent employees
- Number of contractual employees
- Wage structure for each employee category

I would be obliged if the information reaches the personnel department by Monday, 27 May, 2010. In case you have any questions, please get in touch with the undersigned.

Thanks and regards,

Harshit Sinha,
Personnel Manager

Exhibit 12.11
Example of a Request Letter

- State the subject clearly.
- State your purpose clearly.
- Use points to state the different requirements
- Close with courteous request and state a specific deadline.

Dear Saurabh,

Congratulations!

It gives us immense pleasure to inform you that you have been selected for the prestigious “Salesman of the Year” award for 2011. The decision was made after considering the following factors: productivity, personal qualities, and customer feedback.

The award entitles you to visit a listed resort for two nights and three days along with your family. You can avail the offer till 31 July 2011.

The award is a motivation for excellent performance. We hope that it will spur you to greater achievements in the times to come.

Best wishes,

Punita Sharma
Regional Head

Exhibit 12.12
Example of a Good News Letter

- Begins directly with the good news.
- State the criteria.
- States the details of the offer as well as terms and conditions.
- Closes with an expectation.

Dear Saurabh,

I am happy to inform you that your request for a loan of INR 100,000 for setting up a language laboratory has been granted by the management.

The management expects that details about the expenses and infrastructure will be reported on a monthly basis. You had cited three months for the installation of the laboratory; the management desires that the work be completed within the stipulated time to avoid any budgetary shortfalls. The management also expects clarification on the criteria for selection of a contractor—a point that was not mentioned in the proposal.

You may avail the funds on production of original receipts only. You are also requested to furnish a project completion report after the stipulated three months.

We wish you all the best in the endeavour. Please feel free to contact the administration for requirements and other information.

With regards,

Sunita Rai

Exhibit 12.13
Example of a Good News Letter

- Give the news directly.
- State the expectations clearly.
- State the requirements.
- Close with supportive statements.

Bad News Letters

It is important to qualify the term “bad news” before discussing the format of such a letter. Bad news includes: rejection of a request, informing an employee(s) of impending layoffs, refusing an appointment, reporting a decline in sales and customers, stock out, loan cancellation, refusing a loan extension, closing of operations, or informing someone about a termination in extreme conditions.

Conveying bad news is a sensitive issue. Indeed one of the most difficult tasks in business is saying “no.” The problem is somewhat compounded in print, as we do not have the benefit of matching facial expressions and voice to convey the bad news. Generally two ways are recommended: direct and indirect.

Direct Approach

In the direct approach, the bad news is conveyed upfront, in the opening paragraph itself. On one hand, this conveys the news clearly and doesn’t beat about the bush. If stated courteously, it might be appreciated by the recipient. On the other hand, it might alienate the reader and might come across as too harsh. It might also damage the relationship. Such a letter might start with the words, “You have not been granted...”.

Indirect Approach

An indirect approach suits the reader who does not know the writer well. However, if too much “spin” is involved, it might not sound genuine. Such a letter might start with “We have always taken pride in...however, we regret that we are unable to oblige your request...”

Writers following the indirect approach use buffers like the following to cushion the impact:

- Appreciate the reader’s effort
- Compliment the reader
- Sympathize with the reader
- Apologize to the reader
- Agree with the reader
- Make a general service statement
- Give concrete, rational explanations for refusal
- Avoid negatives words; turn around the same statement to say things in a positive manner
- Provide a neutral closing

Effective communicators use the following semantics to make the refusal less painful to the reader:

- Avoiding personal pronouns: “You were lacking in essential qualifications, which is why we...”
- Avoiding phony statements; people can read through spin. Consider this notice issued by Axin Bank: “The Axin Bank deeply cares for its customers; however for the next five days we will be unable to provide essential services as the Bank is currently undergoing some upgrades.” If the bank genuinely cared about its customers, it would have provided alternatives for smooth transactions.
- Avoiding stating the bad news in the opening line itself, “We regret that we will not be able to offer you appointment in our company.” It sounds a bit high-handed and decidedly rude to make such a statement.
- Giving reason for the bad news; show that the decision is fair and reasonable.
- Avoiding beating about the bush.

Exhibit 12.14 gives us an example of a letter written to convey bad news.

Dear Mr Sharma,

Thank you for your letter regarding reimbursement for the Ultra Pure machine. We agree that the machine has not been performing well of late and has been giving a lot of problems.

I have evaluated the reimbursement for the Ultra Pure machine subject to the conditions of the warranty. The warranty states explicitly that "any service failure on account of the customer will not fall under the permissible claim." Our service records reveal that you have missed the monthly maintenance and cleaning service facility for the past two months. Since you have not availed the annual maintenance contract facility, we are not at fault for failing to repair the machine.

Under these circumstances, we regret that we will not be able to reimburse you for the Ultra Pure machine. We would undertake to offer full service facilities for the repair and maintenance of the same (with a small fee). We can however forego the charge if you avail the AMC for two years.

I sincerely hope that we are able to resolve this problem. I am available at the toll-free number (0522) 232-1247 to answer any questions you might have.

Very truly yours,

Neeraj Sinha

Exhibit 12.14
A Bad News Letter

Buffer. Admit the fault.

Give reason for the decision.
Prepare the reader.

Express regret and offer something compensatory.

To: The Sales Manager

Suketu Mehra

Sub: Warning letter

It has been observed that you have proceeded to take leave without prior permission of the concerned authorities, resulting in willful insubordination and gross negligence of your duties, in your capacity as the sales manager.

Absenting yourself from duties without prior intimation is a misconduct that makes you liable for necessary action. We warn you to refrain from such activities; failure to do so shall invite appropriate action. We further advise you to submit a written explanation of the unauthorized leave as soon as you receive this letter or as soon as you resume duties.

Please treat this as urgent and important.

For: Sharma Pharmaceuticals
Nita Khanna,
HR Manager

Exhibit 12.15
Warning Letter

Courteous salutation is not required.

Directly address the problem.

State the implications for the offending acations.

Reiterate urgency.

Warning Letters

On the basis of preliminary enquiries conducted against an errant employee or a dissatisfactory explanation received against a show cause letter/memo, a letter of warning is issued to the employee. A typical warning can be for tardiness, unexplained absence, willful insubordination, verbal misdemeanour, and so on. Exhibit 12.15 gives an example of a warning letter.

Welcome Letters

When any employee joins a company, it is customary for the HR Manager to welcome him or her to the organization as well as to inform other employees about the new employee. Exhibit 12.16 provides an example.

Exhibit 12.16**A Welcome Letter**

Welcome the employee and give relevant details.

Provide the background of the candidate.

Solicit cooperation.

Dear members,

I would like to join you all in extending a warm welcome to Mr Ashish Mehra. Ashish has joined Bizcom Computers, Noida, as Assistant Sales Manager.

Ashish holds a master's degree in management from Delhi University and has previously worked with Incredible Technologies.

We look forward to your support and cooperation with Mr Mehra in his current assignment, and wish him a happy association with the Bizcom family.

Regards,

Sumedha Singh
HR Manager
Bizcom Computers

Exhibit 12.17**A Farewell Letter**

Regret that the employee is leaving.

Acknowledge the employee's contribution.

Mention the details of the farewell party, if any.

End courteously and with best wishes.

Dear Ashish,

We are definitely sad to hear that you are leaving Incredible Technologies on 31 August. Incredible Technologies has benefited immensely from your dedicated service over the past year. You have been an exceptional mentor to new employees as well as other members of the staff.

We thank you for your hard work and loyalty towards the organization. We will always consider you to be a valuable member of our family.

On 29 August, we have arranged a small get-together in your honour, and we hope that you will oblige us by being our chief guest. Please note the following details:

Venue: Meeting Chamber 2
Date: 29 August, 2015
Time: 6:30 pm

We look forward to keeping in touch with you. Please remember that Incredible Technologies will always cherish our memorable time together. On behalf of the organizers, here's wishing you all the best in your new endeavours.

Lalita Singhal
HR Manager
Incredible Technologies

Farewell Letters

Farewell letters are written for an employee who is leaving the organization. It is certainly difficult to compose a farewell letter for an employee who is leaving the organization under favourable circumstances. Exhibit 12.17 gives an example of a farewell letter.

Increment Letters

Increment letters announce the award of an increment to an employee. Such letters essentially fall under the "good news" category, but they follow a particular format. Exhibit 12.18 illustrates this further.

The revised salary can be mentioned in another way too. Consider Exhibit 12.19, which shows part of an increment letter.

L.E.T.T.E.R.H.E.A.D

Date: 12 March, 2015

To: Mr Amar Dutta,
Senior Manager

Dear Mr Dutta,

We are pleased to inform you that your salary has been revised with effect from 1 April, 2011. We take this opportunity to congratulate you, and express our appreciation for your valuable contribution in achieving the company's objectives. We are confident that you will continue the good work in the same spirit of commitment and sincerity and grow with our organization.

You will be paid as below:

Basic	INR XY per month
Dearness Allowance	INR XY per month
Variable Dearness Allowance	NR XY per month
House Rent Allowance	INR XY per month

All other terms and conditions of your employment remain unchanged.

Sincerely,

Sumedha Singh
Bizcom Computers

Enclosure:

I have read, understood, and agree to abide by the aforesaid terms and conditions of employment.

Signature of the employee
Date:
Name:
Designation:

Exhibit 12.18
An Increment Letter

Appreciate the employee's contribution to the company.

State the details of the new salary.

Attach a receipt.

You will be paid as below:

Employee Name	Employee Code
Date of Joining	Position

Exhibit 12.19
Part of an Increment Letter

Exhibit 12.19

Sn.1	Particulars	2014–15	2015–16
2	Basic		
3	HRA		
4	Conveyance		
5	Medical		
6	LTA		
7	Bonus		
8	Total		

Exhibit 12.20
A Transfer Letter

Ref. No:

10 May, 2015

Sonam Mehra
56, Apsara Apartments
MG Road
New Delhi

Dear Ms Mehra,

This is to inform you that you have been transferred to our sales department and your joining date will be 15 May, 2015. Your last working day with the marketing department would be 14 May, 2015. Your earlier designation as per your appointment letter dated 15 February, 2014, was assistant marketing executive, and after the transfer, you will be a sales executive. Your employee ID, salary structure, and other perks would remain the same.

Your employment will be governed by the earlier employment agreement as well as the applicable rules, regulations, and policies of the company.

We believe you have a successful career ahead of you.

Thank you,

Sumedha Singh
HR Manager
Bizcom Computers

Accepted:

(Sonam Mehra)

Signature: _____
Date:

Transfer Letters

An employee may have to be transferred to another location. A typical transfer letter has been shown in Exhibit 12.20.

MEMORANDUMS

The term *memo* (short for *memorandum*) is derived from the word “memorandus,” which means “to be remembered.”

A memorandum is a form of internal communication. It is brief and concise. Memos are used frequently in almost all organizations. Like letters, they serve as important written records and help members of an organization communicate without the need for time-consuming meetings. Memos are an efficient and effective way to convey information within an organization.

The Memo Format

A memo should be specific and concise. For example, instead of titling the memo “Rules,” it is better to write “Office rules for attendance.” This makes filing and retrieving the memo easier. Exhibit 12.21 demonstrates the structure of a typical memo.

Types of Memos

Memos follow a specific format, although they vary across organizations. The length of the memo also varies according to its purpose. The various kinds of memos have been described in Exhibit 12.22.

MEMORANDUM	
To: (Name and designation)	
From: (Name and designation)	
Date: (Month, Day, Year)	
Introduction: Gives the context briefly; states the problem; and indicates the broad purpose.	
Main Body: Details requirements, requests, reports, policy changes, persuasive arguments, reminders, information, announcements, and feedback, usually in the form of a list.	
Conclusion: Action points; follow up.	
Attachments: If any	
Copy to: (Name of person to receive copy) (Name of person to receive copy)	

Exhibit 12.21
Structure of a Typical Memo

Type of memos	Purpose	Paragraph structure	Writing style
Routine memos	Communicate requirements, make requests, serve as reminders, provide information, make announcements, provide feedback (generally a quarter-page long)	Usually written in bullet point form, short sentences, and paragraphs	Conversational tone; firm yet friendly
Memo of transmittal	Transmits reports and proposals to a senior (generally half to one page long)	About two paragraphs	Formal
Memo reports	Short reports (generally about two pages long)	Complex sentences; four to six paragraphs; tables and charts used to show data	Formal

Exhibit 12.22
Various Kinds of Memos

Information-seeking Memos

A typically information seeking memo has already been demonstrated in Exhibit 12.11.

Notices in Memo Format

A typical notice in memo format has been provided in Exhibit 12.23.

At times, a notice for minor negligence is given in memo format. Exhibit 12.24 shows you how.

Show Cause Notices in Memo Format

A show cause notice in memo format specifies the misconduct under the scheduled section and gives the employee a specific amount of time to provide a written explanation as to why disciplinary action should not be taken against him or her. Exhibit 12.25 shows this further.

Exhibit 12.23

Notice in Memo Format

States the problem or the issue.

Details the requirements; reminds about the rules

Action point; offers alternatives so as to not sound unsympathetic (buffer)

From: Ashish Sharma, Personnel
 To: All Employees
 Date: May 19, 2015

Sub: Lunch breaks

Recently, it has come to the management's attention that some employees are taking extra time for lunch. Absences from duty are reportedly taking place with employees away from the office even 2 to 3 hours after lunch time.

I request you to note that the designated time for lunch breaks is from 1.00 to 1.30 pm only. Please adhere to the allotted time, failing which management may be compelled to take necessary action. I remind you that provision exists for short leave (two per month), which may be availed for urgent personal work.

Thanks and regards,
 Ashish Sharma

Exhibit 12.24

Memo for Minor Negligence

Memo

(Employee name)
 (Employee code)

It has been brought to the management's attention that you have (give here the nature of complaint, date/place the event occurred), which resulted in (here please state the consequences such as monetary loss) to the company.

You are advised to be more careful in the future.

Thanks,
 HR Manager

Warnings in Memo Format

A warning might also be given in a memo format. Exhibit 12.26 shows you how.

Transfer Memos

When the services of the employee are transferred from one location to another, the human resources department sends a transfer memo or letter to the employee, which includes the necessary transfer-related information and terms and conditions. Exhibit 12.27 gives an example of a transfer memo.

MEMO

To: (Name and designation)
From: (Name and designation)
Date:
Sub: Show-cause notice

It is charged that you have (here give the nature of the complaint, date/place occurred), which resulted in (here please state the consequences such as monetary loss) to the company.

Please explain why action should not be taken against you, in writing, within (here give the number of days or hours), failing which, it is construed that you have accepted the charge, and action will be taken accordingly.

Exhibit 12.25
Show Cause Notice in Memo Format

To: (Name and designation)
From: (Name and designation)
Date:

Ref: Memo number ...dated...

We have carefully considered your explanation, which has not been found satisfactory.

You are hereby seriously warned and any such occurrence in the future will be very seriously.

Written Warning

Date: _____
Employee: _____
Issued By: _____

A written warning has been issued to you on the above date. The reason for the warning is:

Exhibit 12.26
Warning in Memo Format

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

In this electronic world, e-mail is one of the most exciting communication innovations. It is an essential part of business communication and helps us communicate with both internal and external customers. E-mail has even reduced the face-to-face communication characteristic of so many companies' style of internal communication.

E-mail communication has the following distinguishing characteristics:

- It facilitates instant contact.
- It transcends geographic boundaries.

Exhibit 12.27
A Transfer Memo

Office Memo			
Bizcom Computers 181A, Tech Building Sector 53, Noida Telephone: 12345678 Fax: 23456789 E-mail: hrbizcom@bizcom.com`			
To:	Amit Roy Senior Marketing Manager Bizcom Computers Ahmedabad	From:	Arti Mathur HR Department Bizcom Computers Noida
Cc:	F&A Department	Date:	22 May, 2015
Subject:	Transfer Order		

Your services are being transferred from the Ahmedabad project office to our head office at Noida. By 17 August, 2015, you are requested to report at the head office of Bizcom Computers at Noida, located at 181A, Tech Building, Sector 53.

For this transfer, you will be entitled to transfer allowance as per company rules.

Sumita Menon
Head of HR
Bizcom Computers

- It is impersonal in nature; it lends itself to anonymity.
- It is typically used in situations where an instant response is not required.
- It helps to form/create/define a “persona” of the sender (facilitated by the way one composes an e-mail).
- It is less expensive to send an e-mail than to hold a face-to-face meeting or circulate a notice in hard copy.
- It can be used to send a message to a large number of internal/external customers simultaneously.
- There is no expectation of privacy with work e-mail accounts.
- E-mails have a long shelf-life.

Format

The format of a typical e-mail is shown in Exhibit 12.28.

Tips for Effective E-mail Communication

E-mail communication lends itself to errors. This is because people often mistakenly take it to be an informal medium and use expressions that are not in line with the rules of business grammar. When dealing with expatriates or with Indian colleagues, ensure that the language used in your e-mails is professional, crisp, and businesslike.

Treat Subject Lines as Headlines

A headline in a newspaper grabs the reader’s attention as well as provides information. It immediately tells you what the main story is all about. In a similar manner, the subject line of an e-mail should indicate the theme of the message. At times, the message is the subject line itself and, therefore, it is important to draft the subject line correctly. An appropriate

Subject: Shut Down of Power Supply
From: "goswami" <goswami@apl.ac.in>
Date: Fri, May 21, 2015 11:19 am
To: allemployees@apl.ac.in ([more](#))
Priority: Normal
Options: [View Full Header](#) | [View Printable Version](#) | [View as plain text](#)

This is to inform the residents of Type V, Type IV, and Type III that electrical power supply will be turned off on 23 May, 2015 (Sunday) from 10 am to noon to carry out modifications of the electrical distribution system.

Sorry for the inconvenience.

Regards,

OB Goswami
 AE Electrical

Exhibit 12.28
 Format of a Typical E-mail

subject line ensures that the e-mail is read and not deleted. The general rule is always to have a subject line. A few examples of good subject lines are:

- FYI only: Meeting minutes
- ARs included: Minutes from MRC, all ARs due Friday 12/4
- Gitam, Peter: Need you at noon meeting Wednesday with your updates
- Returning by IC811; 4.30 Arrival (EOM)
- Agenda: Staff meeting Thurs 3/12, 10:00 pm (RNN)
- Mary: I will attend the conference FtF and present summary (EOM)
- Library books overdue

Some examples of poor subject lines are:

- MOM
- Periodicals
- Re: (blank subject line)
- Like it?
- Unrelated subject line: sending an e-mail with an old subject line that does not relate to this message



Communication Bytes 12.1

The following are a few subject line tags for e-mails:

- URG: Stop everything, read me first
- HOT: Needs immediate attention
- RSP: Need you to respond either way
- MTG: New/modified meetings
- FWD: Forward to your respective group(s)
- HLP: Need information, assistance with a problem
- FYI: For your information
- ACT: Needs action

Put One Theme at a Time

An e-mail is a cheaper alternative to snail mail. Hence a number of e-mails can be sent if there are many issues to address. For instance if a meeting agenda is to be communicated to employees along with news of an impending farewell party for a colleague, it is wise to send two e-mails instead of putting the agenda and the party in one e-mail. This way the messages can be remembered and responded to easily.

Use the Direct Approach

The first paragraph of the message should state the purpose of the e-mail and what the reader is expected to do. One can do without preliminaries and use of buffers in e-mails. Also make sure to include identification and contact details.

Exhibit 12.29 gives us a few examples of effective opening and closing lines of e-mails.

Clean the Inbox Daily

It is a good idea to streamline the e-mail inbox and other folders by deleting unnecessary e-mails. If one has to respond to a lengthy e-mail that can be deferred, then it is polite to inform the sender that the message has been read and the reply would be sent in a day or two. However, internal e-mails should be dealt with quickly as these involve projects, deadlines, meeting notes, and so on.

Be Formal

E-mails are official communication. They are a written form of communication that can be printed and viewed by others. Use of slang and abbreviations is poor e-mail etiquette.

Exhibit 12.30 provides an example of a poorly written e-mail.

Exhibit 12.29
Good Opening and Closing Lines in E-mails

Good opening statements	Good closing statements	Words that could be replaced
This is to inform you	Please get in touch for any further clarifications	Reply - Response/Respond
This is to seek your permission	Please get in touch for further discussions	Thank - Appreciate
This is to update you	I would be glad to be of assistance	Sorry - Apologize
This is to bring to your notice	I would appreciate your prompt response	Please - Request you to
Please give approval for	Thanking you in anticipation	Problems - Issues/ Challenges
Further to our discussion	Looking forward to your prompt response	Can - Could (<i>Can</i> is considered to be rude; <i>could</i> is more polite)
I would like to	Looking forward to your cooperation	Should - May
With reference to	Your support is appreciated	But - However
	Should you have any questions	Regarding - with respect to
		Prepone: Advance/Move up

Exhibit 12.30
A Poorly Written E-mail

IT WAS GR8 MTING U

FYI, NXT MT ON 19

RGDS,
AJIT

There are a lot of things wrong with the e-mail shown in Exhibit 12.31. Some of them are:

- **Font:** The font of the e-mail is highly confusing. Always use a well-known font like Times New Roman in a professional setting. Typing in all caps also gives the impression of shouting. It is always advisable to stick to sentence case in e-mails.
- **Short forms:** Numerous short forms have been used in the e-mail (for instance, “FYI” in place of “for your information”). Such abbreviations are unacceptable in professional situations. It is always good to treat e-mails as just another form of business correspondence. Remember that you are writing to a professional and not a casual acquaintance. Do not use terms that are too colloquial.
- **Punctuation:** The e-mail doesn’t have proper punctuation. Many people think that e-mails do not need proper punctuation marks. They couldn’t be more wrong. However, too many punctuation marks could be avoided.
- **Grammar:** Use grammatically correct, complete sentences. Do not use cryptic phrases. You might use bullet points as people find them easier to read.

Exhibit 12.31 gives us an example of a typical welcome e-mail that might be sent out to a new employee by the company representative.

FAQ on E-mail Etiquette

- *How do I address a person?* Stick to formal terms—use “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madam”.
- *How do I address someone if I am unsure of their gender?* Address the person by their full name (for instance, “Dear Annapuran Roy”).

To: New Employee
Cc: Mentor and Immediate Supervisor

Dear Irfan,

It’s great to have you connected to Bizcom Computers on e-mail! Your company colleagues are just a click away on the global address book.

I wanted to inform you that your Employee Code is _____. We have also attached the communication deck on the PDR process and attached the form. You are requested to discuss your KPIs with the supervisor and mail the same to _____.

All our policies are available on the common server, in a folder titled “Company Policies.” Please make sure that you look through them.

Your unique user ID and password to access the company server will be given to you in a few days.

We wish you a successful career at Bizcom!!

Cheers,

Chanda Singh
Staffing Representative

Exhibit 12.31
Welcome E-mail



Information Bytes 12.1

Indian companies like Bharti have switched to using SMS instead of e-mail. Most of the internal communications in the company happen through an SMS intranet developed by IBM. Companies like Oracle and SAP already offer social networking applications inside their enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems.

- *Should I request delivery recipients?* Yes, you may request delivery receipts when writing to subordinates, but not when writing to seniors. Request an acknowledgement instead.
- *Should I use attachments?* Limit attachments as they clog up people's inboxes.
- *Should I reply afresh to every e-mail?* No; it is better to preserve the thread as far as possible.
- *How quickly should I respond?* Respond immediately if possible; if you're unable to do so, send a quick reply acknowledging receipt of the message and follow up as soon as possible.
- *What if my message is in the subject line itself?* Add the acronym "EOM" (end of message) at the end of the subject line.
- *How do I indicate that a reply is not necessary?* Add "RNN" (reply not necessary) at the end of the message.
- *How should I respond if I am angry?* It is best to avoid replying to an e-mail when one is angry. E-mail is not usually the best forum to voice disagreements or vent.

THE OFFICE CIRCULAR, OFFICE ORDER, AND NOTICE

Office circulars, orders, and notices are useful methods of communicating within an office.

Office Circular

An example of downward communication, a *circular*, as the word suggests, is circulated to apprise employees about additional workload, rotations, displacements, transfers, and other such information. It conveys what the management wants employees to do in a particular time period.

Circulars are quite common in government departments, but they are also an effective go-between for the management and the operating or the field staff. Circulars are typically characterized by language that is slightly obfuscated (for instance, "Further to our previous circular no. X/-21, section XV, sub-section VVI (a) has been modified as the following, until further notice..."). Exhibit 12.32 gives us an example of a typical office circular.

Office Order

Office orders are generally issued by an authority. They contain instructions related to office work, change of working hours, instructions regarding holidays, messages by senior authorities when they take over an organization, promotions, and so on. Office orders are issued either periodically or as required. They have an element of "order" attached to them, something that has to be unquestionably followed and implemented. Exhibit 12.33 shows this further.

Exhibit 12.32
Office Circular

To: GM and department managers IPK Polymers Ltd., Indore	From: HR Department, Head Office
Cc: Executive Council (Directors)	Date 26 May, 2015
SUB: New employee joining effective June 1	Ref: HRO/Circ/9
We wish to introduce Mr Kirti Sarwarkar who has joined IPK Polymers Ltd. as Assistant Sales Manager . He will be based in our main office at Indore with effect from 1 June, 2015.	
Thank you for your cooperation!	
Rajendra Sahnii HR Officer IA	K.P.K. Sinha HR Manager
Cc: Indore Sales Office/IPK Warehouse	

From: KPS Srivastava, President**To:** All employees in Plant II

DIR/2015/27

OFFICE ORDER 32

It is hereby informed that in lieu of the extended production schedule, henceforth all Saturdays from July 2015 will be considered working days with regular weekday timings.

This order is issued with the permission of the competent authority.

KPS Srivastava
Chief Administration Officer

Exhibit 12.33
An Office Order

Notice

A *notice* is a sign posted in a public space. It deals with announcements and other general information. A communiqué issued by a government official is also called a notice. A communication of national importance is also issued in the newspapers as a public notice. Exhibit 12.34 provides us with an example.



Notice is a sign posted on a public space. It generally deals with announcements and other general information.

Exhibit 12.34

Example of a Notice

From: Secretary, Employee Council	To: All employees
SUB. Monthly Employee Meeting	
Ref: ECM/04/2015 Date: May 21, 2015	
A meeting of the Council has been scheduled to be held on Monday, i.e., May 24, 2015, at 3 pm in FB-1. All are requested to make it convenient to attend the meeting.	
The agenda for meeting is:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirmation of the minutes of the last council meeting held on March 9, 2015. 2. Discussion on the new pension yojana. 3. Any other matter with the permission of the Chair. 	

SUMMARY

- Business writing is different from other forms of writing. This is because the business audience is usually pressed for time and is most likely to skim a letter, e-mail, or memo than read it thoroughly. Business readers want the bottom-line first: they want to hear about things that affect them professionally. This is why business writing is crisp and succinct rather than evocative. It reflects the unique purpose and considerations involved when writing in a business context.
- A business letter should have the date, the inside address, a complimentary close, and a subject line. It should address people with their proper title and one should sign one's name before closing. It should also mention the presence of enclosures and should be copied to the relevant people.
- Various kinds of letters include cover letters, letters of enquiry, sales letters, offer letters, joining letters, request letters, good news letters, bad news letters, warning letters, welcome letters, farewell letters, increment letters, transfer letters, etc.
- Memos are a brief and concise form of internal communication. There are various kinds of memos including information-seeking memos, notices in memo format, show cause notices in memo format, warnings in memo format, and transfer memos.
- In the electronic world, e-mail is one of the most exciting communication innovations and it helps us in both internal and external communication instantly.
- The office circular, office order and notice are other methods of communicating within an office.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Enumerate the differences between letters and memorandums.
2. What style of communication would you adopt when writing to an employee whose performance is below par? Why?
3. What is the relevance of subject lines in letters, memos, or e-mails? Explain with examples.
4. For what kinds of correspondence can a memo be sent via e-mail?
5. What are the important rules for composing a sales letter? How is it different from a routine correspondence?
6. What qualifies as "bad news" and "good news" in business communication? What techniques are adopted to convey 'bad news to employees and clients?

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. One of the employees in your organization has been absent for the past three weeks without any explanation. You have been trying to contact him, but have not been able to get in touch with him. You feel you have pursued the errant employee enough. You now want to give him a warning letter, followed by a termination letter for legal purposes. Draft a warning and a termination letter to the employee.
2. Write a letter to an employee requesting her to postpone her vacation due to an urgent deadline for an important project.

3. Submit a resignation letter to your chief manager. You are leaving under not-so-happy circumstances. In spite of your best efforts, you felt that the management was biased against you.
4. Draft an internal memo to your staff for disciplinary purposes; ask them to report to work on time, inform the office of any absenteeism, and include a doctor's letter for sick leave. The most important problem that you would like to address is that the staff takes advantage of the director's absences to frequently take a few hours, or even a full day, off. You would like everybody in the office to observe professional discipline.
5. Draft an internal memo to your employees on the use of mobile phones inside the premises of the organization. Of late, you have been receiving complaints of disruptions caused by mobile phones during meetings, presentations, conferences, and even the office seating chambers.
6. As a manager, you have to send an e-mail to all the customers of the company where you are currently working to invite them to the inauguration of the new office. Your task is to compose the e-mail.
7. Archi's salary has been pending for the last four months. Being the primary supporter of his family, he is concerned, as there many responsibilities to take care of. He has been unable to pay his rent for the last two months, and has not sent money home for the last three months. Write an e-mail to his supervisor, Mr Sahai, regarding this.
8. Professor Naved came across this request in one of his interactive lectures:

Professor, we are an organization consisting of relatively young employees. We came across one case where four or five employees were interacting with each other on official e-mail. It started with a nice message and slowly descended into abusive and disrespectful language. They all were joking around on official e-mail. We are not aware if any of them was personally hurt or offended, as we did not get any complaints. I approached one of them and explained the basics of e-mail etiquette and gently chided him. Now I want the entire organization to take precautions when corresponding with each other on e-mail. How should we compose an e-mail to employees advising them about e-mail usage and acceptable e-mail norms in our organization?

Compose an e-mail to help Prof Naved with this request.

9. The management of a company has to write to its regional heads, berating them for not providing satisfactory services to clients and advising them to take ownership of their regions. Assume you are the management and write this e-mail.
10. You have joined a new company. On your first day, you received an e-mail from the CEO welcoming you

on board. You want to reply to his e-mail. How would you do so?

11. You are the HR head for your company. Write an e-mail asking employees for their feedback on the induction/training session they attended recently.
12. Draft an e-mail to all employees regarding an annual picnic. Enlist their cooperation and seek contributions to organize games, events, and food.
13. You have to send a message to all employees regarding performance appraisals, as they are being introduced for the first time in your organization. People may not understand the process. Send an e-mail with complete information explaining performance appraisals in simple, easy-to-understand language. Mention the following:
 - Appraisals would be on quarterly basis.
 - Annual increments would be based on these quarterly appraisals.
 - Appraisals would be highly confidential.
 - List the reasons for appraisals.
 - Explain the benefits of appraisals.
14. Read the following complaint filed by an irate customer about the quality of biscuits purchased from a particular company, and the response sent by the company.

Complaint by customer:

I bought two packets of Delicious Biscuits recently; unfortunately, the biscuits are all in pieces or crumble quite easily when handled. This has been occurring for about the past four months. The retailer is quite prominent (Appu Stores in Ahmedabad), and I doubt that they are at fault. I am quite disappointed in the decline in quality of Delicious Biscuits.

—A loyal customer

Reply to the complaint:

Dear Dr. Maheshwari,

Thank you very much for your valuable feedback. Customers like you are an integral part of our business and your satisfaction is very important to us.

We are very sorry for the inconvenience caused to you in this instance. We shall contact you shortly to understand the nature of your complaint first-hand and take remedial action.

We shall also be glad to have your suggestions on what kind of products you would like Delicious Biscuits to make in the future.

Best regards,

Customer Service division
Delicious Biscuits

- a. Comment on the opening and closing of the response sent by the company.
- b. Comment on the tone of the response.
- c. Comment on the company's strategy in handling this complaint.
- d. Comment on the audience analysis of the response.

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Refer to <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/654/01/>. What are the benefits of “accentuating the positives” in writing business letters? In what circumstances do you not accentuate the positive in letters?
2. Refer to <http://www.hcltech.com/enterprise-application-services/> Assume you represent this firm. Now draft a sales letter on behalf of the firm, offering package and platform-led services to transform a customer's business and IT operations. You can select any customer and refer to their Web site.
3. Refer to <http://www.cosmostours.com.au/>, a subsidiary of Globus Tours. As you are considered quite an expert in planning and organization, you have been entrusted with the task of arranging a group vacation tour for your company officials (about 15 managers and their families). Your company is a Fortune 500 firm, doing wonderfully well. Compose an e-mail requesting Globus Tours to provide the details of the tour. You are interested in knowing the expense for travelling, boarding, and lodging. You are also interested to know the sightseeing possibilities.
4. Read the following extracts from the Internet and then comment on Google's communication style:
 - a. The Google culture is incredibly open. Even as an intern, I was able to read through documentation and source code for these important Google technologies. Whenever I had more detailed questions, there were plenty of Googlers that I could go to in person or by e-mail who were very eager to provide help.

After a while I looked to start sharing all of the documentation and tutorials that I had written while learning about Google technologies. (Written by Sam Slee in the Google Analysis Products department. Available at <http://googleforstudents.blogspot.com/2008/12/googlers-beta.html>/.)
 - b. If you work at Google and have an @google.com e-mail address, you simply enter your name and e-mail address, and then enter the e-mail addresses of up to five other Google employees whom you have a crush on. If one of those people also enters you as one of their crushes, you'll be connected.

Read more: <http://techcrunch.com/2010/02/12/googlecrush-parisian-love/#ixzz0p1XeVqZn>

ENDNOTES

1. Taken from <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/s/socrates122574.html>, accessed on February 8, 2011.

CASE STUDY 1

Handling Bad News on E-mail: Case of Poor Attitude

Summary

Nishant is a part of the Operations team at NeedHelp, an IT startup focused on healthcare. His team is dedicated to book appointments and handling customer support for patients. Confident, outgoing, and fluent in English and other majorly spoken vernaculars, Nishant is one of the best employees in the department. The ease with which he handles patients on call is admirable. He has been awarded the “employee of the month” thrice in his work experience of seven months, which is some achievement. This case is proof to the idea that being qualified and technically competent is not always enough.

Introduction

The appointment booking team (ABT) and customer support team (CST) are the two teams forming the backbone of the operations department at NeedHelp. Consisting of 57 employees, they handle close to 1500 appointments in a day and ensure the implementation of one entire segment of the company mission.

A typical cycle goes like this:

- A patient looks through the website and selects a doctor after relevant filtering based on locality and specialty.
- He/she dials the number provided for booking an appointment and is directed to the ABT/CST.
- The appointment is booked and the recorded voice call is then monitored by the quality surveillance (QS) team.

- The QS scans the calls to check if they meet the required standards in terms of call duration limit, call script, and other protocol.
- It is not possible to stick to the call script 100%, but it is advised to not go below a certain level.

Nishant is a star performer. He is known to have handled difficult customer issues with ease. But he is a difficult employee and has conflicts with almost all members in the team. Excerpts from a very typical day at work:

Pallavi: *Nishant, I need your assistance with a patient call. He is comfortable speaking only in Telugu. I have tried conversing in Hindi and English. Can you please take this call for me?*

Nishant: *Pallavi, I have served my eight hours for today. I am working on some personal bank stuff. I'm sorry I cannot help you right now.*

Pallavi: *Dude, it is for the team! We cannot leave a patient unassisted like this.*

Nishant: *Pallavi, you need to chill. One patient here and there, how does it matter? You will obviously fulfil your daily threshold, with or without this patient.*

Problem

Well, Nishant is not exactly a team player. It does not end there. He also does not believe in sticking even slightly to the call script or taking positive feedback from the QS team. Aakanksha, the team lead of QS has warned Nishant at least four times till now. It started with her politely reminding him of the rules there, explaining to him why a call script even exists, and why it is important to standardize the quality of calls. Nishant was too sure of himself to bother about QS reports. He knew he was talented and was better than most others in a very effortless way. Helpless and frustrated with Nishant's behavior, Aakanksha writes to him:

E-mail 1

Team Lead to Nishant

Hi Nishant,

I see no change in your call pattern in spite of repeatedly reminding you to do the same. No part of the call script is being adhered to and the stipulated call duration is also blatantly being ignored by you. Please let me know if you have an explanation for this, I am sure we can work this out. If this continues consistently although, I'm afraid I will have to think of an alternative and take necessary action.

Regards,
Aakanksha

Nishant is furious upon reading this mail. It hurts his ego and sense of superiority. He is the star performer of the team. Do rules apply to him, he thinks. He hates Aakanksha's guts for writing this mail to him. Complying by it would just mean giving in. He dashes off an angry e-mail to Akansha:

E-mail 2

Nishant to Team Lead

Ms Akansha,

Come on. Why the fuss? I haven't achieved those awards for nothing. I do not, I repeat, do not appreciate your use of words such as 'blatantly' from you. And 'necessary action' I mean give me a break. I do not think you have any right to call explanation from me. For your very kind information, I am rated as a star performer. I am deeply perturbed and escalating this to the higher management.

Instead of taking this feedback positively and scheduling a one to one as suggested by Aakanksha, he loses his temper and directly goes to the VP, Operations. He is carelessly verbal about how Aakanksha's criticism annoyed him. He even threatens to leave the department if this continued. According to him, he does not see a reason why he needs to adhere to a call script, considering how well his performance and delivery has been so far. He impulsively reacts and resorts to using of verbiage not very appropriate. He forgets he has bypassed an entire management level and is directly speaking to the VP.

Impact

Nishant's behaviour is frowned upon. His absurd reaction to a very justified and appropriate e-mail by Aakanksha is seen as an act of immaturity and completely uncalled for. He is strongly criticized by the head of operations for having behaved so impulsively in front of the VP without even informing him. It is also brought to his knowledge that rules are above everyone and everything and no one is going to be an exception to that. Nishant's ratings fall drastically. The management starts giving more emphasis to his conduct and his performance gets side tracked. He is viewed as an example of how not to be.

Questions

1. What are the key e-mail etiquettes that one must adhere to in the workplace?
2. How should Nishant be counselled by the Head of Operations?

Chapter 13 | PLANNING, COMPOSING, AND WRITING REPORTS

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the principal considerations in the drafting of a report.
- Gain a brief overview of the prefatory and supplementary parts of a report.
- Become aware of key areas to pay attention to when editing and proof-reading a report to ensure a polished and professional final product.
- Differentiate between proposals and reports.
- Understand the nature of business proposals.
- Prepare a structured, persuasive proposal.

“Do not put statements in the negative form. And don’t start sentences with a conjunction. If you reread your work, you will find on rereading that a great deal of repetition can be avoided by rereading and editing.”

William Safire¹

INTRODUCTION

Reports are facts and arguments on a specific subject presented in an orderly and systematic manner. They are different from essays in that they present information, conclusions, and recommendations in a systematic and organized manner rather than a critique of a particular subject. Reports assist in decision-making. Some present a review of background information that aids in deciding on a future course of action, while others provide solutions to actual business problems.

Report writing is far more complex a process than merely gathering information and presenting it in a systematic manner. It is the manner in which a report is organized that truly determines the quality of communication. Organizing a report requires a thorough understanding of the purpose for which the report is required, the audience that will read the report, and the context or backdrop against which the report is set.

Reports are assigned and written to enable managers to make decisions when they cannot directly observe the materials, personnel, and other factors involved in running an organization. Managers must rely on the observations and reports of others when:

- They are too far removed from a particular operation to observe it directly.
- They do not have time to supervise an operation directly.
- They do not have the technical expertise to make accurate observations.

QUALITIES OF AN IDEAL REPORT

Reports play a significant role in business. Managers use the information in reports to make decisions and allocate budgets, personnel, and other resources. Reports must be accurate, reliable, and objective for effective decision-making to occur. Good reports do not merely inform; they give the readers ideas, direction, and answers to pressing problems.

As the information contained in a report is more complex than in other forms of business writing, it is important that this information be presented clearly and in a logical manner. It is also said that the recipients of reports, who are usually higher up in the chain of command, assess the credibility of the writer by the quality of the report.



Communication Bytes 13.1

A typical report comprises the following:

- A summary of the research
- A table of contents
- Introduction
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Sources

However, the busy executive almost always reads only the recommendations, and sometimes the introduction and conclusions if something new is presented in these sections.

To be accurate, reliable and objective when writing a report, writers need to be free of biases and prejudice. They need to honestly assess whether all the relevant information pertaining to the subject of the report has been included. Since the onus of conducting the analysis and interpreting the data falls on the writer, the problem is compounded to some extent. Writers may be tempted, consciously or subconsciously, to tilt the facts to favour a particular line of reasoning. Experts suggest the following to achieve accuracy and objectivity in writing:

- Differentiate between facts and opinions—avoid hasty and ill-conceived generalizations that are not supported by evidence.
- Use correct sources of information that are regularly updated. Also cite these wherever necessary. Do not rely solely on one source.
- Avoid unfair comparisons and analogies.
- As far as possible, test for things which have been assumed. Generalizing hypotheses and stating these to be a norm without accurately testing them makes the research subjective in nature.
- Use logic to support arguments. Emotional statements and the excessive use of adjectives and weak verbs make the writing ineffective.
- Focus on people and not on the ideas in framing sentences. In essence, make the subject of the sentence the person or the organization, not the idea that one has proposed. The idea then becomes the object of the subject's focus. For instance, the sentence "Rightsizing can result in motivating officers who are sincere in their jobs" should ideally be rephrased to "Sincere officers benefit the most from the proposed rightsizing."

TYPES OF REPORTS

Each organization has its own requirements for reports. The types of reports discussed in this section apply universally, although the formats and structure may vary from organization to organization. Reports can be classified according to requirement, purpose, length, and physical form.

Classification by Requirement

Reports can be classified according to their requirement in the organization:

- **Routine reports:** These help an organization monitor and regulate its processes and procedures. Routine reports may be informational or interpretive (meaning they supply

information and interpret it). Progress reports, expense reports, and sales reports are routine reports.

- **Task reports:** These are special assignments designed to help solve a specific problem. Task reports may be informational or analytical (meaning they supply information, interpret it for the reader, draw conclusions, and provide recommendations based on the conclusions).

Routine Reports

Some information is required on a regular basis (such as manufacturing and sales records); therefore, many reports in an organization are routine. These are reports required on a regular basis (hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, annually). Because of their periodic nature, routine reports are often called periodic reports. They are also called maintenance reports because they help an organization maintain its ongoing activities.

Routine reports typically have a set format and a clear chain of responsibility regarding who collects the data, who prepares the report, who receives the report, and who uses the information. For this reason, many routine reports are prepared on forms or by following specific guidelines that provide direction on what information should be included in what order and in what format. Most routine reports are purely informational and simply provide the facts. Financial statements, sales reports, audit reports, minutes of meetings, and similar documents fall into this classification.

Routine reports may require interpretation when specialists in technical areas report to managers who are generalists. For instance, a technical support help desk technician might need to explain to managers how changes in the network operating system will influence computer operations.

Task Reports

Task reports are the result of an investigation of an issue. They are prepared on a one-time basis. They may supply information, but more often they are interpretive or analytical in nature. All analytical reports begin as informational reports to which the writer adds interpretation and analysis. In fact, any informational report could become an analytical report if the management desired interpretation and analysis of the information presented in the report.

Task reports are typically written to answer one of the following questions:

- **What?** The first step is to identify a problem and the issues surrounding it. Then the root cause analysis is conducted to identify the reasons for the problem. This is followed by the action plan to solve the problem.
- **Can we?** A report may be written to investigate a prospective business project. In such a situation, the report entails a detailed analysis of the organization's strengths and weaknesses in light of constraints and opportunities. It essentially identifies whether a project is feasible.
- **Should we?** If a project is feasible for an organization, the next question is to determine whether it should be undertaken. Here the report focuses on a cost–benefit analysis. Both quantitative and non-quantitative factors are taken into account in the assessment.
- **Which way is best?** Once it has been decided that a project is worthwhile, the report may examine the best possible means to achieve the goal. This is in line with the investment potential and the cost–benefit analysis. Task report guidelines vary in organizations depending on the nature of the business. An engineering firm would have different guidelines for report writing than a construction firm.

Classification by Length

According to this classification there are three types of report: the long formal report, the short formal report, and the informal report.

The Long Formal Report

The long formal report is usually a document that can be seen by the public. It is considered formal because it uses formal language, has explanatory sentences, and is arranged systematically, generally in the following order:

- Title page
- Table of contents
- Summary or synopsis
- Terms of reference (Who asked for the report to be written? What is included? When was it due?)
- Introduction
- Detailed findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Appendices
- Bibliography
- Index

Short Formal Report

The short formal report is generally written for internal review. It is short in terms of the number of pages as it is brief and focused. It is not uncommon to find this type of a report beginning with recommendations and conclusions. It is considered formal as it follows the typical conventions of business writing. The length is shorter than a long formal report (about 10 to 15 pages). Structurally, the report is arranged in the following order:

- Title page
- Terms of reference
- Introduction
- Main Findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Appendices

Informal Report

The informal report is generally written for internal use within the company. It deals with routine issues and issues relating to departmental activities. These reports are presented in a memo format. They are short and range from two to seven pages. They are considered informal as they tend to skip certain conventions of writing. Structurally, informal reports are arranged in the following order:

- Terms of reference
- Introduction
- Findings
- Conclusions and recommendations

Classification by Purpose

Reports can be divided into informational and analytical reports when they are classified according to purpose.

Informational Reports

Informational reports are factual reports where the writer is merely informing the reader. The reader obtains the details of events, activities, or conditions from the report. The information can relate to sales activity, meetings, a business trip, or a department procedure. Informational reports are presented as short formal or informal reports using the memo format. Exhibit 13.1 shows how a meeting report should be structured.

An itinerary report is another example of an informational report. It is usually in the form of a table, and includes the following:

- Information about when, where, and how a person will travel
- Daily appointments
- Helpful reminders of where the individual is to be at certain times
- Names of people he or she may encounter in the course of conducting business, and—in the case of foreign travel—local customs he or she should know about.
- The day and time of departure, name of airport or station, flight number, time of arrival, and hotel names and addresses

Analytical Reports

For analytical reports, the writer collects information and then analyses it. Thereafter it is presented to the reader. The issues involved in an analytical report are more complex and require material to be presented in a manner that aids the reader in decision-making and problem-solving. Analytical reports are presented as long formal reports, usually in a manuscript format, as well as short formal reports.

Examples include feasibility reports, recommendation reports, and research reports. Analytical reports also include progress reports. These are required for big projects and informal enterprises, and generally comprise the following:

- **A brief background of the project:** The background helps put the report in an appropriate context.
- **A detailed account of the time period covered:** The writer may need to explain and justify delays, other problems, or unusual expenses. The information might be arranged chronologically, going from what has been done to what will be done. It might also be organized according to topics or areas of concern, although the chronological sequence is usually emphasized within each of the topics.
- **A projection of the work that remains to be completed:** Managers need to know whether a project is on schedule and whether the work can continue on schedule. This may include the projected timeline.

Exhibit 13.1

An Informational Meeting Report

Name of the organization

- Date, time, and place of the meeting
- Attendance (members present or members present *and* members absent)
- Name of the presiding officer
- Agenda
- Confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting

A record of:

- All announcements
- Reports
- Motions
- Resolutions
- Date of the next meeting
- Time of adjournment

Recommendation Report

Problem: What is it, and how will the reader benefit if it is solved?

Facts: What is known about the situation? Where and how was that information obtained?

Assumptions: What can be assumed on the basis of the facts?

Recommendations: What should the reader do, and why will that action (or those actions) solve the problem?

Exhibit 13.2

A Recommendation Report
Format

Analytical reports also include recommendation reports. Exhibit 13.2 demonstrates the structure of such a report.

A justification report is also a kind of analytical report. The conclusion of such a report should show convincingly that the recommendation is justified by the advantages that will be realized. These reports are good for solving problems where the solution results in cost saving; they also follow a more systematic structure than recommendation reports.

Classification by Physical Form

Some business reports are identified primarily by their physical form: memo reports, letter reports, and formal reports.

Memo Reports

Memos are short, informal messages that provide a rapid, convenient means of communication between employees within the same organization. Memo reports are written in the memo format, that is, these reports follow the “To; From; Date; Subject” format. These are internally driven and internally generated reports, normally only a few pages in length. Memos are used to communicate vertically (from superiors to subordinates and from subordinates to superiors) and horizontally (between personnel of equal rank). They also serve to communicate messages that range from the extremely informal to extremely formal. The writing style may be formal or informal depending upon the sender’s relationship with the audience, the type of relationship the sender desires in the future, and the purpose of the memo.

Letter Reports

Letter reports are short reports that are written in the letter format, meaning these reports follow the same structure as a letter. They include the recipients address, the sender’s address, the date, a salutation, a subject line, a closing line, and a signature. Letter reports normally extend up to two pages in length. These are usually sent to external audiences. The writing style may be formal or informal depending upon the sender’s relationship with the audience, the type of relationship the sender desires in the future, and the purpose of the letter. Like other reports, letter reports need to be accurate, reliable, and objective, so they are more factual and tend to be less persuasive than the typical business letter. Their objective is to provide information as clearly as possible so that the reader or readers can make an informed decision. Graphs, charts, tables, or drawings may be used to illustrate specific points.

Formal or Manuscript Report

The main differences between formal and informal reports lie in their tone, structure, and length. Formal reports or manuscripts are long, formal reports that extend up to many pages in length. Usually these are research-based reports that include complex tables and calculations. Remember that a formal report should reflect and maintain the organization’s professional image—especially if it is to be seen by people outside the organization.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT REPORTING STYLES

In report writing, especially in short formal reports and short informal reports, the direct communicator seeks to present the information (in informational reports) or conclusions and recommendations (in analytical reports) in the very first part of the report. Using direct communication, the writer “directs” the reader to a particular course of action. The reader learns the crux of the matter immediately. The writer uses appropriate active voice verbs, a first-person account, and direct statements to convey thoughts and ideas.

When using indirect communication, the writer comes to the main point towards the end of the report. The indirect communication style is adopted in long formal reports. The writer uses passive voice construction, jargon, and third-person statements to present thoughts and ideas.

A thumb rule to follow when selecting a reporting style is to select the direct style when:

- The writer is sure that the audience will react positively to the direct tone.
- The writer knows the audience well.
- What is written has a positive feel to it.
- The matter is routine.

The indirect style should be chosen when:

- The writer is unsure about the reaction of the audience to the direct tone.
- The writer does not know the audience (when in doubt, it is better to use the indirect style).
- What is written has a negative feel to it.
- The writer wants to build up his or her case.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL REPORTING STYLES

Formal writing styles are impersonal; therefore, they are used more often in complex reports, theses, and research studies, and when reports are presented to outsiders. In contrast, an informal writing style is used to convey a personal connection, warmth, and a sense of personal involvement. An informal writing style is used in short reports, reports for familiar audiences, and internal reports.

Formal writing style is characterized by the use of third-person passive voice statements, complex sentences, and long words, sentences, and paragraphs. (For instance, it may use “It is recommended that” instead of “I/we recommend that” and “The survey results reveal” instead of “My analysis reveals.”) There is also an absence of contractions (for instance, “don’t,” which is a contraction of “do not”), idiomatic expressions, and colourful phrases. A formal writing style is used most commonly if the intended recipients are high-level executives.

An informal writing style, on the other hand, stresses the use of first-person active voice verbs and statements. It lays special emphasis on short, crisp, and precise writing that eliminates redundancy and verbosity.

Exhibit 13.3 illustrates the various kinds of reports, along with their preferred communication style.

Exhibit 13.3
Types of Report by Purpose
and Communication Style

No.	Type of report	Purpose	Category	Preferred communication style
1	Compliance	Respond to government agencies and laws of the land	Informational	Direct
2	Operating	Monitor and control operational activities: sales, shipping, production, etc.	Informational	Direct

Exhibit 13.3

No.	Type of report	Purpose	Category	Preferred communication style
3	Situational	Describe one-time events: trips, conferences	Informational	Direct
4	Investigative	Examine problems; supply facts	Informational	Direct
5	Recommendation	Solve problems; assist in decision-making	Analytical	Direct
6	Yardstick	Establish criterion; evaluate alternative course of action	Analytical	Direct
7	Feasibility	Predict viability of proposed course of action	Analytical	Indirect
8	Research	Studies problems scientifically; defines hypotheses	Analytical	Indirect
9	Proposals	Offer to solve problems; investigate ideas; sell or market something	Analytical	Direct
10	Excel Dashboard reports	Allows unlimited information on one page; clear and effective display through charts, tables. Are highly interactive and customized to the requirements of the organization. Allows management to set goals, targets, checks, and balances, and continuously monitor trends and KPIs.	Informational and analytical	Direct

STAGES IN REPORT WRITING

There are numerous stages to report writing. One needs to go through certain steps in order to write a successful report. This has been illustrated clearly in Exhibit 13.4

Busy executives are pressed for time. They sometimes plunge into the task of writing without adequate “pre-writing.” As a result, the report looks like a hurriedly assembled gathering of all the information the writer could find at the time of writing. Some reports seem to be identical clones of existing reports with only the basic facts updated. Presenting a report as the client/recipient wants it, rather than as the writer wants to present it, requires careful planning and strategic skill.

Pre-writing/Planning Stage

Pre-writing includes the tasks to be attempted before actually writing the document. The first task is to know what writing the report actually entails. Reports are solicited documents and therefore a practical tip here is to first extract information from the requester of the report, either directly or discretely, by enquiring about his or her specific requirements. This is done by asking questions such as:

- Why is the purpose of the report?
- What aspects should the report cover? (scope)

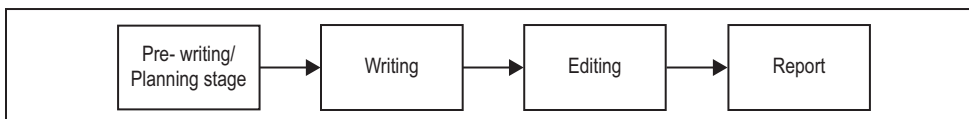


Exhibit 13.4
Stages in Report Writing



Busy executives only read certain sections of the report and skip the rest of it.

- What level of detail is required?
- Can background information be made available?
- When is the report due?
- Is the report for personal or public consumption?
- Is a direct or indirect structure preferred?

Once the “audience perspective” is taken care of, the writer can focus clearly on the goal for report writing. This involves three important steps:

- Define the problem statement
- Identify the problem question
- Write a statement of purpose

Using the techniques discussed in Chapter 2, the writer should frame the issues around the central theme. This means that the writer should anticipate some core concerns. On the basis of the issues that have been identified, the writer can then plan his or her strategy. For instance, he or she can prepare mind maps, tree diagrams, pyramids, or any other planning tool to include relevant aspects.

If the report is informational, a plan of action can be framed. If the report is analytical, then more issues need to be anticipated as the writer is also providing views and recommendations. For example, if the core concern is non-performance of xyz branch of ABC Bank, the writer will focus on one or more of these issues:

- Discussions with branch manager
- Competitor analysis

- Location analysis
- Past records
- Survey of front office staff
- Survey of customers

Anticipating these concerns may help the writer determine how much information needs to be collected and from what sources, the level of background research required for completing this task, the organization structure to follow, and the tone to be used for this type of report.

The writer can further break this down by using the pyramid approach:

Main Point 1: Improve infrastructure; Location; Aesthetics

Physical layout:

- Colour scheme
- Improving the atmospherics
- Making the location attractive
- Streamlining systems to manage customer traffic
- Improving queue systems
- Making customer communication at the front office convenient
- Parking lot?

Main Point 2: Improve HR policies; Implement promotion schemes

Quality of leadership

Employee satisfaction

- Promotion avenues
- Role definition
- Role expectation
- Career path
- Training for staff: computer skills/communication skills

Main Point 3: Improve Customer Service and Visibility

Advertising strategy

- Radio
- Marketing schemes
- Tie-ups with other organizations
- Promotion of financial schemes
- Service culture
- Customer satisfaction

Assume for a moment that the writer would like to conduct research on these. What does he or she do? Some possibilities are:

- Personally meet the employees/customers one-on-one
- Meet the employees/customers in groups (focus groups)
- Administering questionnaires

If the writer decides on one of the first two options, the issues that he or she has anticipated will provide the background information to probe into the minds of respondents. If the writer opts for a questionnaire, he or she needs to include questions that will gather employee/customer perspectives on important issues.

Regardless of the approach adopted, the writer then needs to prepare a work schedule.

Work Schedule

A *work schedule* is a helpful planning tool during a specific period of time that identifies the tasks to be done with their allotted time frames. It helps to plan activities for a given period of time. In some cases, a work schedule must be approved by the decision-makers. It acts as a guiding document for the activities to be carried out during that time period. A work

Exhibit 13.5
Sample Work Schedule for
a Report

Sn.	Task	Time frame
1	Background research	Wks 1–2
2	Design the survey instrument/pilot test	Wk 3
3	Field investigation	Wk 4–5
4	Compile and collate the information	Wk 6–7
5	Write the first draft	Wk 8
6	Edit and finalize report	Wk 9

schedule includes an inventory of activities, their proposed start and completion dates, and a budget in some cases.

A work schedule is different from a work plan in that the latter is more detailed, as it identifies (as goals) the problems to be solved, makes them finite, precise, and verifiable as objectives, indicates the resources needed and constraints to be overcome, outlines a strategy, and identifies the actions to be taken in order to accomplish the objectives and complete the outputs.

Exhibit 13.5 gives an example of a typical work schedule for reports, assuming that the report has to be submitted within two months.

The Writing Stage: Organizational Strategies

There are various kinds of organizational strategies involved in writing various kinds of reports. Some of these have been discussed after this.

Organizational Strategies for Informational Reports

Informational reports are generally the easiest to write as they do not involve complex analysis and reasoning. Usually, writers adopt the direct approach when composing such reports. Even in case of bad news or neutral messages, writers steer towards a direct approach after a quick buffer or opening statement. The main purpose is to deliver information in an effective and efficient manner.

The writer can arrange the material according to the following criteria:

- Comparison
- Importance
- Sequence
- Chronology
- Spatial
- Territorial

Comparison: This organization shows points of similarities between competing brands, products, or companies as seen in Exhibit 13.6.

Exhibit 13.6
Comparison-based Organization
of Report

Introduction
Main Body
Brand A Vs. Brand B
Factor 1
Factor 2
Factor 3
Factor 4
Conclusion

OR

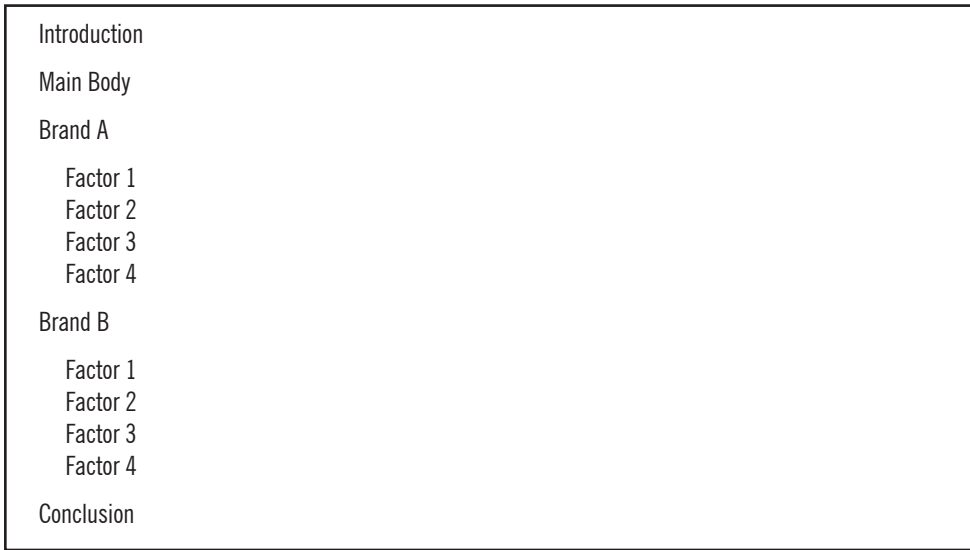


Exhibit 13.6

OR



Exhibit 13.7
Importance-based Organization
of Report



Importance: In this type of organization, information is arranged from the most important to the least important, or vice versa. This happens when the most important cause of an event is to be highlighted or the product line contributing most (or least) to the revenue has to be mentioned. Exhibit 13.7 shows this organization.

Sequence: In this organization, information is arranged according to the sequence in which events occurred. This is used when describing a process, a training programme, and the like, as seen in Exhibit 13.8.

Chronology: This is when information is arranged according to the time frame in which events occurred, for example by what happened in January, February, and so on. This is used when explaining the growth/origin of a country, company, or a brand, taking certain years in chronological order as milestones. Exhibit 13.9 demonstrates this type of organization.

Spatial: This is when information is arranged according to how a physical object works or how a physical space looks. This organization is used to describe layouts, product design, and so on.

Territorial: This is when information is arranged according to the area or topography. This is used to explain various factors relating to a company or its sales/product line in a region-specific manner. Exhibit 13.10 shows the structure of a territorial organization-based report.

Exhibit 13.8
Sequence-based Organization
of Report



Exhibit 13.9
Chronology-base Organization
of Reports



Exhibit 13.10
Territorial Organization of
Reports



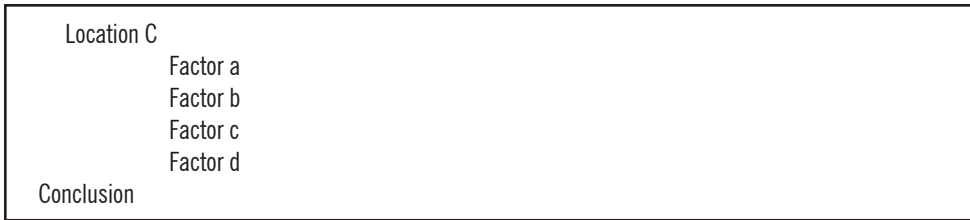


Exhibit 13.10

Organizational Strategies for Analytical Reports

Essentially analytical reports serve the following purpose:

1. Assess opportunities: They help investigate the potential of a new business venture or launch of a new brand, relaunch of an existing brand, and report on the risk and return. They also identify possible opportunities and competitor threats, and aid in decision-making.
2. Solve problems: Analytical reports are like troubleshooting reports where past failures are analysed to prevent similar failures in the future.

As discussed, there are two writing styles: the direct and the indirect. To select one of the styles, it is important to consider the predisposition of the audience.

What is the attitude of the audience towards this document: positive, neutral, or negative? When the audience is receptive, it is best to use the direct style of reporting. If the audience is skeptical, it is best to be indirect. Focus on conclusions and recommendations in the direct approach, and focus on arguments (induction style) when adopting the indirect approach. Exhibits 13.11 and 13.12 show the structure followed by the two approaches.

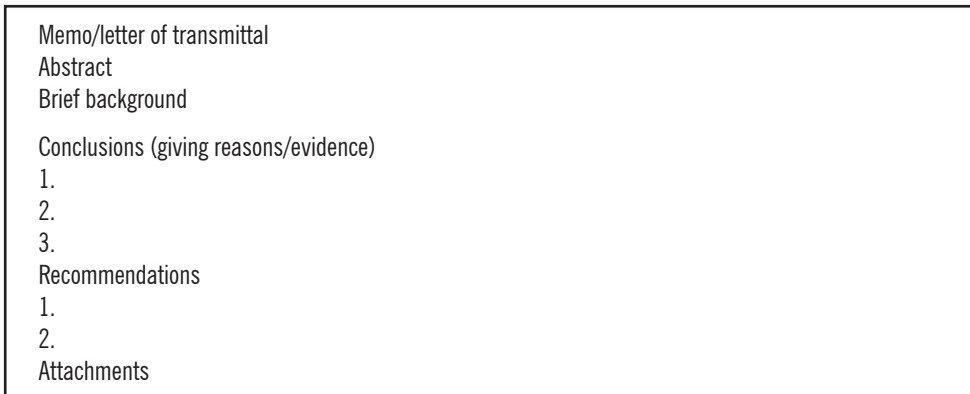


Exhibit 13.11
Structure of the Direct Approach

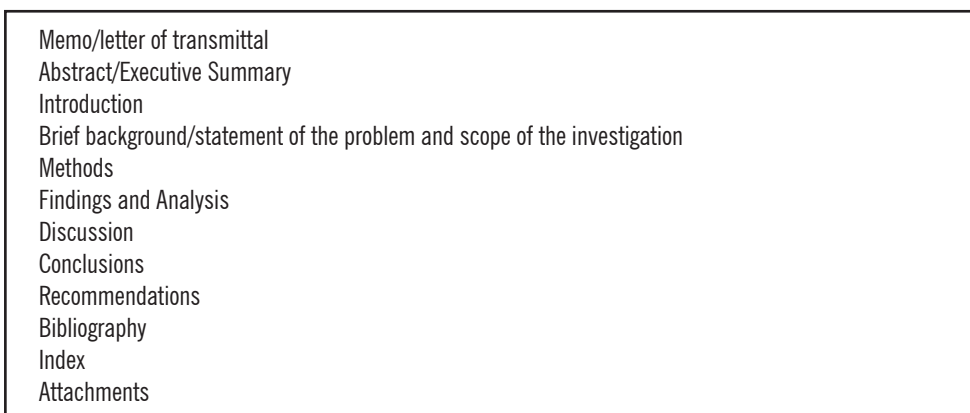


Exhibit 13.12
Structure of the Indirect Approach

Editing and Proofreading

Editing a document is of extreme importance. Just as we expect a newspaper report to be perfect, with ideas arranged in a coherent manner, we also expect documents to prescribe to standard business writing. Misspellings, typos, and improper phrasing sink the writer's credibility. They create an impression that the writer or company is amateur and unprofessional and does not pay attention to details.

The writer must edit for higher order concerns (logic and writing patterns) as well as lower order concerns (grammar and punctuation). The professional reader looks for the following in a document:

- Information for decision-making/action
- Coherent arrangement of ideas
- Flow of arguments
- Proper formatting
- Highlighting of important points
- Error-free language

Macro-editing

Look at the big picture and try to analyse whether the report will achieve its objective. Consider how appropriate the report is for the reader and how effectively their needs will be met by it.

- Omit information that readers do not need.
- Add examples wherever necessary.
- Reorganize the information/arguments wherever necessary.
- Strengthen the transitions between paragraphs and sections.
- Check the format, whether it is direct or indirect, or in the form of a letter or a memo.

Micro-editing

Micro-editing refers to careful reading for mechanical errors relating to:

- Sentence structure, use of tenses, and subject–verb agreement, especially in complex sentences.
- Use of unnecessary words, jargon, clichés, or words that are redundant. Shorten sentences that are needlessly long.
- Paragraph structure. Take a printout of the report and skim through each paragraph carefully. Review the logical sequence of ideas and the arrangements of the paragraphs. When doing so, make sure to link the each paragraph to the next one. Also adhere to the “one paragraph one thought” principle.
- Headings. Check the headings to make sure that they are numbered and formatted to indicate the difference between the various heading levels.
- Punctuation. Proofread to ensure correct punctuation, grammar, spelling, and tenses. Finally, ensure that the document follows the prescribed writing style followed in the organization.

PARTS OF REPORT

A report comprises various parts. Some of the important features of the report have been discussed after this.

Report Problem and Title of the Report

The report title indicates the broad theme of discussion or investigation. It forms the basis of how the report is classified. The report title must be indicative, short, and positive.



Information Bytes 13.1

“Communication” is a bad title for a report, as it indicates too broad a topic. “Cross-cultural communication” is also not a very good title as there is no definite perspective to it. Instead of these, it is better to go with the following title: “Cross-cultural communication: Removing barriers.” This kind of title creates interest and adds a separate dimension to the themes.

The Problem Statement

For complex reports, a written problem statement is extremely helpful. Once the writer has understood the essence of the assignment, he or she can write his or her own interpretation of the problem. Talking to the person who commissioned the report clarifies any doubts about the writing task. Once the dimensions are clear, the problem statement can be written. An example of a problem statement is:

Problem statement: *ABC Bank is unhappy with the functioning of the new branch and wants to investigate the reasons for poor performance, low morale, and high attrition among the employees there.*

The writer can further define the problem by writing a specific question that he or she would try to answer in the report:

Problem question: *What are the causes of non-performance of this new branch of ABC Bank's?*

At this point the writer can once again talk to the requester of the report regarding how the report should be organized. Should it only include information regarding the current scenario or, is he or she looking for recommendations to improve the situation as well? Should there be a comparison with other branches? After this discussion, the writer can then draft a statement of purpose.

Statement of purpose: *To investigate the reasons for non-performance of xyz branch of ABC Bank.*

Defining the problem statement keeps the document on track. Further, it ensures that the document is focused on the task at hand and does not give unnecessary details. Usually, strong active verbs define the problem question well. In this case, the writer has used the verb “investigate” to define the task. This verb is specific, somewhat measurable, and action oriented. In contrast, “to find out” appears weak in comparison. Some other words that can be used are:

- To suggest
- To determine
- To evaluate
- To recommend
- To approve
- To select

Statements of purpose are useful in many ways. First, they tell readers what to expect if they continue reading the document. A good statement of purpose is:

- **Specific:** Avoid making general statements like “The purpose of this document is to explain the rules of the personnel department.” Rules are too generic and may include a number of aspects.
- **Concise:** Phrases like “The purpose of this document” use too many unnecessary words. Instead, just say “This document describes... explains...outlines...” (For instance, “This document explains four reasons for the high turnover in the xyz branch and suggestions to improve this situation.”)

- **Targetted:** Avoid sounding like the report is for everyone. Instead, make the audience an integral part of the purpose statement. For instance, one can say that the document informs employees working on Shop Floor II about the revised health and safety rules.

Statements of purpose can also identify the scope and limitations of the proposed report.

Scope: *Scope* refers to the depth of the report's coverage. What aspects and issues would the report consider? Defining the scope sets the boundaries of the report.

Statement of purpose with scope: *To investigate the reasons for non-performance of xyz branch of ABC Bank specifically with respect to productivity, morale, and attrition of employees.*

Limitations: Some purpose statements include limitations. *Limitations* are the anticipated drawbacks in finding, sorting, and analysing information. Limitations are also boundaries within which something is evaluated. High costs, poor infrastructure, lack of time, non-availability of specific records, and inadequate sample size are some possible limitations.

Statement of purpose with scope and limitations: *To investigate the reasons for non-performance of xyz branch of ABC Bank specifically with respect to productivity, morale, and attrition of employees. The study is limited to the front office staff only.*

To move ahead with the task of writing, the writer must confirm the statement of purpose with the requester, so that the writer can be sure of the direction in which he or she is heading.

Based on the statement of purpose defined thus far, the writer has come to the conclusion that:

- The report is an informational report.
- Background information regarding data on past performance indicators is required.
- The report will present the facts only.

Now imagine that the requester requires that the writer also recommend a course of action for the xyz branch. In that case, the writer would need to frame the issues around the central theme. The report would become an analytical report, where sufficient background information is required and the report presents both facts and recommendations backed by sound logic.

Components of a Formal Report

The components of a formal report can be divided into three main parts: prefatory, the report proper, and the supplementary parts. The report proper has already been discussed. The prefatory parts are the introduction of the report.

There are six prefatory parts of a report. The first is the *title fly*, which is the report title by itself. Following the title fly is the *title page*. This page includes the title, the writer, the authorizer of the report, and the date. If the report was authorized in writing, it is traditional to follow the title page with the *authorization message*. This component is not written by the writer, but should come from the individual who requested and authorized the report.

The *preface* is a personal message from the writer and follows the authorization message. Its purpose is to informally introduce the report to the reader, and it takes the place of a face-to-face meeting. Alternatively, the writer can write a *memo* or a *letter of transmittal*, a document that “transmits” the report to the reader's hands. This is like a cover letter because it transmits the report. It is a brief summary of the report, giving the background, context, findings, and recommendations. It ends with a warm note of thanks. Exhibit 13.13 shows a sample letter of transmittal.

The transmittal letter may include the following:

1. The authorization of the person who commissioned the report.
2. Acknowledgement to those who helped with the report.
3. Unexpected findings, major conclusions, and special suggestions.
4. Emphasis on follow-up research.
5. Personal comments.
6. Encouragement to the reader to take action.

To
 Director of Campaigns,
 Stallion Advertising,

From
 AIM Lucknow

30 June, 2015

Sir,

Enclosed is our final report on indirect advertising techniques that can be used for design of advertising campaigns. The report contains our analysis of different indirect marketing techniques and lists the product categories that use these techniques. We have analyzed the impact of these campaigns and list the scenarios in which these methods are most effective. The report outlines our recommendations on the use of these techniques, and we are confident that these would be useful in designing effective advertising campaigns.

We take this opportunity to thank the campaign research department of Stallion Advertising for the assistance extended to us. If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, kindly contact us at the aforementioned address. We thank you for this opportunity and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

AIM Lucknow

Exhibit 13.13
 A Sample Letter of Transmittal

After the preface comes the *table of contents* and the *list of illustrations*. The table of contents lists the major parts and subdivisions of the report in the order in which they appear in the report. The numbering of the contents is marked by Roman numerals (I, II, III), letters (A, B, C), and Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3). Exhibit 13.14 shows a sample table of contents.

The list of illustrations appears on a separate page, immediately following the table of contents. It lists all the figures and tables (visual aids) that are included in the document. It may also be titled “Exhibits.” The title and page number of every illustration must be included in this list.

The final component of the prefatory parts of a report is the *executive summary*. The executive summary is a highly condensed version of the report; it extends up to two pages at the most.

The executive summary is one of the most important parts of a report as it is often referred to in order to reference critical/key points. In addition, it is often used as the main document that is circulated to several people when the entire report is too lengthy. It differs from an abstract in that an abstract is usually just a single paragraph. The executive summary on the hand presents information in the same order as the report. It includes information under headings such as “Introduction,” “Aims,” “Background,” “Methods,” “Findings,” “Conclusion,” and “Recommendations.” It does not contain any tables, charts, footnotes, jargon, abbreviations, or exhibits. Bulleted and numbered lists are appropriate to use in executive summaries. Experts recommend that an ideal executive summary should be up to a tenth of the length of the actual report.

The final component of a formal report is the appended parts that come after the main body of the report. This includes an appendix, bibliography, glossary, and index, if required. The *appendix* is the place for supplementary information. This information is not important enough to be included in the main report, but it supports the investigation and analysis done by the report writer. The appendix can include tables, pictorials, graphs, charts, or other additional information. It appears immediately after the last page of the report body.

The *bibliography* refers to the sources from where the data have been collected. The sources may be books, newspapers, magazines, government publications, public associations,

chambers of commerce, and yearbooks. The bibliography acknowledges the contribution of the various sources that have been used in the work. It also gives readers an opportunity to refer directly to these sources for detailed information. The citation for these references is within the text and at the end of the document.

There are three major formats used to cite data:

- American Psychological Association (APA) style; the list of references is simply titled “References.”
- Modern Language Association (MLA); the list of references is titled “Works Cited.”
- Chicago Manual of Style (CMS); the list of references is titled “Bibliography.”

Regardless of the format used, a citation must include:

- Name(s) of author(s)
- Title of journal, newspaper, book, or electronic source
- Title of article
- Year of publication
- Page number(s)
- Volume of the journal
- Book chapter, where required

A *glossary* is an alphabetic listing of special terms and words with their meanings and definitions. It is useful for both technical and non-technical readers. At times, important terms may be explained in footnotes instead of the glossary.

The *index* includes an alphabetical list of topics, their divisions, and subdivisions along with their locations in the report. It is a quick guide to locating a subject in the report.

Writing Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

When writing the “Findings” section of the report:

- Describe the data presented in tables and graphs.
- Highlight important findings and provide the supporting data immediately. The general rule is to place the text just before the table or chart being described.
- Describe the highest proportions in the table or chart first.
- Describe relationships, don’t just symbolize them.
- Put your results in context by comparing them with previous research or with existing theory in order to explain them.
- Give reasons to account for differences between your research and previous research or existing theory, or to explain unexpected results.

When writing the “Conclusions” section of the report:

- Keep the conclusions relatively short (usually a couple of paragraphs).
- Keep the level of technicality relatively low.
- Emphasize what the report means.
- Focus on the main results and what they mean.
- Interpret the overall meaning; integrate similar findings.
- Add no new details.
- Do not merely summarize the report.

Sometimes recommendations appear in the same section as conclusions and sometimes they form a separate section. Two questions need to be answered in the “Recommendations” section:

- What does the writer want the reader to do?
- What action needs to be taken?

Findings: About 55 per cent of respondents preferred the television for viewing advertisements relating to the brand. Most of the respondents are indifferent between newspapers and magazines, which are the second best preference and can be used alternatively.

Most respondents have seen the advertisements on hoardings followed by television advertisements, as can be seen in the figure attached. Print media was not used as effectively as it should have been. This gives us an indication regarding which medium to use for future communications.

Conclusion: Our research concludes that the advertisement media currently being used most for the brand is the hoarding, whereas the audience’s preference is for television commercials. This is essentially due to the emotional connection with the car, which appears to be missing in the case of hoardings.

Recommendation: In light of this, we recommend that the brand should place greater stress on advertisement via television as well as print media for appropriate brand recall. The appeal can be a combination of the emotional, self-expressive, and functional.

Exhibit 13.14
Examples of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendation Sections

To write recommendations and have them be accepted by the reader, generate the recommendations from the conclusions drawn from the research. Use terms such as *should*, *can*, *must*, and so on. Exhibit 13.14 shows examples of the findings, conclusions, and recommendation sections of a report.

Headings

In reports, headings act as the internal outline. They show readers the importance of each section. They also indicate the most important point in a particular section. Headings categorize the report and make it easier to read.

Headings can be one word or a phrase. They can be set in bold, in italics, and in a different colour or font size to make them stand out from the text. Headings orient the reader to the text that follows them. It is recommended that the headings be indicative of the paragraph that follows them. This is especially true in the middle section of reports, when explaining the findings.

Headings should be specific. For instance “turnover” is less helpful as a heading than the phrase “reduced turnover in Plant Z.” Also, do not make headings antecedents to pronouns.

Avoid this: *Headings.* In reports they act as the internal outline

Instead use this: *Headings.* Headings act as the internal outline in reports

The following general guidelines apply to headings:

- **Levels:** The level of a heading corresponds with its relative importance in the outline. There are three types of headings: first level, second level, and third level. First-level headings can be centre-aligned, bold, in a larger font, and even in a different typeface in some cases. They indicate the beginning of a new major section. There must be considerable white space between first-level headings and the text. The second-level heading is of smaller font, set in bold, and left aligned. The third-level heading is of the same font size as the second-level heading, but is aligned with the paragraph. See the example In Exhibit 13.15.

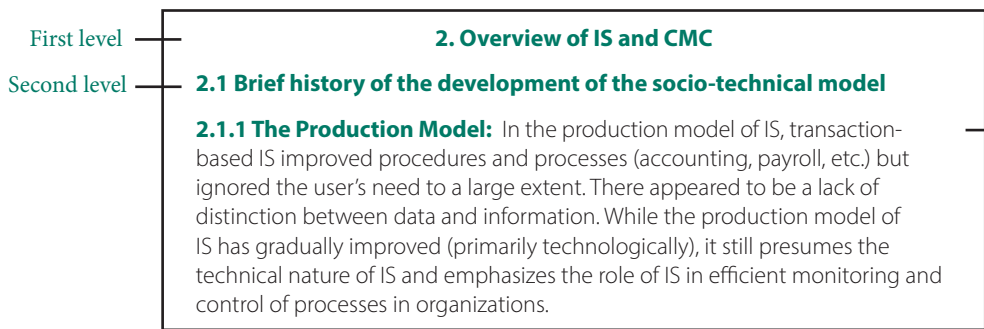


Exhibit 13.15
Examples of Various Heading Levels

- **Consistency:** A second important guideline refers to consistency. All headings of equal importance must have the same font size, alignment, and space management. This can be achieved by numbering them in a proper manner.
- **Numbering:** First-level headings are numbered either as Arabic numerals (1.0; 2.0 3.0, and so forth) or as Roman numerals such as I, II, III, and so forth. Second-level numbering is done correspondingly as 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and so forth for the Arabic system, and as A, B, C, and so on for the Roman numerals. Third-level numbering is done corresponding to Arabic numerals as 1.1.1; 1.1.2, 2.1.1., 2.1.2 and as a, b, c, for Roman numerals.

There are fourth- and fifth-level headings as well, but in business writing specifying the three levels is usually enough.

VISUAL AIDS IN REPORT WRITING

Visual aids make a report easy to read and understand. They provide a break from the monotony of endless text and lengthy descriptions. A few guidelines to make graphics clear to the reader are:

- Introduce the aid before the reader sees it on the page. Both the text and the graphic should be self-explanatory. The graphic must support or supplement the explanation and vice versa.
- Number each visual aid and label them correctly. Give each a title that emphasizes the verb and not the pronoun or noun. For instance, do not label a visual aid “Sales Figures: Ranbaxy.” Instead, label it “Ranbaxy: Declining Sales in First Quarter.”
- Make sure that the graphic is clear and attractive and has plenty of white space.

The three most common aids are the line chart, the pie chart, and the bar graph. Though statistical packages will automatically generate such charts, in terms of communication these must be modified.

Line Charts: Line charts typically show trends or changes over time. A line chart has two axes—a vertical axis (the Y-axis) and a horizontal axis (the X-axis). Experts recommend the following to prevent distortion:

- Keep the horizontal and vertical gradations equal.
- Keep the plot lines to a maximum of seven and differentiate between each line by using colours.

Pie Charts: Pie charts divide a whole (100 per cent) into segments the same way one cuts a pie. Always begin at the 12 o'clock position and move clockwise, starting with the largest segment and proceeding in descending order. Computer programmes will not arrange the slices in this order automatically. The data must be sorted in this order before using it as the source of a chart.

Include the value and the label of each “slice.” By using different effects, information in a significant slice can be highlighted.

Bar Graphs: Bar graphs are used to illustrate comparisons, especially changes in quantity. The bars can be horizontal or vertical (column). Use horizontal bar graphs to compare data over a single period of time or to represent length or distance. Vertical bar graphs are used to compare data over a period of time or to represent height.

Use a multiple-bar graph when comparing two or three variables within a single bar graph.

A *pictogram* uses pictures or symbols rather than lines or bars to represent data. It helps the reader visualize the importance of the information being presented.

Tables are useful for presenting a wide variety of statistical and technical information. A statistical package will automatically generate a table, but these have to be modified to make information clear to the reader. At times, much of the data is of no relevance to the reader and has to be excluded when presenting a report.

<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>This paper examines the trends relating to the increased use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) at the workplace in the Indian context. The increased use of CMC particularly in emerging economies such as India raises concerns relating to its efficacy, particularly when compared to the more natural face-to-face communication. Driven by a collectivist mentality, Indians have difficulty in communicating unpleasant messages and prefer to use the face-to-face communication mode to convey feelings and emotions. Given this background, the paper investigates the impact of the new media for information gathering and exchange, and decision-making in an Indian context. A survey was conducted of professionals working at the lower, middle, and upper levels of management in public and private enterprises. Respondents express satisfaction with the CMC media except for dimensions relating to social interaction and the quality of task coordination. The study concludes that the purpose of communication is an important mediator of satisfaction with the CMC mode. Though the trait theories are valid, the theories do not accurately predict media selection behaviour and satisfaction. Given the obvious benefits of computer-mediated communication in organizations, the study recommends that organizations, especially government-owned enterprises, need to invest in media adoption as well as media accessibility, as well as strengthen relationships among its employees keeping in mind the task–technology fit.</p>	<p>Exhibit 13.16 A Sample Abstract</p> <hr/> <p>Purpose statement</p> <hr/> <p>What the study is all about</p> <hr/> <p>Method and context of the study</p> <hr/> <p>Conclusion</p> <hr/> <p>Recommendation</p>
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Visuals must be explained in a clear and lucid manner. Avoid using the third-person voice and verbose statements. For instance, instead of saying “It is recommended in the research that...” it is better to say “I recommend...” or “The study recommends...”.

A SHORT NOTE ON PREPARING A SUMMARY OR AN ABSTRACT

There are five sections of an abstract. These are the problem statement, the methods used in the research, the results or findings, conclusions, and the major recommendations. These five sections are not discrete but blend seamlessly in the preparation of an abstract.

The problem statement: Start by giving the context in brief, followed by the questions that the research or the study intends to analyse. Indicate the gap that previous research has not covered and explain why it is necessary to fill the gap. Use the present tense and the active voice in this section.

Methods: Follow the problem statement with the techniques used in the study. Indicate the sample unit, size, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures. Typically, the past tense is used in this section.

Results: The next statement should briefly outline what has been learnt from this study. Explain the results without any reference to data. Use phrases such as “a large majority...” to indicate opinions. Active voice and present tense is used in this section.

Conclusion: Give one or two major implications of the research. Active voice and present tense is used in this section.

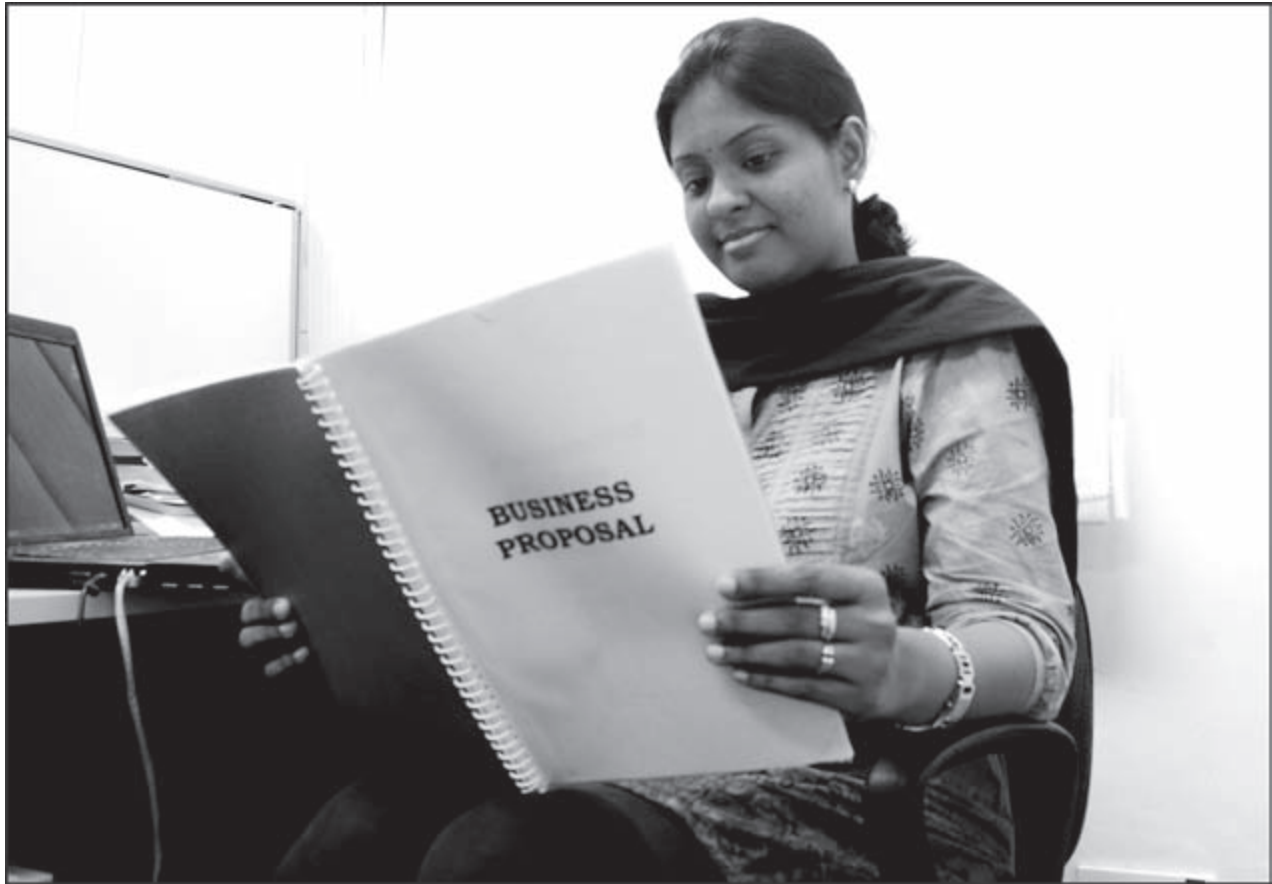
Recommendations: Give a major recommendation in this section. Use active voice and the present tense.

Exhibit 13.16 illustrates a sample abstract.

BUSINESS PROPOSALS

A *proposal* is a persuasive document that is designed to sell an idea, product, or service. It is an offer or a bid to do a project for someone. It seeks approval, permission, or funding from the target audience for completing the proposed project. It is different from reports in the following ways:

- Its tone is persuasive rather than informative. It is designed to elicit a positive response from the reader. Reports may be both informative as well as persuasive.
- The emphasis is on positive wording and building credibility.



The tone of a proposal is persuasive rather than informative. It is designed to elicit a positive response from the reader.

- It is based on a future prediction, namely the hope that the product, idea, or service would yield beneficial results for the reader; reports, on the other hand, are based on past performance.
- The budget section is a necessary aspect of proposals; this is not always so in a report.

A proposal must contain information that permits the audience to decide whether to approve the funding or hire the services of the proposer or both. Proposals are solicited by issuing an RPF—a Request for Proposals—which is advertised in trade journals, newspapers, chamber of commerce newsletters, or through individual correspondence.

Types of Proposals

Internal and external proposals: Internal proposals are also known as justification reports. These are persuasive documents sent by an employee to a superior. They concern ideas for improvement of facilities at the workplace, recommendations, and other internal matters. They demonstrate the initiative, leadership, and confidence of an employee. These are short and informal. External proposals, on the other hand, are proposals sent externally, usually to current and potential clients. These are commonly used in consulting and sales. These are long and rather formal.

Academic (research) and business proposals: Academic proposals are proposals that seek funding or a grant from an institution or other academic body. Academic proposals may also seek approval of a plan or a research study. These are supported by strong background and secondary research. Business proposals, on the other hand, seek to influence the reader to buy their idea, product, or service. They are backed by the credentials of the company proposing the idea.

Long and short proposals: Proposals may be as short as two pages or as long as 100 pages. Long proposals are usually in response to a public advertisement or an RPF.

Solicited and unsolicited proposals: A solicited proposal is a proposal that is sought by the reader; the reader establishes criteria that are listed in the RPF, which the proposer has to comply with. Unsolicited proposals are those that are sent voluntarily to the readers. They serve as letters of introduction and set the pace for future discussions.

Quotations: A quotation is a price list sent to the reader for the services proposed to be rendered by the proposer; it contains no other details. Normally the proposer is well known to the reader. A quotation is also a response to a Request for Quotation (RFQ).

Parts of a Proposal

The proposal can be divided into the prefatory parts, the main document, and the supplementary sections, just like a report.

The prefatory parts are:

- Title page
- Cover letter
- Problem statement
- Table of contents
- List of illustrations

The main document consists of:

- Summary
- Introduction
- Statement of offer
- Analysis
- Manpower
- Scheduling

The supplementary section includes:

- Glossary
- References
- Appendix

These are explained in the following section.

- **Title Page:** This should indicate the name of the individual writing the proposal, the company name, and the date of submission.
- **Cover letter:** A long proposal must be accompanied by a cover letter. A cover letter should introduce the proposer, present a brief biography of the proposer, outline his or her credibility, and explain why the proposal writer is the best firm for the job.
- **Table of contents:** A long proposal must have a table of contents. This should indicate the organization of the proposal and the numbering of the pages.
- **List of illustrations:** Most proposals depict timelines, project schedules, and data in the form of charts and graphs. The exact location of these pictorial representations must be indicated in the list of illustrations
- **Summary:** A summary of the proposal in terms of the problem statement, solutions offered, the benefits of the proposed offer, and the sender's qualifications, experience, and expertise is essential. This is useful to the readers who may only skim the proposal. Such readers would be expected to read the summary (and little else) thoroughly, and hence the summary should be complete in all respects. The summary should include the research objectives, the methodology to be adopted, and the expected outcome of the project.

- **Introduction (purpose and problem):** The purpose statement explains why the proposal has been submitted and what is hoped to be achieved. Identify the stimuli that prompted the preparation and submission of the project proposal.
- **Statement of offer:** In this section, put forth the case and sell the idea, product, or service. Get the prospective client excited about the opportunity of working with you. If it is an internal proposal, get the reader concerned at the problem that you present. For example, it is not sufficient to say that “we have trained thousands of professionals in management skills”; instead, it is better states as: “For nearly two decades, we have dedicated ourselves 100 per cent to training managers, engineers, and others in management-related subjects. Since our inception in 1990, we have conducted no less than 1,600 workshops on leadership, communication, and management skills.”
- **The problem statement:** Reveal what is known about the context surrounding the proposal; elaborate on the problem and explain why the proposed offer will solve it. Discuss the benefits of undertaking the project and what advantages would accrue if it is approved. Build evidence or proof of the competency of the proposing company.
- **Analysis:** This is usually discussed under two headings, “Technical” and “Financial.” This section explores the feasibility of the proposed idea. It includes:
 - a) Technical descriptions of mechanisms, tools, facilities, and so on
 - b) Financial or cost implications, including fees, levies, warranties, and other charges
- **Deliverables:** This includes terms and conditions
- **Manpower:** This includes:
 - Key personnel and their biographical background
 - Managerial structure
 - Control and reporting mechanisms
- **Schedules:** This requires laying out timelines taking into account the constraints, implementation plan, and Gantt Chart.
- **Budget:** This is a proposed estimate of the expenditures along with the heads of accounts. A justification note may also be added.
- **Conclusion:** This is:
 - A summary of the key points and hope of meeting the requirements
 - A call for action
- **Glossary:** This section describes the technical terms used in the proposal. It is helpful for lay readers, who are the secondary audience of the proposal. The glossary must be assembled in alphabetical order.
- **Works cited:** This section describes the sources of references used in the proposal. It must follow designated formats prescribed by the APA, MLA, or CMS for both in-text as well as end-of-document citations.
- **Appendix:** Any additional information may be put in the appendix section.

The Process of Submitting a Proposal

Submission of a business proposal is by no means an easy task. It is not as simple as presenting a standard version of one’s competencies and achievements. Though there are no success formulas for writing a winning proposal, there are certain guidelines for drafting a proposal:

- A proposal must be customized to the requirements of the reader.
- A proposal is a persuasive document; hence, it must influence the target by providing as much detail as possible about the writer, the company, and previous projects of relevance.
- A proposal must be realistic; it must be pragmatic instead of promising lofty visions that are too far-fetched.
- It must be genuine. People can read through fluff and recognize tall claims easily.

POINT	Proposals are long documents.	Proposals can be as short as a single page.	COUNTERPOINT
	Proposals are informative in nature.	Proposals are always persuasive in nature.	
	Proposals are always sent externally and used in consulting and sales.	Proposals are sent internally as well, where they serve more as reports justifying something.	

A submission requires several steps in a sequential order:

- **To bid or not to bid:** This decision has to be made as soon as one hears that a tender has been floated, an advertisement announcing a potential bid has been made, or a verbal confirmation has been received from a client. This decision will depend on the perceived viability of the project, the manpower requirements, available budget, expertise, competitor analysis, and other factors.
- Once a decision to bid has been made, the following is done:

Depending upon the level of effort required for the bid, a team is assembled to discuss the RFP or the guidelines provided. Inputs from various key personnel and departments are sought to refine the offering. After a cost analysis, a storyboard proposal is drawn up that is a prototype of a proposal in the initial stage of testing. A strategy is devised to obtain maximum information about the audience, the competitors' offerings, and the requirements of the client. Exhibit 13.17 demonstrates the process of submitting a proposal.

Audience analysis involves obtaining answers to the following:

- Who is going to read my proposal?
- Who are the secondary audiences?
- What is their personality type: detail-oriented, pragmatic, consensus-based, or visionary?
- What is their operational role: user, gatekeeper, decision-maker, or advisor?
- What is their level of technical expertise with respect to the proposal: expert, informed, initiated, or uninitiated?
- What is the criterion for selection: price or quality?
- Who is the gatekeeper?

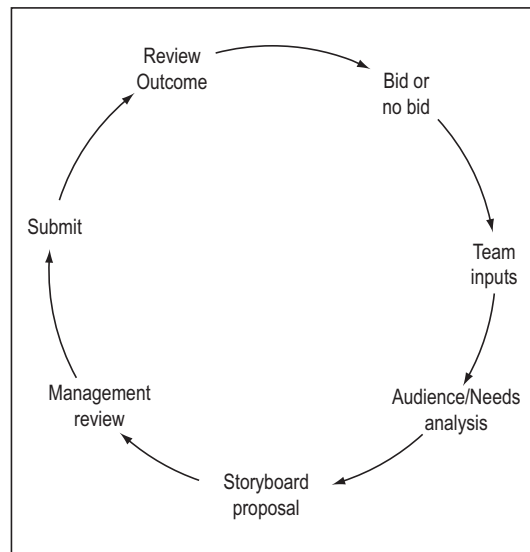


Exhibit 13.17 Process of Submitting a Proposal

- Who did they previously patronize?
- Has the partnership ended?

Views from all key personnel and departments are assimilated. At this stage, the proposal is ready to be drafted. After a management review, the proposal is submitted to the concerned authority. The penultimate stage in the proposal drafting process is the win/loss analysis, which is essentially a post-mortem on the exercise.

SUMMARY

- Research information does not have value if it is not presented in a coherent form and to those who need to apply the results. Reports are facts and arguments on a specific subject presented in an orderly and systematic manner.
- According to their requirement in the organization reports can be either routine or task. According to their length, reports can be classified into the long formal report, the short formal report, and the informal report.
- If they are classified according to purpose, they can be either informational or analytical. By physical form, reports can be memos or letters or manuscripts.
- In direct reports, the reader learns the crux of the matter immediately, while in indirect reports, the writer comes to the main point towards the end of the report.
- Writing reports include a pre-writing or planning stage, a writing stage, and an editing or proofreading stage.
- Pie charts, line charts, and bar graphs are visual aids to help report writing.
- A business proposal is a persuasive document that is designed to sell an ideal product, or service. It seeks approval, permission, or funding from the target audience for completing the proposed project. Proposals can be internal or external, academic, long or short, solicited or unsolicited, etc.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. For one of your projects you have referred to three sources of data. One is a book on marketing, while the second is an article related to the theme of the project. The third is an article downloaded from the Internet. Write the bibliography specifying each source.
2. Identify the following report headings and titles as talking or functional/descriptive. Discuss the usefulness and effectiveness of each:
 - Need for tightening Computer ID System
 - How to implement Quality Circles that work
 - Alternatives
3. For each of the following situations, suggest a report type and briefly discuss with the help of a mind map how the report will be organized:
 - Your manager wants a quick overview of extranets. She knows that other companies are setting up extranets but she has little knowledge of what they are or how they work. She would also like to explore the feasibility of setting up one.
 - Uday Enterprises must implement a worker incentive wage programme. This plan would ensure standards for warehouse workers and generously reward them with extra pay and time off. The current wage programme pays everyone the same, causing dissension and underachievement. Other wage plans, including a union three-tier system has drawbacks. Expect management to oppose the worker incentive plan.
 - Your company is organizing a symposium of architects. You are the convener. You have selected a site, set up a tentative programme, and are now working on keynote speakers and exhibitors. You have to report your progress to the organization's president.
4. The dean of admissions is concerned with the poor response rate of students towards the newly launched insurance management programme. As the admissions coordinator, you have been entrusted with the task of investigating the problem. Create an outline for the same. What organizational pattern will you use to present the information?
5. The education officer is asked to report on the progress of the Mid-Day Meal Yojna in ABC state. INR 200 million had been granted in January 2015 for this scheme. Comment on the type of report that should be given. What organizational structure should the report follow?
6. Students of a premier management institute have asked for a review of the teaching pedagogy followed in the institute. This is in line with the international norms of business education. The director of the institute has asked the Student Council to prepare a recommendations report so that the same could be discussed in the Faculty Council. Write a short report of two pages.

7. The academic chairman of a management institute wants to launch an orientation programme for the newly inducted students. She has requested you as the member secretary to design one such programme and present a proposal to her. Give an outline of the same.
8. Write short notes on the following:
 - Difference between a letter and a memo of transmittal
 - The pagination process (page numbering) in report writing
 - First-level, second-level and third-level headings in reports
 - Two possible formats of the table of contents
9. Every visual (graphs/charts) has a story to tell. What visuals would make it easiest to see each of the following “stories”? Also, give reasons for selecting a particular visual.
 - The *Chicago Manual of Style’s* method of referencing
 - Letter reports
 - Comparing the growth rates of BRICS nations in 2015
 - The proportion of monthly income spent by the households in Canada in 2015
 - Territories assigned to each salesperson in a cement company
 - The process by which cocoa beans are processed to make chocolate in a chocolate manufacturing company

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Your manager wants you to investigate the feasibility of setting up a shopping mall in Sitapur, an upcoming satellite town near Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Keeping this context in view, answer the following questions:
 - Using the criterion presented in this chapter, what type of report is this?
 - What type of organizational structure would you propose for this type of report?
 - What points do you hope to cover in this report?
2. See the table that follows. Based on the table, answer the questions that follow (invent information if necessary):

Gender	Age group	Marital status	Working/ not working	Job satisfaction
Male	25–40 years	60% married	100% working	Medium
Female	25–40 years	48% married	76% working	Low

- Write the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of a report based on the data in the table.
 - Frame a tentative title for the report.
 - Frame an outline based on this information.
 - Using a hypothetical source, frame a reference using the APA, MLA, and CMS formats.
3. The library committee of a business school has recommended that the library be open all night. For collecting views related to this proposition, responses were collected by the chief librarian from 400 students at random. The results are tabulated below:

Response to question: Do you want the library to be open all night?

Batch	Yes	No	Can't say
First year	66%	22%	12%
Second year	84%	5%	11%

- Write the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of a report based on the data.
 - Frame an appropriate title for this report.
 - Write a memo of transmittal to the chairperson of the library committee.
4. The general manager of your company is concerned about the attrition of newly inducted recruits within a few months of their joining. She has asked you, as the HR manager, to investigate the causes and suggest measures for reducing attrition. She has a few issues she wants you to think about:
 - Is the orientation programme faulty?
 - Is the salary not attractive enough?
 - What is the perception about the work culture?

Write a memo report highlighting the issue and suggest measures for reducing the attrition rate. Your manager wants you to write this in a direct informal style.
5. The regional marketing manager wants to implement a sales force automation system in his organization. He has asked you as the branch head to investigate the benefits of introducing such an expensive system. You have been advised to collect information about

three companies who are offering such systems and conduct a comparative analysis on the same. Submit a recommendations report to your supervisor in memo format. Your supervisor prefers the direct reporting style.

6. The weekly meeting in your organization is held every Saturday at 10 am sharp. The agenda relates to the sales performance, client meetings and presentation planning, cold calls, and budget reviews. As the branch head, you chair every meeting. Prepare a meeting report of about two pages. You can invent details if necessary.
7. ABC Corporation experienced employee turnover and lowered productivity. The company conducted a massive survey, resulting in some of the following findings:

- Nearly 35 per cent of employees surveyed have children under the age of twelve.
- Nearly 15 per cent of employees have children under the age of five.
- The average employee with children younger than twelve is absent four days a year and is late to work five days a year due to child-related issues.
- Within a one-year period, nearly 33 per cent of employees who have young children take at least two days off because of failure in child care plans.
- Nearly 78 per cent of female employees and 67 per cent of male employees record job stress as a result of conflicting work and family roles.

Assuming that you are a part of the consultant team writing this report:

- Phrase an appropriate problem statement.
 - Phrase an appropriate title for this report.
 - What five conclusions can you draw from these findings regarding the issues that affect work life?
 - Suggest at least five recommendations based on your conclusions.
8. Read the article that follows this question. It describes the proceedings of a lecture with the assumption that it is connected with your work. Assume that you are a senior manager and have attended the lecture at the expense of your company. The conference was attended by nearly 200 participants and many prominent companies were represented by their heads of strategy. The lecture concluded with a brief but a very interesting question-answer session. Write a memo report to your supervisor about the lecture, its impact on your thought process, and suggestions if any.

The Challenges of Adaptive Leadership

A lecture on this theme was organized in New Delhi on the 24–27th of December, 2008, by the CII and was attended by various heads of strategy. The keynote speaker was Ronald A. Heifetz, who is the co-founder of the Center of Public Leadership at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Heifetz talked about the distinguishing feature of adaptive leadership; its similarity to the principles of evolutionary biology; how its conservative aspects are often overlooked; the kind of resistance it offers; and how it differs from the challenge of technical leadership.

Heifetz dwelt in great detail on the definition of adaptive leadership. In biology, an adaptive pressure is a situation that demands a response that's outside the organism's current repertoire. In an evolutionary sense, the organism must distinguish what DNA to keep and what DNA to discard, and what innovations to build on in order to thrive in a new and challenging environment. Applying this biological metaphor to cultures helps us to understand that adaptive work is conservative as well as progressive.

He also gave the example of Panasonic and how Konosuke Matsushita refashioned the mission of Panasonic from being just a profit-making company to being a company that had the larger social mission of combating poverty by making products that were widely affordable and would improve the lives of masses.

Adaptive leadership, in other words, is not just about change. It's also identifying what you want to hold on to. Many leaders forget to remind people that a change also involves a lot of hard thinking about what to preserve. That is why leadership is more about the mobilizing of adaptive work rather than about transformational change. Talking about transformation can lead to grandiosity—a failure to respect the enormous wisdom frequently accumulated over an organizational cultural history.

The challenge with adaptive work is to figure out how to capitalize on history without being enslaved by it. In a choice between revolution and evolution, revolutions usually fail and evolution, in which a dramatic innovation is grafted on to the best of the core competencies of the past, has a much better chance of succeeding. Adaptive leadership entails innovative experiments. It does not occur through a central planning mechanism. In an organizational mind, adaptive leadership requires an experimental mindset rather than an "I've got the answers" mindset.

Heifetz concludes that the most common source of failure in leadership is treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical ones—with a focus on quick remedy and state-of-the-art solutions. Leaders are sometimes like doctors. Doctors are wonderfully trained in being technical experts but they are very poorly trained to mobilize people to change their ways

9. Oliver Newbury, COO of a biscuit manufacturing company, is keen to explore the Indian market. He has to make a presentation to an Indian subsidiary in Mumbai. He is looking to explore the prospect of tying up with a well established biscuit brand in India.

He expects you, the HR manager, to give him a quick update (in a short report format) on dealing with people in this country. What factors do or do not motivate people? How do people show respect and deference? Do people have a hierarchical or egalitarian outlook? What about respect for time, body language, and other issues? He also expects a short note on the proposed consumer behaviour of the target market (Newbury's company makes premium chocolate biscuits popular for their exclusive taste worldwide).

Oliver Newbury, 46, is highly result-oriented. His decisions are hardly ever wrong. He is rather a perfectionist (much to your chagrin; but you are used to it now). Moreover, he has been in the industry for nearly sixteen years and is widely respected. You would like to stretch yourself for this report because Newbury is likely to be influenced by what you write. You see this as a good opportunity to be in his "good books."

Identify and write the following pre-writing tasks:

- The problem statement and problem question(s)
 - A mind map that can guide your writing
 - Audience analysis that can make your writing effective
10. The sales of Burma Biscuits for certain years are: **2011**, 6.7 million; **2012**, 5.4 million; **2013**, 3.2 million; **2014**, 2.1 million; **2015**, 2.6 million; **2016**, 3.6 million. Using relevant assumptions:
- Prepare a line chart showing the sales of Burma Biscuits. Please include the chart label as it would appear in the report.
 - Write an explanation of this chart.
11. 21st Century Finance Company is concerned about the readability of its annual report. The company has taken note of complaints by potential investors who say that they cannot understand the investor-related information. ("The language in these policies is bureaucratic jargon, double talk, a form of officialese and federalese that does not qualify as English.") The burden is on organizations to write policies that communicate rather than obfuscate. 21st Century hires you as a consultant to study its standard policies and make recommendations. Here is a sample selection (165 words):

Pursuant to Section 217(2AA) of the Companies Act, 1956, the Directors, based on the representations received from the operating management, confirm the following aspects.

- In the preparation of the annual accounts, the applicable accounting standards have been followed and there are no material departures;

- They have consulted the Statutory Auditors in the selection of the accounting policies and have applied them consistently and made judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company at the end of the financial year and of the profit of the Company for that period;
- They have taken proper and sufficient care, to the best of their knowledge and ability, for the maintenance of adequate accounting records in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956, for safeguarding the assets of the Company and for preventing and detecting fraud and other irregularities;
- They have prepared the annual accounts on a going concern basis.

A recent survey gave the following results:

I am able to read and understand the language and provisions of the annual report:

Age group	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
18–34	2	9	34	41	14
36–49	2	17	38	33	10
50–64	2	11	22	35	31
65+	1	2	17	47	33

- Using data given to you, write the findings, conclusions, and recommendations sections of the report.
 - Create a title page for the report.
12. Write a formal proposal arguing the benefits of a mini-sports complex and gym for your company. Your primary audience will be the company president, Raghav Behl, the CEO, who does *not* see the need for the gym. Other members of your audience will probably include the board of directors, and other administrators and managers within the company. As the HR manager, you feel that a gym and sports facility will energize the workforce; it will also be useful as a hiring tool and hopefully improve productivity. You also know that most of your competitors have one in place.
13. Compose a proposal to your academic head to create a break room in the academic block. As the academic representative, you get a lot of feedback from students who complain that the time between classes is too little to run over to the mess and get something to eat! You propose that the break room would have a canteen

and proper seating arrangement with adequate ventilation.

14. The Learning Tree, a private education firm, is keen to submit a proposal on designing as well as managing the writing lab for a premier management business school. It has already met the faculty and has learnt the management is looking to outsource the writing lab on a contract for two years. Design a two-page proposal in a letter format to the faculty (select a name) outlining your firm's ability to manage the writing lab.
15. Globe Trot, a consulting firm in California, offers a number of training programmes for employees being sent to other countries. Globe Trot provides pre-visit orientations, counseling, foreign language training, and family cultural immersion programmes. Mridul Sharma, senior partner in Globe Trot has recently learnt that Neo Motors plans to open a vehicle assembly plant in Kenya. Although the Kenyan government will own 51 per cent of the plant and will supply most of the labour force, the plant will be run by Neo Motors managers and engineers. Responding to an RFP, Mridul has to submit a proposal of about 8 to 10 pages to the director of Neo Motors.
 - If you were Mridul, what pre-writing activity would you adopt to frame your proposal? What would emerge out of this with respect to the situation described?
 - How could Mridul make the proposal more persuasive? Outline strategies for this.
16. As the head of HR for Tec Shell Corporation, you are concerned about the writing styles of your sales professionals. You recall a meeting with Stella of "Design Consultants"; her credentials in the field of professional communication had impressed you tremendously.

You arranged a meeting with Stella and gave her some writing samples from your salespeople. You were impressed with her critique of their writing and

her thoughts on how it could be improved. Her process calls for a two-day workshop followed by individual coaching by phone and e-mail. Her prices are not cheap. The workshop for 12 salespeople would cost INR 60,000, and a 45-day retainer for follow-up coaching would be another 15,000. The cost includes pre- and post-training evaluation, but there is also the cost of travel, hotel, meeting room, and meals for the two-day event—expenses that could easily add up to another 12,000, not to mention the cost of time away from the job. This type of expense is not in your budget, but you think you can make a case for the workshop to your boss based on the benefits of the training. You also assume that other regional vice-presidents in the country are having a similar problem. Perhaps your region can serve as a pilot for the company for this type of training.

Stella left you with some brochures that explain the features and benefits of her services. You checked her references and her clients gave her rave reviews. You dash off a quick e-mail to Stella asking her to submit a proposal addressed to Francis Gerson, Vice President Sales and Marketing, to this effect. You ask her to give your reference when writing the proposal.

- You represent Design Consultants. The head of HR of Tec Shell Corporation has just asked your firm to send a formal proposal for a writing workshop. Write a persuasive proposal outlining your offer, fees, and training schedule.
- From the perspective of the head of HR, write a proposal letter to your supervisor Francis Gerson, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, asking for approval and funds to conduct the training as a pilot project. You have a good relationship with Mr Gerson and know that though he is tough-minded and no-nonsense, he is willing to try new things if he sees a potential payoff, even in tight economic times.

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Visit the Web site: <http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/general/report/1.xml>. See the sample report. What is the organizational structure of this type of report? Why is such a structure used? Do you think it enables the reader to take a decision?
2. Visit <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/report2.html>. What do you think are the major differences between an abstract, introduction, and conclusion?

FURTHER READING

- Gerson and Gerson, *Workplace Communication: Process and Product* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2007).
- Kitty Locker and Stephen Kacsmarek, *Business Communication: Building Critical Skills* 3rd edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007).
- Larry M. Robbins, *The Business of Writing and Speaking: A Managerial Communication Manual* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996)
- Laura Reave, “Promoting Innovation in the Workplace: The Internal Proposal,” *Business Communication Quarterly* (December 2002) 65(4):8–21.
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- William Baker, *Writing and Speaking for Business* (Provo, UT: BYU Academic Publishing, 2008).

ENDNOTES

1. Taken from <http://www.chem.gla.ac.uk/research/groups/protein/pert/safire.rules.html>, accessed on June 22, 2011.

CASE STUDY 1

Improper Preparation and Planning for Report

Summary

The case reveals how poor planning and lack of preparation for a report writing task can impact team performance. The case highlights the role of effective communication at the workplace, and how lack of it can lead to project failure, even if the team is technically competent.

Introduction

Tulip Interactive Services Ltd. (TIS) was an Indian consultancy firm based in Bengaluru, providing ERP solutions to its clients. They had recently bagged a deal from PSZ Ltd., an Australian utility company engaged in the distribution and retailing of electricity and gas. They were the largest utility firm in western Australia worth \$24 billion and a customer base of over a million which included residential, SME’s, and corporates.

In the first phase, TIS was required to deliver a report on billing and consumption pattern of customers availing services of PSZ Ltd.. Mr Neeraj, Service Delivery Manager of TIS appointed a team comprising of Mr Animesh, Off-shore Delivery Lead and Mr Ravi, Senior System Engineer. According to the client specifications, the TIS team could contact them any time for support services.

Problem

Ravi was handpicked by Animesh because of his technical expertise and functional competence. Ravi started preparing the report diligently, while working on the details of

the report, Ravi discovered that two of the important client requirements could not be met under the current scheme of things because of tool limitations. He informed about the same to Neeraj over a call and asked him to get it removed from the document.

Animesh, however was not aware of the situation. He assumed that all was going on well under Ravi’s guidance. Even the e-mail update from Ravi mentioned the same. This was one of the Ravi’s e-mail to Neeraj:



During the process, Neeraj happened to meet Animesh a couple of times and discussed the progress of the report. Animesh suggested some changes in the report that required the report layout to be altered, along with some other minor, but important cosmetic changes.

Meanwhile, Animesh went on an annual leave, and the work was handed over to Mr Ravidorai who was not at all aware of the all the changes that were supposed to be incorporated into the report. He was aware only about the changes suggested by Animesh.

As the project deadline reached, the report was handed over to Ravidorai who started reconciling the report from their system. It came as a great disappointment to him

that none of the changes suggested by Animesh were incorporated into the report. Also, he could not find two requirements mentioned in the document since he was not informed about its exclusion and the reason for the same.

Impact

Since no proper communication happened between senior management and the clients, the changes that were supposed to be incorporated into the report were missing. As Neeraj did not convey the MoM to the clients as well as the team, the whole team failed to deliver the project and this badly affected the reputation of the company. Due to lack of proper project updates, the final report lacked the key elements required by the client.

Ravi had to rework the whole project so as to align it with the clients' requirement. This cost the company both resources as well as time. It also put a question mark on the perceived functional and technical competence of the senior management as they were the ones who were representing TIS.

Questions

1. What is the role of planning in report writing? What are the key considerations involved in report writing at the workplace?
2. How should TIS introspect on its procedures after this incident?

CASE STUDY 2

Mistimed and Misplaced Announcement in the Office Memo

Summary

The memo in the office notice board read, "From August 14th onwards, the height of cubes will be reduced from 5.5 feet to 3 feet. As you all are aware that the organization believes in promoting "better together" idea; this is one such step in making this belief a reality."

This one liner creates a big tension amongst the employees who feel that the management has not adequately communicated their decision to them.

Introduction

Rahul Srivastava who had been working as a lead engineer for Rowbland Technologies, was surprised to read this first thing in the morning. Rahul joined Rowbland Technologies five years ago.

Rowbland Technologies was established in 1995 by two IIT graduates as a startup firm that designed websites for clients. With the internet booming in the late 90's Rowbland Technologies started getting many clients, and subsequently, sales started growing at a good pace. As the sales picked up, Rowbland Technologies started hiring more to meet the demand from its clients. By 2008, Rowbland Technologies had over 500 employees.

Rowbland was known to be very aggressive as far as delivery of products and achieving targets were concerned. Global recession that had hit world economy in 2008 had a major impact on the sales of Rowbland Technologies. Many clients who were affected by the recession started to reduce their expenses. Hence a number of clients opted not to have a website upgrade that particular year. This was a major blow to Rowbland as a major portion of revenues were generated from upgrade of websites.

Problem

The HR of Rowbland, Mr Yadav believed that the employee morale was at an all time low due to low quarterly results posted by the company and low possibility of a bonus in that financial year. He urgently felt the need to raise the morale of the employees- an innovative idea that would raise the 'zing' factor in his team.

It was increasingly getting clear to him that serious communication barriers existed amongst the employees. One of the reasons, he decided was the height of the cubes-the seating space designated for the employees just opposite his cabin. Yadav was of the opinion that reducing the height of the cubes would greatly reduce the barriers and facilitate employee happiness quotient-apparently the latest buzzword in the management circles. He took this idea to a few senior directors who, after a few deliberations, expressed satisfaction with Mr Yadav's intent and plan of action. Post the informal discussion, the directors met and decided that reducing the height of cubes was indeed a good idea for a number of reasons: Firstly, it would help the supervisor to talk to team members more easily. Secondly, the employee to employee interaction would improve as the cubes that acted as barriers earlier would be removed. The directors believed that this initiative would improve morale and workplace commitment for a team that had yet to hear some positive news since a long time.

Impact

What was seen as a populist move by the directors elicited a lukewarm response from the employees. The employees felt unhappy that they were neither informed nor taken into confidence by the top management, for a decision that involved them. Ritin Raj, an associate engineer, who joined the company a year ago, believed that this move was taken by the management to exercise tighter control over the employees.

Most employees thought that this was a move designed by the management to secure greater control over the staff. Everyone felt under the radar. Some employees secretly dreaded the vigilant eyes of their supervisors especially when accessing social media sites!

In short, the employees believed that by putting up this notice the company was trying to get more out of each employee in order to cope with the current economic crisis. They now thought that they have lost their sense of privacy and would be constantly monitored by their supervisors

throughout the day. Ritin Raj on behalf of all the employees was considering writing a letter to Mr Yadav to convey the negative mindset that this move would create in the minds of the people.

Questions

1. Why had the project misfired?
2. Compose an e-mail to Yadav on behalf of the employees.
3. What should Mr Yadav do now?

Chapter 14

EMPLOYMENT COMMUNICATION

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Prepare for employment by focusing on your core strengths, capabilities, and networking skills, and by building a strong résumé.
- Understand the nuances of designing recruitment-related correspondence: the cover letter, application, and resume.
- Learn ways to participate in group discussions, the first step in the employment process.
- Recognize the types of interviews and understand ways to excel in them.
- Learn to use technology that is not face-to-face to interview.

Effective communication is 20 per cent what you know and 80 per cent how you feel about what you know.

Jim Rohn¹

INTRODUCTION

Whether one has newly entered the job market, has been recently laid off, or plans to shift to another job, it is necessary to carefully craft a communication strategy to seek gainful employment. There are four general tips to achieve this:

- Understanding yourself: what are you looking for in a job? What are your current credentials? What are your existing capabilities? How can you prove yourself useful to an organization?
- Prepare an effective résumé that showcases your strengths and highlights your potential.
- Network efficiently with colleagues, batch-mates, seniors, and alumni. Use both offline and online modes to do this.
- Build capabilities and skills that add meaning and value to the résumé.

NETWORKING

Networking refers to building relationships with people known as “contacts.” Networking relationships are built on mutual assistance and support. Cultivated deliberately, they go beyond the mere exchange of business cards and phone numbers.

Generally, a networking relationship begins with a promise of assistance, and then that help is reciprocated in some form in the future. These contacts then transform into connections, especially when promises are fulfilled and appointments are kept. An important aspect of effective networking is follow-up. Sales professionals cultivate their networks by sending e-mails regarding the latest information, updates, and articles on their areas of expertise to their respective clients.

Online networking is especially gaining prominence. In addition to simply keeping in touch via Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, it is advisable to show an interest in current events and social concerns. This attracts potential contacts who view you as someone with wide-ranging interests and in-depth knowledge about the industry.

There are several mistaken assumptions people often make about networking:

- It is unethical.
- They do not know anyone important enough to network with.

- They do not know how to introduce themselves to others.
- It sounds too self promoting.

People are branded as poor in networking skills because:

- They fail to take initiative.
- They criticize the person or the company who helped them after the work is done.
- They forget to keep in touch with the person who has helped them.

CORRESPONDENCE RELATED TO RECRUITMENT

There are three essential components of employment communication:

- The cover letter and résumé
- The group discussion
- The interview process

The Cover Letter and Résumé

The best cover letters are short and to the point. Rather than being annotated copies of résumés, they should be in the form of a personal note to the recruiter. An ideal cover letter indicates what the person can do for the organization and not what the person has already done.

Cover letters are essential in job applications. Experts say that in business, every communication matters. Before writing a cover letter do the following:

- Study the position and job description carefully.
- Find out about the company.
- Investigate what skills and attributes the company looks for to highlight them in the cover letter.

An ideal cover letter should:

- Be short; about half a page.
- Be free of errors.
- Have an appropriate subject line.
- Mention how the applicant found out about the vacancy.
- Highlight how the applicant fits the job.
- Focus on what the candidate can offer and not what the candidate has already done in terms of academic achievements and experience.
- Provide full contact details of the applicant.

The typical format of a cover letter is the “I–You–Us” format.

The *I* in the first paragraph demonstrates the applicant’s interest in the position and reasons for applying to the organization. For instance: “I am applying for the position of Assistant Manager in your firm. This position fits well with my education, experiences, and



Communication Bytes 14.1

The design of a cover letter depends on the position applied for. The position would then dictate the form the cover letter would take. When the applicant is well qualified and has significant related work experience, the line of argument would focus on the experience the applicant has. When the applicant has the required educational background but very limited work experience, the line of argument would focus on the applicant’s skills and expertise. If the person has neither the relevant work experience, nor the educational background and expertise, the line of argument is generally focused on “an intense desire to work in a different area.”

career interests. My research reveals that your organization offers the type of work profile I am looking for.”

You denotes the hiring organization’s point of view; it indicates the best fit between the firm’s requirements and the applicant’s capabilities. For instance: “During my 9 months’ tenure at my previous organization, I employed skills related to sales and distribution setups. While in that position, I initiated and maintained a retail data analysis programme. This complements the requirements of your organization. Given my expertise in retail management, I am confident that I have the abilities to be an effective contributor to your organization.”

Us indicates what the firm should do to contact the applicant for an interview. For instance: “To further discuss my qualifications, I can be reached at (phone number). Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to meeting with you.”

The ideal cover letter should not be filled with too many “I” statements, as these dilute the perception of the applicant. Too many “I” statements make the applicant sound pompous and self-centered. It is wise to temper these statements with the use of passive voice and the third person. For instance, consider how the following paragraph can be re-written to temper “I” statements.

Version 1

In my previous job, I worked as the Assistant Manager and was responsible for overseeing retail operations. I created an administrative system that resulted in an orderly inventory management system. I was also responsible for smooth distribution, management, and interaction with the second-tier distribution network.

Version 2

In my previous job I worked as the Assistant Manager and was responsible for overseeing retail operations. Our team developed an administrative system that resulted in an orderly inventory management system. Smooth distribution management and interaction with the second-tier distribution network were a few of my other job responsibilities.

Recruiters use the cover letter for various purposes:

- To judge whether the candidate has a good command over the English language.
- To learn whether the candidate has taken the time to match their skills with the firm’s requirements.
- To compare at the outset whether the job requirements match the candidate’s skills and experiences.
- To excite the recruiter and encourage him or her to open the résumé .

A sample cover letter format is shown in Exhibit 14.1.

Exhibit 14.1

A Sample Cover Letter Format

<p>Your Street City, State, Zip Code</p> <p>Date</p> <p>Name of Individual/Recruiter Title Name of Employer Street Address or PO Box Number City, State, Zip Code</p>

Exhibit 14.1

Dear Mr/Ms/Dr _____:

Opening Paragraph. Attract attention. State the reason for writing, naming the position or type of work. Identify explain where you came across the opening or who recommended it to you.

Second Paragraph. State why the present employment interests you; give concrete reasons why the work is appropriate for you. Showcase your skills, strengths, and achievements and relate them to the job at hand. Demonstrate your capability by using examples, illustrations, and specific contributions in previous jobs.

Closing Paragraph. Reiterate your interest in the job opening; indicate your availability for a personal interview. Suggest a time and day suitable and convenient to both. End with a strong positive note, saying that you look forward to an interview. Indicate that your résumé is attached with the cover letter.

Sincerely yours,

(Signature)
Full Typed Name

Enclosure

Cover letters and application letters are written in response to specific advertised job openings. These are therefore “solicited.” Unsolicited applications are those that are written when the applicant has come to know about a job opening from a third party such as an employee of the firm, a head hunter, or an acquaintance.

Response to an Advertisement

This is the most common form of cover letter. It typically includes the following:

- The name of the company and their address
- The name of the person to whom the letter is addressed
- The name of the position the applicant is interested in
- An explanation of how the applicant meets the requirements listed in the job posting

Response to a Blind Advertisement

In this type of a recruitment advertisement, the name of the company is not disclosed. Letters responding to a blind advertisement will include:

- The address provided or a PO box number
- A generic salutation such as “Dear Sir/Madam”
- Information on how the candidate learned about the advertisement
- The name of the position the candidate is applying for
- An explanation of how the applicant meets the requirements listed in the job posting

Response to a Job Placement Agency

An applicant who sends letters to a placement agency will include more personal requirements that are not included in the cover letter to the company. Salary expectations, relocation

possibilities, and other constraints as well as expectations constitute this type of cover letter. Letters to recruiters or agencies will include:

- The recruiter's name and address
- Information on how the candidate learned about the advertisement
- The name of the position the candidate is applying for
- Salary range
- Willingness to relocate
- An explanation of how the applicant meets the requirements listed in the job posting

Cold Call Letters to Employers

Cold call letters are unsolicited in that they are written without any formal advertisement for the position. The applicant writes a cold call letter based on a third-party referral, a person working inside that organization, or just "out of the blue." A cold call letter will include:

- The company's name and address
- A specific person to whom the letter is addressed
- An introduction to the applicant
- The applicant's expertise and area of interest

Letters of Inquiry

Letters of inquiry are letters or e-mails that seek information related to the position advertised. The purpose of a letter of inquiry is to:

- Tentatively request information related to a possible job opening
- Demonstrate knowledge of the organization
- Communicate how the applicant can contribute to the needs of the organization
- Request a personal interview

A typical letter/e-mail of inquiry has the following structure:

- Why the applicant is interested in that particular organization
- The job profile the applicant is interested in
- The applicant's qualifications, experience, and expertise
- A request for consideration for existing or anticipated job openings
- A request for an appointment
- A request for a telephone conversation

Other Types of Job Correspondence

Acceptance Letter

An acceptance letter generally follows a telephone conversation and is used to confirm the terms of employment. The opening line accepts the employment offer and expresses gratitude for the same. The letter ends with a promise to serve the organization faithfully and discharge the duties ethically.

Thank You Letter

This is used as a follow-up to thank someone who helped the applicant in their job quest. It is an etiquette that's often ignored. The general norm is to send the letter with 24 hours of receiving the offer letter. The letter is crisp and short. Reiterate commitment to the organization and express appreciation for the support.

Withdrawal Letter

It is ethical for applicants to inform other organizations where they have applied for positions that they have accepted another offer, and to withdraw their application from consideration. This is an informational letter and begins directly. This letter establishes the goodwill of the applicant.

Rejection Letter

At times, a candidate may have to reject an offer, especially when the offer does not fulfil their interests and personal inclinations. This requires tact on the part of the applicant. The letter must maintain goodwill and, at the same time, send the message that the offer is unacceptable. The applicant may begin by appreciating the organization and the offer and then explain why they are unable to accept it at that juncture. The letter ends with a polite thanks to the recruiter.

Preparing A Résumé

A résumé is a marketing tool. It is used to screen candidates for recruitment and selection purposes. It is the first contact between a candidate and the hiring organization. According to a survey conducted by the well-known Web site *Résumé Doctor*², recruiters spend less than 10 seconds reviewing a résumé.

A résumé should not be confused with a bio-data or curriculum vitae. A *bio-data* is an exhaustive account of an individual's academic and work achievements, usually presented in a chronological or a sequential format. It is presented to public sector companies and is normally about four to five pages in length, depending upon the applicant's experience and age profile.

A *curriculum vitae* is an exhaustive account of an individual's academic achievements and is presented to universities and educational institutions for research, teaching, and training purposes. It is about four to five pages long. Its main focus is research results, theses, academic proposals, and research papers that have been presented and published.

Writing a Résumé

Résumés are characterized by customization and continuity. Crisp and precise, they range from one to two pages. A great résumé cannot guarantee a job offer, but a bad résumé will negatively impact the applicant's job prospects. Below are a few indicators that compel recruiters to give a résumé a miss:

- Spelling mistakes
- Grammatical errors
- Too factual a tone; the résumé reads like a job description
- Incomplete information
- Poor formatting
- Excess length
- Poorly organized
- Inclusion of too much unnecessary personal information
- Use of long paragraphs instead of bullet points
- Criticism of a previous employer
- Lack of details
- Difficult formatting (such as zip files) that may be difficult to access
- Lack of summary of skills and accomplishments
- Unexplained gaps in employment

Résumé Formats

Generally, there are two formats that are used to write résumés:

- The functional format
- The chronological format



Information Bytes 14.1

Primary skills are the essential requirements of a job, while secondary skills are the acceptable skills for a job. Thus an applicant may have strong analytical skills for a finance job but weak reporting skills; he or she may be hired as reporting skills may be developed over a period of time.

The *functional* or the *skill-based format* emphasizes the skills and competencies of the applicant. The skills vary across sectors, industries, and companies and include the following:

- Counselling, networking, communication, questioning (for HR-related jobs)
- Analytical, summarizing, statistical, logical (for finance-related jobs)
- Reporting, networking, relationship-building, brand-building, negotiation, influencing, persuasive skills (for marketing jobs)

The *chronological format* or the *linear format* emphasizes dates and years and presents information about the candidate in a sequential manner. It follows a top-down approach, where the applicant’s educational background is followed by his or her experience, extracurricular activities, and references.

Most modern organizations prefer the skill-based format as it offers the following benefits:

- It connects immediately with the requirements of the job at hand.
- It highlights current achievements rather than academic credentials.
- It focuses on active voice verbs that add weight to the résumé .
- It lends itself to electronic scanning systems as it highlights key words rather than degrees.

A résumé can be of various kinds but a typical résumé has the following components (see Exhibit 14.2 for a sample résumé format):

Exhibit 14.2
A Sample Résumé Format

	NAME
	Make your name stand out by using all caps, bold text, and/or a larger font size
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> A photograph (Optional) </div>	Address, Phone number(s), E-mail Address
	SKILLS SUMMARY
	List key strengths specific to the job
	EDUCATION
	Degree, area of study, university or college name(s) and dates, listed in reverse chronological order. Usually include your GPA only if it is above 3.5. Detail special coursework if pertinent. Do not include high school.
	RELEVANT EXPERIENCE
	Bulleted statements highlighting your relevant work, volunteer, educational, or life experiences. Target these to show an employer that you are qualified for the job.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ List most relevant information first. ■ Under each sub-category, list 3 to 5 bulleted accomplishments, skills, duties/responsibilities. ■ Start each phrase with an action verb (<i>organized, created, established, conducted</i>, and so on).
	WORK HISTORY (or PROFESSIONAL HISTORY)
	A list of employers, locations, and dates. List 3 to 5 bulleted accomplishments, skills, duties/responsibilities. Start each phrase with an action verb.
	OPTIONAL SECTIONS
	Sections such as Objective, Activities, Memberships, Honours, Interests , and References may be included only if these match the requirements of the job.

- Name, address, contact numbers, and e-mail address
- Objective (optional)
- Summary of skills
- Education (Current qualification comes first)
- Relevant experience (for the present job)
- Work history or professional history (List the position title, employer, location, and dates in reverse chronological order. Do not mention the name and address of the supervisor; only company names are needed).
- Other activities, memberships, honours, interests (optional)
- References (if required)

Exhibit 14.3

Sample Résumé of an Entry
Level Job Seeker

Trupti R.
C-45, Vijaywanta District KVE Road
Hubli Karnataka
trupti@gmail.com

Objective: Summer internship in the area of Human Resource Management

EDUCATION

Currently pursuing PGDM 2010–2012, Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow. Completed B.E (E&C) 2002–2006 from B.V. Bhoomaraddi College of Engineering & Technology (BVBCET), Hubli, securing 83.80 and placing second out of 120 students. Top 1% in 900 students

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND AWARDS

- Awarded merit certificate for two semesters for securing 2nd rank out of 120 students 2002–06.
- Awarded the “Best Outgoing Student” Award in School (tenth standard), 2000.
- Awarded the “Best All-Rounder” Award in School (400 students), 2000
- Stood first in school for four consecutive years 1997–2000

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Tata Consultancy Services, Bangalore/Chennai (July 2006–June 2010)

Assistant Systems Engineer

Roles & Responsibilities:

- Involved in quality assurance in the banking & financial sector
- Clientele included XY Pension Funds and AB Credit Cards
- Expertise in testing strategies to identify and minimize fraud and maximize recovery
- **Project Lead** of fraud offshore testing team and led a team of seven people for a year
- Responsible for test planning, execution, and reporting
- **Spearheaded** resource and knowledge management and performance management and auditing for the project

Achievements & Awards:

- **Improved defect containment ratio to more than 95%** and ensured 100% on-time delivery
- Initiated and encouraged “Idea Generation,” which generated **savings of over USD 4000** for the client
- Awarded “**TCS Gems**” for client appreciation for exhibiting leadership skills
- Acknowledged as the top performer in the group (100+) annual appraisal (2009–2010)
- Acknowledged as the top performer in the group (80+) annual appraisal (2006–2007)
- Awarded “**TCS Certified Performance Tester**” certification

POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- SPOC for staging cross block knowledge transfer sessions within client testing portfolio, TCS Bangalore

(Continued)

Exhibit 14.3 (Continued)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ladies Representative for over 300 ladies studying at BVBCET ▪ Organized counseling sessions by eminent personalities for women ▪ Conceptualized the women's day celebrations, talent hunt, and inter-departmental activities ▪ Chief Student Coordinator, Sixth Annual Youth Festival, Vishveswaraiah Technological University. Staged and managed 27 events with over 2500 participants drawn from 60 affiliated engineering colleges; ▪ Led a team of 200 students as the House Captain for two years in high school
EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
<p>Sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Led the departmental throw-ball team and won the championship for 3 years in college (2002–2005) ▪ Inter-departmental Tennikoit Doubles Champion (2004–2005) ▪ “Best Sports Girl” Award in School (2000) ▪ Captained the House throw-ball team and won the championship for 3 years in school (1997–2000) ▪ Led the House volleyball team and won the championship for 2 years in school (1998–2000) ▪ School Discuss Throw Champion (1997–2000)
<p>Cultural and Literary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Department dumb charades Champion (2004–2006) ▪ Department cartooning Champion (2005–2006) ▪ Runner-up, Inter-departmental debate competition (2004–2005) ▪ Runner-up, Inter-school debate competition (1998–1999)
<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National Social Service (NSS) member for 4 years (2002–2006), organized blood and eye donation camps ▪ Coordinator “Jyanavani” (2006), a programme to kindle engineering interests among school children

Exhibit 14.3 is the résumé of a candidate seeking entry into the job market after receiving a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degree.

List of Do's

1. Check for errors, typos, and poor grammar
2. Ensure that the résumé is suitably tailored to technology
3. Customize the résumé for each application.
4. Include an e-mail address at the top
5. Label your résumé in the format lastname.firstname.middleinitial.doc when sending it as an electronic attachment
6. Indicate future possibilities; willingness to travel; relocate
7. Be specific in terms of deliverables achieved in your previous job
8. Include appropriate workshops, training, travel, coursework, community service, and other experiences that sets one apart from other candidates

List of Don'ts

1. Be shy about expressing your strengths
2. Use personal pronouns (“I”) in excess
3. Lie or inflate your résumé
4. Include personal information such as age, gender, marital status, or religion

5. Use abbreviations
6. Exceed one page, or two at most

Scannable Résumés and Résumés Sent by E-mail

Résumés delivered through e-mail or for the purposes of scanning require different formatting. Scannable résumés are scanned using specialized software by the HR department of the hiring organization. After downloading, these résumés are put into a database and later searched or scanned for key words for a particular job requirement. Because the focus is on the right words it is important to use such descriptions to get into the “hit list.” Do not use italics, lines, bold face, graphics, underlining, boxes, shadows, or letters other than black. Also, do not use multiple column formats. Do not staple or fold either the résumé or the cover letter. Do not use parentheses for phone number and area code.

Important considerations for a scannable résumé include:

1. A keyword summary: about 20 to 30 keywords that relate to one’s background and experience should be included in the form of nouns. A good source of such key words is the recruitment advertisement. Include acronyms, jargon related to the field of work, and software capabilities, if any.
2. Keeping the font simple and easy to read: Times Roman and sans serif fonts are easy to read.
3. Margins: keep a minimum half inch margins on all sides.
4. Highlighting: For highlighting text, use capital letters and not bold face.
5. Insert your name on every page.
6. Print on light paper that is 8.5 × 11 inches, printed only on one side.

Exhibit 14.4 shows a sample résumé format for someone looking to change jobs.

Exhibit 14.4
Sample Résumé Format for
Someone Looking to Change
Jobs

Name:	Company:	Designation:	
Education:			
Degree	College	Percentage	Year
Profile:			
1. Current Company: _____			
2. Turnover: _____			
3. About company _____			
Target	Clients servicing	Products handled	Reporting to
Reportees	Verticals handled	Reasons for wanting to change jobs	Current CTC
2. Previous Company: _____			
Turnover:			
About company			
Target	Clients servicing	Products handled	Reporting to
Reportees	Verticals handled	Reasons for changing jobs	CTC

(Continued)

Exhibit 14.4 (Continued)

Add more as required.

Achievements:

- 1.
- 2.

Interest in _____ (Company)	Interest in _____ (Job profile)

E-mailing Résumés

It is always wise to ask the recruiter about the type of formats they accept. Some recruiters may prefer not to have résumés sent as e-mail attachments as they may contain virus that harm their files. There are three options available:

- Copy and paste your résumé to the e-mail along with the brief cover letter as one message.
- Attach the résumé to the message containing the cover letter.
- Send print copies by post.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A *group discussion* is a valuable tool used by organizations to gauge the personality of candidates in a group situation. In this technique, a group is given a topic and members are



A group discussion is a valuable tool used by organizations to gauge the personality of the candidate applying for a job.

required to discuss the topic among themselves for a specified time period. The sequence is as follows:

- The group assembles for a discussion.
- Members are assigned specific seats.
- They are given a sheet to fill in basic information about themselves (optional).
- They are given a topic and (usually) given some time to think about it.
- After some time, the group discussion starts.
- The panel members ring a bell to signal the group to stop the discussion.

Recruiters look for the following qualities in a potential candidate:

- Ability to get along with other people
- The amount of importance given to group objectives over personal ones
- Ability to frame issues
- Ability to suggest ideas
- Communication skills: articulation, language, and listening skills
- Assertiveness: the ability to defend one's stance
- Ability to take initiative
- Adaptability: remaining flexible to others' ideas and opinions
- Ability to think on one's feet

These traits are generally grouped into four categories:

- Knowledge
- Communication skills
- Team dynamics
- Leadership skills

Knowledge

Having knowledge about the topic of discussion and the ability to discuss it in a logical manner requires the skills of framing, analysis, and argumentation. An in-depth knowledge of the issue under discussion and the ability to analyse the issue is expected from prospective managers. This holds true for topical themes such as the “The India–Pakistan peace talks will not yield results” or “Indian railways are unsafe.” For the first theme, a patriotic argument will not help the candidate; rather the candidate should discuss:

- Previous parleys
- The main protagonists in the peace talks
- Why the current talks failed
- Some suggestions to resolve the issue

Some organizations give a case study as a topic for the group discussion. In this case, the knowledge that is expected from the candidate pertains to identifying the problem and the symptoms or triggers; examining the causes that led to the problem; suggesting possible solutions; defending one's solution; and summarizing the issue.

For abstract topics such as “If pigs could fly,” the knowledge that is expected from the candidate is the ability to create metaphors and similes; one such example was a candidate's interpretation of the topic as “Swine flu.” Thus, the ability to think on one's feet and relate the theme to the world around us is essential to deal with topics such as these.

Another important point to remember is that in a group discussion, one's opinions per se do not matter. Rather, it is the balanced arguments that one puts forth that earn us credit from the panel. Thus, extreme positions should be avoided.

Communication Skills

Communication skills include two types of skills: expressive skills and receptive skills. Expressive skills include the ability to state one's position and viewpoint to others in a confident and assertive manner; it includes the ability to organize thoughts in a logical and coherent sequence. Receptive skills include listening skills. This is especially important in a group. Listening well is important to assimilate various viewpoints in a group. Unless we listen well we cannot comprehend the viewpoints of others and express our own. Synthesizing, paraphrasing, and articulation are the other key communication skills expected from candidates. Use of formal language, tone, and vocal clarity are the other areas where the aspirant can take steps to improve.

Team Dynamics

The purpose of a group discussion is to test a candidate in group or team situations. Specifically, the group discussion tests candidates on their ability to influence others. There are several methods we can use to influence others. In a group discussion, one can influence others by use of knowledge, expertise, empathy, information, and networking powers. Team skills are demonstrated by listening carefully to the views of others, disagreeing politely with others (do not use statements such as "I disagree with you"; "I do not agree with what you say"; "you are wrong"; "this is not correct"; and the like), and by appreciating the views of the other team members.

Leadership Skills

With reference to a group discussion, leadership implies setting an agenda, taking initiative, and giving direction to the group. It is also about summarizing and allowing others to express their views freely. It is not easy to be a leader in a group as everybody belongs to same peer group and may resent individuals who assume leadership roles. The best way is to assume leadership in a natural manner without intimidating anybody.

Classification of Group Discussions

There are four types of group discussions:

- Topical group discussions
- Case study-based group discussions
- Abstract group discussions
- Controversial topic group discussions

Exhibit 14.5 gives a detailed description of each of these, along with tips on how to excel at each type.

Evaluating Group Discussions

What do senior managers have to say to candidates appearing for a group discussion? Some suggestions are:

- Candidates must speak in a group discussion.
- It is important to be as natural and spontaneous as possible.
- Candidates must organize their thoughts before speaking.
- Candidates should use simple, jargon-free language in their communication.
- Candidates are welcome to seek clarification if required.
- Candidates are expected to be assertive. Assertiveness is a preferred trait as opposed to aggressiveness.
- Candidates are expected to exercise restraint and be calm even if provoked.
- Candidates must involve others. Those candidates that engage others in the group discussion through verbal or non-verbal communication are perceived as better team players.
- Candidates must offer original perspectives. Innovative ideas and originality are important.

Category	Topical	Case Study	Abstract	Controversial
Description	Knowledge intensive: extensive knowledge about the topic is required. Non-knowledge intensive: Requires structured thinking and ability to frame the argument	A specific problem in a situational context is presented to candidates, who in turn are required to recommend solutions for the same. This may be conducted in a discussion format or as a role play	A broad theme is given that requires out-of-the-box thinking. Involves lateral thinking and unconventional perspectives	A topic is presented in a debate format that has two sides or positions to it. The topic is set in a contemporary context, and pros and cons are discussed
Examples	Foreign direct investment, stock markets, liberalization, employment scenario, capital convertibility, rupee versus dollar, inflation, export–import, politics, environment issues	Leadership, strategy perspectives, marketing issues, people management, financial implications	Popular sayings, quotes, analogies	Private foreign universities should not be allowed to set up campuses in India
Preparation Tips	Make a two pages of notes on sectors like banking, insurance, retail, telecom, IT, ITES, healthcare, agriculture, and so on. Know about developments in last year and prospects of each sector. Read newspapers and magazines on current issues, specially the year-end issues that capture the highlights of the year gone by. Also watch and listen to the news and current affairs programmes on news channels	Read case studies downloaded from Harvard Business School and other case repositories. Brush up on strategic management and the area of your specialization. Practice costs and other calculations to validate your arguments	Practice such topics with your friends; also read books on group discussion and study ways to deal with such topics	Prepare a list of such topics; decide your position; validate arguments; read extensively on gender issues, environment issues, and other important topics or flavours of the season
Tips	Demonstrate not only knowledge but also interpretation; give a balanced viewpoint; present facts; be objective	Give a holistic perspective to the problem; use contextual and audience analysis techniques; apply skills of analysis and synthesis to give solutions; be innovative; be factual	Widen perspectives beyond the obvious; use imagination, be humorous	Have a standpoint; do not retract it. Accept others' viewpoints gracefully; support your own views with reason and logic

Exhibit 14.5 Types of Group Discussions

How does the panel consisting of senior professionals assess candidates? Communication is the most visible aspect of a group discussion and hence lends itself to observation easily. The panel considers the following questions:

- Who initiates the discussion?
- Who speaks the most and for how long; who follows and precedes whom; whom do people look at?
- Who interrupts others; who becomes quiet suddenly; who looks at whom?
- Who uses what assertions; what gestures are being used and by whom?
- Who asks the most questions?
- Does anybody smile or criticize others' ideas?
- Who is a good listener?
- Who dominates the group and who uses aggressive language?
- Who is the most influential participant?

The task is the desired end result of the group discussion. The group is given a task and has to conclude that task in a satisfying manner. With respect to the task, the panel observes the following:

- Who steers the group to a plan of action?
- Who gives suggestions on framing the issue and bringing it back into focus when it goes off track?
- Who asks for opinions, facts, and suggestions?
- Do participants adhere to roles such initiator, contributor, information seeker, and summarizer?
- Are any norms laid down for the discussion before brainstorming?
- Who involves others and draws them into the discussion?
- Who prevents a conflict among a subgroup?
- Who reconciles differences?
- Who summarizes the issue?
- Who imposes their decision on the group?
- What is the process used by the group to reach a conclusion: Voting? Show of hands? Consensus?
- How does the group handle stress imposed by time limits, the topic, and group members?

Real-life Scenarios: Lessons to be Learnt

We can learn how to be effective in group discussions by evaluating some real-life scenarios.

Case 1: Fighting a Personal Battle

Geetika was rather put off when she heard that one of the group members referred to women as being the weaker sex and that too with a sardonic smile. Unable to contain herself, she launched into a tirade against the male gender and their (supposedly) high-handed ways. She was rejected.

Geetika's mistakes were:

- She did not focus on the topic.
- She vented her personal feelings and opinions.
- She lost objectivity.

The persona she portrayed to the panel and the group was that of someone who:

- Is immature
- Jumps to conclusions
- Wastes others' time

Case 2: Initiating the Discussion at All Costs

Rohan thought that he would score points with the panel if he initiated the discussion at all costs. So when the topic was read out, he jumped immediately into the fray, without organizing his thoughts. He began by agreeing with the topic and elaborated on the benefits of having a love marriage to all and sundry, even though the topic required the group to comment on the benefits of arranged marriages. In his haste, he had assumed that the topic focused on love marriages. He was politely reminded by the panel about the focus of the topic; he remained a silent spectator thereafter. He was rejected.

Rohan's mistakes were:

- He made hasty assumptions about the topic.
- He made incorrect assumptions about the panel. Initiative is not the sole criteria for evaluation.
- He failed to listen.
- He made a false start; he should have spent some time analysing the topic and making notes.

The persona he portrayed to the panel and the group was that of someone who:

- Is immature
- Wastes others' time
- Is self-centered

Case 3: Obsessed with Data

Thyagaraj maintained a diary in which he noted several important statistics and figures. He used to quote these extensively in group discussion. The mistake he made this time was that he quoted many of these statistics for an unrelated topic ("Manage stress or stress will manage you"). Every statement he made had one or more statistic in it. For instance, he said: "I read in an U.S. Bureau report that 29 per cent of NASA scientists are prone to backache" and "36 per cent of villagers working in the field suffer from a physical disease due to poor posture." Both these statements are far removed from the theme at hand. Most panelists as well as the participants did not appear impressed. In fact one participant asked him the year and source of his data, to which he gave 1989 (this group discussion was in 2010) and "a reliable source" as his answer. He was rejected.

Thyagaraj's mistakes were:

- He was ego-centric; he was trying to show off his knowledge.
- He did not have all the facts; he lost credibility as a result.
- He failed to link the topic with the data.
- He concentrated on data rather than analysis and interpretation.

The persona he portrayed to the panel and group was that of someone who:

- Is superficial
- Is self-centered
- Cannot accept opinions other than his own
- Cannot exercise restraint

Case 4: Dictating the Agenda

Paritosh believed that the more he spoke in a group discussion, the more he would be noticed by the panel and the group. Consequently, he interrupted all the participants when they spoke and insistently put forth his own comments and suggestions. He also invited other members

to present their opinions in an irritating manner that left most of the group members embarrassed. Additionally, he declared that the best way the group could function was by presenting arguments sequentially, and he tried to dictate who would do what. Annoyed, the other group members requested him firmly and politely to stop dictating norms and let free flow of conversation take place. He was rejected.

Paritosh's mistakes were:

- He assumed that the panel would assess his contribution based on how much he spoke.
- He tried to set norms for the group without a consensus.
- He invited reticent members to speak, thereby putting them on the spot.

The persona he portrayed to the panel and group was that of someone who:

- Is arrogant and self-centered
- Is a poor team player
- Is immature

Case 5: The Hesitant Speaker

Prita was shy. She had a good grasp over current affairs but she was always nervous that others were far superior to her: in looks, knowledge, and work experience. Even her spoken English, she felt, was below standard. Consequently, in a group discussion she hardly spoke. If she did contribute, it was in a soft hesitant voice that was too difficult to comprehend. She was ignored by the panel for the next round of assessment.

Prita's mistakes were:

- She barely spoke during the discussion.
- She rarely raised her face when speaking.
- If she spoke, she was too soft to be comprehensible.

The persona she portrayed to the panel and group was that of someone who:

- Is insecure and lacks self esteem
- Has an inferiority complex; in communication, it is the message and the way it is delivered that is more important than diction and language
- Lacks leadership potential

THE JOB INTERVIEW PROCESS

Interviews are conversations between two or more people held for the purpose of selecting an employee from among several candidates. A candidate is tested on knowledge, experience, and behavioural and psychological orientation. The primary purpose of a job interview is to find the “best fit” in terms of attitude, aptitude, and capabilities. An interview is conducted in a synchronous manner (face-to-face, telephone, and video conference); instant messaging is also used, but on rare occasions.

The interview process helps hiring managers “size up” the candidate in person. While the résumé can be fairly exhaustive, a face-to-face encounter, even a mediated one, helps to assess the true worth of a candidate.

The attire you wear should be representative of how you will appear if you are offered the job. It is not advisable to be casual in your approach to an interview. Be comfortable within the knowledge that you have; you don't have to know the answers to all the questions. Be direct and come to the point immediately. Do not ramble. Anticipate some questions, especially the problem-solving variety.

Types of Interviews

There are many types of interviews:

1. Panel interviews
2. Sequential interviews



Always be well-dressed for an interview and greet the interviewers pleasantly, with a smile.

POINT	Interviews are fair and objective.	Interviews are often a matter of luck.	COUNTERPOINT
	The best candidate gets the job.	The job goes to the person who performs best at the interview. He or she may not be the best person for the job.	
	The interviewer is the best judge of the candidate.	There are good as well as bad interviewers. Good interviewers judge you on your innate abilities. Bad ones judge you on your projected ability.	
	Interviews are a one-way process.	Interviews are a two-way process. Candidates must seek responses from the interviewers.	

3. Stress interviews
4. Behavioural or HR interviews
5. Telephone interviews
6. Video conferencing interviews
7. Case interviews
8. Lunch/dinner interviews
9. Blog-based interviews

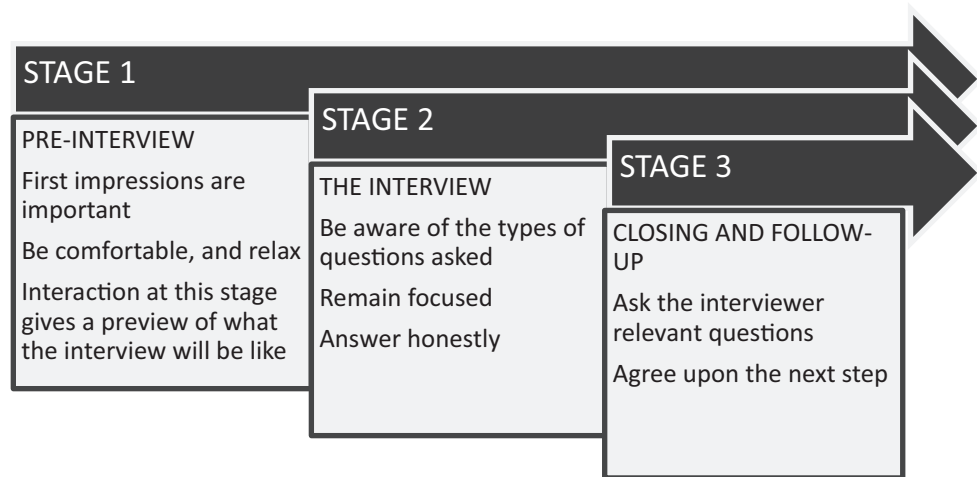
Exhibit 14.6 describes in detail the types of interviews and strategies to adopt for each type.

Exhibit 14.6 Types of Interviews

	What is it?	Description	Tips and strategies
Panel Interview	The candidate is interviewed by a panel consisting of the HR manager, representatives of the functional area, a union member, and a psychologist	The candidate is asked a wide range of questions and is assessed on a number of parameters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read through your résumé thoroughly 2. Quickly assess each panel member and understand their personality type 3. Make eye contact with each member 4. Address your answers to all members
Sequential Interview	This includes a series of interviews ranging from the simple (behavioural) to the complex (knowledge intensive)	The candidate is assessed on parameters one at a time and may be “dropped” from the list if found unsuitable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Know yourself; read your résumé thoroughly 2. Disclose information that is necessary 3. Prepare subject matter thoroughly, especially on technical issues 4. Investigate the industry
Stress Interview	In a stress interview, there is a deliberate attempt by the panel to put the candidate under stress and make him or her uncomfortable. They may sound sarcastic or plain rude.	This is done by asking several questions one after the other, by contradicting the candidate frequently, by cross-questioning the candidate’s claims, or by lapsing into unusual and generally uncomfortable periods of silence.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be psychologically prepared that this might happen 2. Be patient; do not rush in to answer; agree with the panel when they contradict you (Use the “You are right, but...” technique of empathetic assertion) 3. Do not lose your temper or show hostility towards the interviewer 4. If there is a silence, try to break it by asking a question or just smiling
HR/Behavioural Interview	The panel asks questions relating to past behaviour; this gives them a sense of how to predict future behaviour	Candidates are asked questions relating to how they dealt with a particular situation or their reactions to certain events. Some commonly asked questions are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe an occasion when you tried to persuade somebody to do something that he or she was not willing to do. 2. Describe a time when you felt that something had to be done to solve a problem and you took the initiative to do it. 3. You have worked in a different environment before this. Your new job requires you to shift to another type of work environment. How will you adjust? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anticipate such questions and come prepared 2. At the same time, do not sound overly rehearsed 3. Try to give genuine answers instead of clichés 4. Try to strike a rapport with the interviewer 5. Use the Context–Action–Result–approach

Telephone Interview	Telephone interviews are mediated through a telephone or a mobile phone	These are much like any other interview; usually they are one-on-one conversations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have your résumé in front of you 2. Sound confident 3. Sound natural 4. Show emphasis
Video Conferencing Interview	These allow the transfer of audio and video between remote sites. It is a convenient alternative to more costly face-to-face meetings. Anyone, anywhere in the world, can videoconference with the use of a microphone, web camera, and compatible software	These are similar to any other interview; there is usually a panel conducting the interview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use voice and behavioural cues 2. Demonstrate knowledge 3. Make eye contact
Case Interview	A small problem is presented to the candidate, who is then asked to generate solutions. These generally cover operations issues, and they may also cover strategy and issues related to the decline of profits or sales	Case interviews test the analytical and problem-solving capabilities of the candidate and whether the candidate's fundamentals of running a business are clear (knowledge of revenues, fixed costs, impact of fixed and variable costs, business processes in general). They also test how the candidate assumes the role of a professional and if he or she would be able to advise a client on whether an acquisition is feasible	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be fully aware of the fundamentals in your area of expertise. 2. Use a specific framework: a two by two matrix for strategy problems 3. Think like a detective; be prepared to ask questions to get further insights into the case 4. Give a specific solution; also focus on the way the answer has been arrived at (calculations, logic, equations, logarithms, etc.) 5. Practice presentation skills
Lunch/Dinner Interview	The candidate is interviewed over lunch or dinner; this technique is usually reserved for senior professionals	This type is much the same as other interviews; it takes the form of discussions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not be informal 2. Learn appropriate dining etiquette 3. Do not drink alcoholic beverages 4. Look neat while eating 5. Do not speak while eating
Blog-based Interview	Blogs or online journals can attract people who may not be reachable by a static Web site. With blogs, one can also target passive job-seekers who already have a job but are keeping an eye on other career prospects. Start-ups are finding this tool lucrative. Networking sites are other avenues. They can identify potential hires based on ongoing discussions about topics relevant to their industry. Recruiters get a good sense of that person's knowledge, thinking, and perspectives	Unlike job descriptions on Web sites, blogs are more humane, offering free flow of ideas and giving insights into the personality of the writer Employees can write about the company culture and recruiters can have engaging excerpts about company policies and the latest happenings. They can provide information on the career path in store for the candidate. This screening process works in favour of candidates too, as it allows them to get to know the company and its culture better	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One's writing skills must be good; a polished communication style is essential 2. Be expressive in print 3. Be prepared to wait as the lead time is longer

Exhibit 14.7
The Three Stages in the
Interview Process



Preparing for an Interview

There are three stages in an interview (See Exhibit 14.7). However, success depends on the suitability and preparation of the candidate.

The following steps should be taken when preparing for an interview.

Investigate the employer The more you know about a prospective employer, the better you will be able to tailor interview responses to the needs of the organization. Companies are usually impressed with candidates who have done their homework. This information may be gleaned from the following sources: company Web sites, annual reports, financial statements, and case studies. Find out all you can about the leaders of the company. Investigate their philosophy and success secrets. Learn as much as you can about the company's goals, vision, mission, accomplishments, and failures. Examine its products, brands, and services. Also check out the competition, the industry profile, and growth prospects. Do not forget to read about the market capitalization and share value of the firm. Another good strategy would be to analyse the firm's advertisement strategy and the manner in which it promotes its brands, products, and services.

Make a personal inventory List your strategic skills, greatest areas of knowledge, strongest personality traits, key accomplishments, and personal qualities; these help you stand out from the competition. Identify problem areas in your résumé : gaps in education, a shift in specialization, repetition of an academic year, lack of experience, a layoff, and health issues. Prepare honest and genuine answers to explain each of these.

Phase II: The Interview

The following steps should be taken during the interview.

Nonverbal messages sent by the body Arrive on time for the interview; in fact, it is wise to come a few minutes early to acquaint yourself with the surroundings. Be courteous upon arrival. Wear a pleasant smile and look relaxed. Introduce yourself to the receptionist and be seated. Always dress professionally and neatly.

When it is time to enter the venue, walk confidently and self assuredly. Greet the panel. Shake hands with the panel members, look directly into their eyes, tell them your name, and say that you are pleased to meet them. A firm handshake sends a positive signal. Wait for the panel to offer you a chair. Do not rummage in your file for your résumé ; look relaxed and unhurried.

Keep your hands, elbows, and arms to yourself. Do not lean on something; instead, sit up straight, do not slouch, and keep your shoulders straight. Keep your feet on the floor.

Make eye contact with all panel members as you speak. Sound enthusiastic and sincere. Smile pleasantly and politely. Listen to the question carefully before answering and ask them to repeat the question if you are not clear.

Do not be intimidated. Expect to be a little nervous, but do not let your nervousness show. Fumbling with your hands, fidgeting, speaking in a shaky voice, stammering, and repeating yourself are signs of fear. It is wise to prepare 150 per cent for an interview. This will boost your self-confidence as you will feel that you are sufficiently prepared for the interview.

Responding to questions Customize your answers to skills that the employer is seeking. These include knowledge, interpersonal skills, decision-making skills, motivation, and the ability to handle stress. Highlight past situations in which some or most of these skills are demonstrated or displayed. If you do not know the answer to a particular question, admit this rather than bluffing your way through it.

Stay focused on your strengths; do not highlight your weakness, as one is hired on the basis of one's strengths. Omit slang and casual vernacular expressions. Also omit fillers such as *er* and *um*, and repetitive words such as *like*, *ya*, *ok*, and *so*. Avoid using weak words such as *actually*. Speak crisply and concisely. Be specific and to the point.

Closing the interview The panel will indicate when the interview is over. Ask a couple of questions from the panel if they permit or seek permission to do so. Get up gracefully from the chair, gather your papers, put them back in your file, and thank the interviewers for their time and patience. Say goodbye and walk out of the room.

Phase III: Post-interview Follow-up

Thank the interview panel for their time formally via e-mail. Follow this up with a query on your performance and future prospects with the company. Be sure to give a reasonable gap after each query so as not to annoy the panel.

Frequently Asked Interview Questions

This section discusses a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions with sample answers to few of them.

■ “Tell me about yourself.”

Keep the answer to this question brief and to the point. Do not repeat information that is already on the résumé. Give a unique answer. Here is an example:

My name is Surya, which means Sun. I hope to ignite the world with my passion and enthusiasm. True to my name, I am energetic and confident. After getting my engineering degree, I worked for two years in the industry. This strengthened my belief that managerial competency is essential to succeed in today frenetic work environment. A stint in business school taught me the value of teamwork, empathy, communication, and ethics. My strengths are my dedication, honesty, and financial expertise in accounting and capital budgeting.

■ “Describe your key weaknesses.”

Keep the answer to this question brief and focused. Do not ramble. Sound genuine.

There are many ways to answer this question:

- Present the weakness as a strength. (“I am too focused on details and this makes things stressful for me.”)
- Present it as a corrected weakness. (“I found that I was weak in public speaking so I joined Toastmasters International.”)
- Present an unrelated skill and a desire. (“I really need to learn German.”)
- Present it as a long-term learning goal. (“One of my desires relates to learning more about management of mergers and acquisitions.”)

- Present it as an affirmation of your qualifications. (“I have no weaknesses that affect my ability to do the current job.”)
- Do not say things like, “I have a short temper”, “I love chocolate”, “I am ambitious”, “I love to get into an argument.”
- What is the salary you expect from this job?

Do not be blatant about money. Do not state your expected salary upfront. Wait for the final job offer. There are many ways to respond to questions about money:

- Defer the discussion. Say: “At the moment, let’s concentrate on whether our requirements match...I am sure that we can work out a fair deal for both of us.”
- Try simple assertion. Say: “At the moment I am not too sure about the position and the job description. I’d like to learn more first.”
- If pressed further, give a range rather than an exact figure.

The following is a list of other popular questions asked during an interview. Please note that the same question might be phrased differently in different cases.:

- What is your college major? What was your reason for choosing this subject?
- Tell me about your key strengths.
- Do you prefer to work in teams or alone?
- How do you spend your free time?
- What are the particular qualifications you have for this job?
- Why should we hire you?
- Rate your interpersonal skills on a scale from one to five.
- Enumerate your major accomplishments in your last job.
- Why did you change jobs?
- Who was the toughest boss you’ve worked for and why?
- Which professor do you like the most and why?
- Why is your GPA low in this subject?
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?
- What would your contribution be to this job and company?
- If you found that one of your colleagues was falsifying accounts, what would you do?
- You feel that your supervisor is dissatisfied with you. What would you do?
- Describe a good leader. Give an example.
- Who do you think is an excellent communicator among prominent businesspeople today?
- What are/were some aspects of your job that you feel particularly good about and why do you feel that way about them?
- What are/were some of the more rewarding aspects of your work/job?
- How has your job prepared you to assume greater responsibilities?
- What do you feel are/were the greatest frustrations in your last job? Why?
- What is your general impression of the last organization and department for which you worked?
- What did you like and dislike about your job?
- How do you feel your work history reflects your career objectives and your abilities?
- Tell me about your career to date, starting with your current job and responsibilities.
- How did your interest in this area develop?

- How are you measured at your current position? How well are you doing? Why?
- What are the most satisfying aspects of your role and the most frustrating? (What do you enjoy most and the least?)
- What aspect of your job is the most challenging (and what is the easiest)?
- What part of the job do you consider to be your most successful? Why? Your least successful?
- What are your greatest achievements at work? What are your most significant disappointments or failures?
- What is the most complex task you have undertaken?
- Take me through your typical work day.
- Tell me about your current and previous bosses.
- Tell me about your previous roles. Why did you move? What factors influenced your move to this new position? How would you describe your career to date?
- Describe the work you do.
- Why do you like your work?
- What areas of your work do you not enjoy?
- If I were to ask your manager to describe you, what do you think he or she would say?
- If I were to ask the people in your team to describe you what would they say?
- What are your goals for the next three years?
- What would you like to be remembered for?
- How would you do things differently in your work?
- What are the points at which you find people in your team getting stressed?
- When do you feel stressed? Can you tell me about the last time you felt stressed?
- If you had to run your team (or company), what would be your priorities?
- What are the three most critical things in your job?
- How do you handle people you manage? If they have a grievance, what do you do?
- How do you check for quality?
- When do you know there is a quality problem?
- What do you do about it in your present job?
- When you retire, what would you like people to say about you?
- What have been the high points in your life?
- What have been the low points?
- What would you have like to have done differently?
- What do you consider as the most critical points in your life?
- How would you describe your life today?
- Which role in your life do you enjoy the most?
- What are the most important factors you consider before taking a job? How should it be structured to provide you with satisfaction? What motivates and demotivates you?
- Where do you want to be in two years' time?
- What do you see as your strengths and limitations? (What will help you achieve your aspirations?)
- How would your colleagues/supervisor/customers describe you?
- Is there anything you would like to change about yourself? Why?
- What do you see as the qualities of a successful...?

- How do you stack up against them?
- What experience have you had using these skills?
- To what extent do you consider that progress in your career is representative of your ability?
- How do you cope with conflict? (Any examples?)
- What do you like about yourself? What do you not like about yourself? What are you proud of?
- Tell me about your education: any achievements or regrets? How successful were you? Would you recommend that your younger sibling go to the same school? Why?
- Why did you study and how did you choose this field?
- What did you learn in university that you think is relevant to this role?
- Apart from your studies, what other university activities did you get involved with? How do you relate those experiences to your career?
- In retrospect, do you feel you should have done something different?
- What are your major interests outside work? Any notable achievements? How much time do you devote to your leisure activities?
- Have you held any positions of responsibility? How did you come to be...? Why do you think you were selected? What is involved in the role? How successful were you?
- What do you know about the IT scenario in India? Describe.
- Can you compare your approach to your work versus your approach to leisure activities?
- What risks do you see in moving to this company?
- How do you divide your time between your professional growth and personal growth? What is the nature of investments made?
- What do you expect your company to do to enhance your interests?
- Tell me about your childhood. How do you get on with your parents?
- What sort of expectations did your parents have about your career and education?
- What do your brothers and sisters do (older, younger)?
- Who has influenced you the most? Why?
- How do you relate to your father/mother?
- Who has most influenced your personal development?
- What would you have liked to study if you had a chance all over again?
- What do you like about your studies?
- How much of your education do you feel applies to your work now?
- What are the areas in which you think you need to improve?
- What do you think of the present education system?
- What are your colleagues doing now?
- What relevance do you think grades have to the workplace?
- How is your health? Any days off in the last year?
- What is the most serious illness you have had?
- Do you have any plans for marriage? (for non-married people)
- If you could change one thing about yourself what would it be?
- Do you drink alcohol?
- How frequently do you lose your temper?
- Relate an incident where you faced an ethical dilemma.

- Describe a challenging situation you faced at work.
- What do you want most from this job?
- If your boss wanted something to be done and you felt that he or she was ethically wrong, what would you say to him or her?

Do not:

- Ask for the job.
- Criticize your previous employer.
- Give canned answers.
- Be late or too early to the interview.
- Smoke during the interview.
- Interrupt the interviewers.
- Accept an offer immediately.
- Emphasize salary or benefits.
- Use profanity.
- Threaten the interviewer.

Some questions are considered illegal in the United States and the candidate has the right to refuse them:

- Questions about marital status
- Questions about sexual preference
- Questions about disabilities
- Questions about religious preferences
- Questions about living arrangements

Interviews: Special Techniques

Different techniques are to be applied to ace different kinds of interviews.

Telephone Interviews

1. Before the interview: setting the stage

- Do take a telephone interview as seriously as an in-person interview.
- If the call is unexpected, ask to reschedule. It is always better to be prepared.
- Keep your résumé handy.
- Keep employer research materials within easy reach of the phone.
- Have a notepad handy to take notes.
- Turn off the stereo, TV, and any other potential distractions.
- Practice speaking before the actual call takes place.
- Keep a glass of juice or water nearby.
- When the phone rings at the allotted time, identify yourself. Spell your name if necessary. If it is too difficult to pronounce, give a short form. Get the name of the interviewer. Ask for the spelling if required.
- Wish the interviewer based on his or her time of the day, not the interviewee's time of day.
- Wherever appropriate, use the words *please*, *thank you*, *my apologies*, and so on.
- Learn to engage in small talk about the weather or other things. This will set the stage for the interview.

2. During the interview

- Address the question; answer to the point and crisply; simultaneously list key skills.
- Sound enthusiastic and confident. If there are other people near you, ensure that they do not whisper or talk to each other during the interview. Recruiters may interpret that the interviewee is being helped by somebody.
- Clearly enunciate your strengths, achievements, and relevant skills.
- Sometimes you may find that you are continuously talking without any response from the interviewer. If you are concerned about this, you may ask: “Am I making myself clear?” or “Is that OK?” to elicit a response. Do not say “Hello, are you there?”
- Ask for clarifications directly (“Excuse me, can you repeat that question?”) or paraphrase the question to check if your understanding is correct.
- If you have doubts about the answer, it is better to be honest and admit that you do not know the answer.
- Take time to think through the answer and frame a response. Fumbling, hesitating, and interruptions can mar understanding and spoil the impression.
- The use of another language often confuses the interviewer. Commonly used Hindi words such as “theek hai” (it is OK), “aacha” (fine), and “haan” (yes) could leave a negative impact.
- Do not hold the mouthpiece too close; the interviewer will hear you breathing. The mouthpiece should be 2 to 3 inches from the mouth.
- Sign off by saying “It was nice talking to you. Thank you.”

3. After the interview

- After a phone interview, send a thank you note by e-mail that recaps your best selling points.
- Follow up to know the result of the interview.

Video Conference Interviews

1. Before the interview: setting the stage

- Make sure to send your résumé well in advance to the recruiter.
- Arrive early to acquaint yourself with the room and other arrangements.
- Ask for assistance if you are not sure of how to use the equipment.
- Dress professionally. Wear the attire suitable for an in-person interview.

2. During the interview

- Make sure the table is clean and neat. This will prevent any distractions.
- Be aware that the microphone picks up all the noise in the room. Don't tap the pen or shuffle papers.
- Make eye contact.
- Use the picture-in-picture feature to see how you appear to the interviewer.
- The interview process will be the same as an in-person interview. The interviewer's objective (to screen candidates for employment) is the same. The same type of questions will be asked.
- Be prepared to ask questions of the interviewer.
- It is perfectly fine to ask the interviewer for feedback on how things are going on the video mode.
- Keep your hand or body movements to a minimum. Rapid or repetitious movements can distract the interviewer; they can also move you out of the camera's range.

- When speaking, try to look at the camera positioned on top of the monitor, rather than at the monitor itself. This will give a better appearance of eye contact. Speak in a conversational tone; don't forget to smile.
 - Sometimes there can be a slight time lag. If this happens, wait a moment before answering questions to ensure that the interviewer has finished speaking.
 - In case of technical snags such as the video freezing, calmly inform the interviewers. Explain what is visible and what is not, and that you will leave the room for a short while to get help from the operator. A reboot is usually all that is required.
 - Cover the agenda well in time; since the facility is booked for a specific time period, it may not be possible to manage an extension.
3. At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer for his or her time. Mute the sound and leave the room. Let the operator or receptionist know that you have left.

SUMMARY

- The value of networking for employment related issues is great. We carry many wrong assumptions about the term “networking” and relationships need to be built for mutual gain.
- There are various forms of employment related correspondence (e.g., thank you letters, rejection letters, acknowledgement letters) and the emphasis should always be on getting results.
- Group discussion is a major way through which recruiters choose employees and there are various techniques to influence the recruiter in a group discussion.
- There is a distinction between a résumé, a curriculum vitae and a biodata, and résumés must be customized to the requirement of the recruiter to achieve success.
- In addition to the generic types of employment interviews, there are two relatively new interviewing techniques—the Blog interview and the Lunch-Dinner Interview. Interviews are also done via audio and video conferencing.
- It is best to focus on attributes of genuineness, simplicity and clarity to influence the recruiter.

ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What are the types of interviews? When is a case interview useful?
2. Lunch/dinner interviews are just like any other interviews. Comment.
3. Why is building a rapport important in the first stage of interviews?
4. What is the difference between a résumé, curriculum vitae, and bio-data?
5. What are the criteria for judging the effectiveness of a group discussion?
6. What are the special considerations for conducting a telephone interview from the point of view of the candidate?
7. What are the limitations of a video conferencing interview?

USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. You have an interview with IBM. Look up the company's Web site and compile an inventory of useful information for the interview.
2. Would your pre-interview research strategy be different for a manufacturing concern and a software concern? If yes, in what ways?
3. You are being interviewed by a leading consultant firm. After the preliminaries, the panel asks you to determine why the market share of a popular brand of bathing soap is declining. This is the only information you have. In this context, frame at least 10 questions that you would need to ask the panel to obtain a reasonable solution to the question.

WEB-BASED EXERCISES

1. Visit the Web site: <http://www.metacafe.com/watch/477641/a_complete_view_of_group_discussion/>, which is about group discussions. Analyse the interview based on the parameters discussed in this chapter.
2. Visit the link: <<http://facultyfiles.deanza.edu/gems/abrahams matt/TheBrandCalledYou.pdf>> on résumés and read the article titled “A Brand Called You” by Tom Peters. How far do you agree with Peters that we need to understand the concepts of branding and that of “CEO of I Incorporated”?
3. Goto<<http://www.mckinsey.com/aboutus/whoweare/>> and read the recruitment ad for McKinsey and Company. Assume you have just completed your management degree and have some prior work experience in software and engineering.
 - a. Write a cover letter expressing your desire to work with the consulting firm.
 - b. Write a résumé (one page) tailored to the job requirement.

FURTHER READING

- C.L. Bovee and J.V. Thill, *Business Communication Essentials* 4th Edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2009).
- R. Lesikar R and M. Flatley, *Basic Business Communication* (New York: Tata McGraw Hill, 2005).

ENDNOTES

1. Taken from http://thinkexist.com/quotation/effective_communication_is-what_you_know_and-how/295573.html, accessed on August 16, 2011.
2. Taken from <http://www.resumedoctor.com/ResourceCenter.htm>, accessed on August 14, 2011.

QUOTE

“Effective communication in video conference interviews and meetings is important, but, technology disruptions and hiccups can result in screen freeze, loss of facial expressions, and disruption of the flow of communication, and thus the real message may get lost due to the technical noise. It’s vital that communication should be crystal clear, loud, to the point and follow up with the e-mail summary to avoid surprises, missed points, or any confusion.”

—Jyotsna Umesh,
Manager,
Accenture Federal Services,
Washington DC.

Appendix 1

Different gestures and ways of living are prevalent in different countries. The interpretation of a specific gesture changes wildly from country to country. This is further illustrated in Figure 1.1A.

Figure 1.1A Different Norms for Different Countries

Country or countries	Greetings/introduction	Decision-making	Gifting/Business cards	Dinner/entertaining	Communication/Others
China	Bowing or nodding is the common greeting; however, you may be offered a handshake. Shaking hands is highly uncomfortable for the Chinese. Wait for the Chinese person to offer their hand first. Introductions are formal. Use formal titles. Being on time is vital in China.	The decision-making process is slow. You should not expect to conclude your business swiftly. Many Chinese will want to consult with the stars or wait for a lucky day before they make a decision.	Present and receive business cards with both hands. Never write on a business card or put it in your wallet or pocket. Carry a small card case. Allow the Chinese person to leave a meeting first. Gift giving is a very delicate issue in China. It is illegal to give gifts to government officials; however, it has become more commonplace to do so now. It is more acceptable to give gifts either in private or to a group as a whole to avoid embarrassment. The most acceptable gift is a banquet.	Do not start to eat or drink prior to the host. As a cultural courtesy, you should taste all the dishes you are offered. Sample meals only; there may be several courses. Never place your chopsticks straight up in your bowl. By placing your sticks upright in your bowl you may remind your host of joss sticks, which connote death. Do not drop the chopsticks; it is considered bad luck.	Do not use large hand movements. The Chinese do not speak with their hands. Personal contact must be avoided at all cost. It is highly inappropriate for a man to touch a woman in public. Do not point when speaking. To point do not use your index finger, use an open palm. Avoid self-centered conversation in which the word "I" is excessively used. The Chinese view individuals who boast about personal attributes with contempt. The Chinese are more reticent, reserved, or shy when compared with North Americans. They avoid open displays of affection, and the speaking distance between two business people is greater than it is in the West. China is not a "touching" society.

(Continued)

Figure 1.1A (Continued)

Country or countries	Greetings/introduction	Decision-making	Gifting/Business cards	Dinner/entertaining	Communication/Others
<p>Japan</p>	<p>In a business situation, business cannot begin until the “meishi” (business card) exchange process is complete. In introductions, use the person’s last name plus the word “san,” which means “Mr” or “Ms”. The customary greeting is the bow. If you are greeted with a bow, return with a bow as low as the one you received. Make your first approach in a Japanese organization at the highest level possible; the first person contacted will be involved throughout the negotiation. Avoid direct communication about money; leave this to a go-between or to lower echelon staff.</p>	<p>Wait patiently for meetings to move beyond the preliminary tea and small talk. Expect slow decision-making characterized by frequent breaks. The Japanese like to huddle up after discussion of key points.</p>	<p>Quality writing pens are considered favoured gifts. The following gifts and/or colours are associated with death and should <i>not</i> be given: 1. Clocks 2. Straw sandals 3. A stork or crane 4. Handkerchiefs 5. Anything white, blue, or black Always arrive on time or early if you are the guest. Do not discuss business at meals.</p>	<p>Do not eat all of your meal. If you eat all your food, your Chinese host will assume you did not receive enough food and are still hungry.</p>	<p>The Chinese do not appreciate loud, boisterous behaviour. Telephone calls and fax machines are a vital part of business, but the Chinese believe that important business should only be conducted face to face.</p>
			<p>In Japan, business cards are called “meishi.” The business card should be given after the bow. This is very important to remember. Japanese give and receive meishi with both hands. The business card should be printed in your home language on one side and Japanese on the other. Present the card with the Japanese language side up. Take special care in handling cards that are given to you. Do not write on the card. Do not put the card in your pocket or wallet.</p>	<p>Key phrases to learn are “itadakimasu” at the beginning of dinner, and “gochisou-sama-deshita” at the end. It is polite to use these phrases. They show your host that you have enjoyed the meal. “Sumimasen” (excuse me) is another very useful term to add to your vocabulary along with the phrase “kekko desu” (I’ve had enough).</p>	<p>Avoid using large hand gestures, unusual facial expressions, and any dramatic movements. Avoid the “OK” sign; in Japan it means money. Pointing is not acceptable. Do not blow your nose in public. Personal space is valued. A smile can have double meaning. The Japanese tend to be straight-faced when happy, and smile to mask unpleasant feelings such as anger or sadness. The Japanese are not uncomfortable with silence. Understand that the Japanese prefer not to use the word “no.” If you ask a question they may simply respond with a “yes,” but clearly mean “no.”</p>

	<p>Never put a Japanese person in a position in which he or she must admit to a fault.</p> <p>Avoid praise your products or services; let your literature or your go-between do that.</p>		<p>Use business cards that include titles, preferably in both Japanese and English.</p>		<p>The logical, cognitive, or intellectual approach is insufficient in Japanese business; the emotional level of communication is also considered important.</p>
<p>Germany</p>	<p>Punctuality is a necessity in Germany. Formal meetings are common.</p> <p>In business situations, shake hands at both the beginning and the end of a meeting.</p> <p>Additionally, a handshake may be accompanied with a slight bow.</p> <p>When being introduced to a woman, wait to see if she extends her hand.</p> <p>German men frequently greet each other with Herr "last name," even when they know each other very well.</p> <p>Follow protocol related to gender and hierarchy.</p> <p>Germans guard their private life, so do not phone a German executive at home without permission.</p> <p>Titles are very important to Germans.</p>	<p>Germans are extremely planned and focused.</p> <p>They prize forward thinking.</p> <p>They may be slow to arrive at a decision; decision-making is done at the top; subordinates do not expect that their supervisors will consult them on decisions.</p> <p>Germans expect a great deal of documentation; there is a high emphasis on written communication.</p>	<p>Business cards may be exchanged initially.</p>	<p>Always be on time.</p> <p>Never arrive too early or late. Apologize for a late arrival.</p> <p>Send a handwritten thank-you note the following day thanking the host or the hostess for their hospitality.</p>	<p>Germans do not like surprises.</p> <p>Germans do not need or expect to be complimented.</p> <p>Germans do not appreciate humour in a business context.</p> <p>They value credentials, authority, and experience.</p> <p>Germans keep a larger personal space around them, approximately 6 inches more than North Americans do.</p> <p>They tend to stick to schedules and plans.</p> <p>The demarcation between home and office, private and professional life, is strict.</p> <p>They tend to be suspicious of hyperbole and are very direct and blunt.</p>
<p>Britain</p>	<p>Always be punctual in Britain.</p> <p>Arriving a few minutes early for safety is acceptable.</p> <p>A simple handshake is the standard greeting (for both men and women) for business occasions and for visiting a home.</p>	<p>Decision-making is slower in Britain than in the United States.</p>	<p>Cards are exchanged initially during the introductions; the card may be put away in the pocket after an initial cursory glance.</p>	<p>When socializing after work hours, do not bring up the subject of work.</p> <p>Loud and disruptive behaviour should be avoided.</p>	<p>Eye contact is seldom kept during conversations.</p> <p>To signal that something is to be kept confidential or secret, tap your nose.</p> <p>Personal space is important in Britain, and one should maintain a greater physical space when conversing.</p>

(Continued)

Figure 1.1A (Continued)

Country or countries	Greetings/introduction	Decision-making	Gifting/Business cards	Dinner/entertaining	Communication/Others
<p>France</p>	<p>Punctuality is treated relatively casually in France. France is a highly stratified society, with strong definition and competition between classes. The French handshake is brief and is accompanied by a short span of eye contact. Always shake hands when meeting someone, as well as when leaving. French handshakes are not as firm as in the United States. The French have a great respect for privacy. Knock and wait before entering a room. Do not "drop in" unannounced. Always give notice before your arrival.</p>	<p>Courtesy, formality, and protocol are adhered to in meetings. Wait for your turn before sitting. Hierarchies are followed; decisions are made at the top of the company. Decisions take time and are accompanied by debates and heated discussions; discussions are dispassionate and intense. The French prefer a sober, logical presentation of facts as opposed to pressure selling tactics. This is followed by a written contract.</p>	<p>Flowers are preferred, though avoid the number 13 as it indicates ill luck; be careful about the types of flowers given, as the French are sensitive to certain flowers. The French also love wines and prefer rich elegant wines for gifting. Gifts may be opened when received.</p>	<p>If a man has been knighted, he is addressed as "Sir" followed by his first name. An example is "Sir John." If writing a letter, the envelope is addressed "Sir First Name Last name"; for example, "Sir John Roberts."</p> <p>Be on time for a dinner engagement. Northern France is more rigid about time than southern France. Dress well as the French are fashionable and profess a good taste in clothes.</p>	<p>Furthermore, it is considered inappropriate to touch others in public. One gesture to avoid is the "V" for victory sign, done with the palm facing the person making the sign. This is a very offensive gesture.</p> <p>If you do not speak French, it is very important that you apologize for your lack of knowledge. The French frequently interrupt each other, as the argument is a form of entertainment. Be sensitive to the volume of your voice. Eye contact is frequent and intense.</p>
<p>Italy</p>	<p>"Time is money" is not a common phrase in Italy. Foreign businessmen/businesswomen should be punctual for appointments, although the Italian executive may not be.</p>	<p>Do not expect quick decisions or actions to take place, as the Italian bureaucracy and legal systems are rather slow.</p>	<p>Do not exchange business cards at social occasions, though it is the norm at business functions and meetings.</p>	<p>It is common for everyone to speak simultaneously at Italian gatherings.</p>	<p>Avoid giving anything in a multiple of 17, as 17 is considered to be bad luck or a doomed number. Avoid talking about religion, politics, and World War II.</p>

	<p>Handshakes are common for both genders, and may include grasping the arm with the other hand. When entering a business function, the most senior or eldest person present should be given special treatment.</p>	<p>Italian companies often have a rigid hierarchy, with little visible association between the ranks.</p>	<p>Italians often have two different business cards—one with business credentials for formal relationships, and another with personal information for less formal relationships. Italian cards are often plain white with black print.</p>		<p>At social gatherings, it is considered insulting to ask someone you have just met about their profession. Good conversation topics include Italian culture, art, food, wine, family, and films.</p>
<p>Russia</p>	<p>Handshakes may be of the typical bone crushing variety. Women like to kiss three times on the cheek as a greeting, and men may pat the back and hug each other. When shaking hands with someone, be sure to take off your gloves, as it is considered rude not to.</p>	<p>Patience is an extremely important virtue among Russians; punctuality is not. Russians are known as great “sitters” during negotiations; this demonstrates their tremendous patience. Technical expertise, rank, and position are valuable in Russian culture. They believe in win–lose and not win–win negotiations. They may also tend to use disruptive tactics to gain concessions from a deal.</p>	<p>Be sure to have plenty of business cards that are double-sided. One side should be printed in English; the other side should be in Russian. Speaking or laughing loudly in public is considered rude, as Russians are generally reserved and somber.</p>	<p>Social events are more relaxed. It is acceptable for foreigners to be 15 to 30 minutes late.</p>	<p>There is a Russian term meaning “connections” or “influence.” It is extremely difficult to do business in Russia without help from a local. Gifts, money, or other items are often a good idea when doing business in Russia. Many Russians speak English, as it is often taught as early as the third grade. Russians are highly literate, and Russia has almost a 100 per cent literacy rate. Good topics of conversation include peace, the current changes taking place in Russia, and their current economic situation.</p>
<p>Central America</p>	<p>Handshakes are the common greeting. “Abrazos” (embracing good friends) is not as common as in other Latin countries. Address a person directly by using his or her title only. A PhD or a physician is called “doctor.” Teachers prefer the title “professor,” engineers go by “ingeniero,” architects are “arquitecto,” and lawyers are “abogado.”</p>	<p>Decision-making is slow and the higher-ups are usually involved.</p>	<p>Titles are important and should be included on business cards.</p>	<p>Guatemalans embrace and pat each other’s backs. Good conversation topics include children, history, and art. Bad topics include any personal criticism and religion.</p>	<p>The culture is conservative and family orientation is high. Making a fist with the thumb sticking out between the middle and index fingers is obscene. This gesture is known as the “fig.” Don’t put your feet up on any furniture except items expressly designed for that purpose.</p>

(Continued)

Figure 1.1A (Continued)

Country or countries	Greetings/introduction	Decision-making	Gifting/Business cards	Dinner/entertaining	Communication/Others
<p>South America</p>	<p>For persons who do not have professional titles, it is common to call a man “Don” followed by his first name. Women are called “Dona” followed by her first name). Mr = Senor Mrs = Senora Miss = Senorita Most Hispanics have two surnames: one from their father, which is listed first, followed by one from their mother. Only the father’s surname is used when addressing someone.</p>				<p>Fidgeting with one’s hands or feet is considered distracting and impolite. Costa Ricans are by far the most punctual people in Central America. Salvadorans are expressive with both their hands and faces; this complements their verbal communication. To beckon someone over, extend the arm and wriggle the fingers with the palm down. Only summon close friends with this gesture. Yawning in public is considered rude and should be avoided.</p>
	<p>Shaking hands, often for a long time, is common. People also shake hands to say hello and goodbye. Use good eye contact; when leaving a small group, be sure to shake hands with everyone present. When women meet, they exchange kisses by placing their cheeks together and kissing the air. First names are often used, but titles are important.</p>				<p>Touching arms, elbows, and backs is very common. The “OK” hand signal is a rude gesture in Brazil. To express appreciation, Brazilians may appear to pinch their earlobes between their thumbs and forefingers. Flicking one’s fingertips underneath the chin indicates that you do not know the answer to a question. The term “jeito” refers to the idea that nothing is set in stone, and that a good attempt can break a rule. Good conversation topics are soccer, family, and children. Bad conversation topics are Argentina, politics, poverty, religion, and the rainforest.</p>

					<p>Stay away from phrases such as, "Is it true that everyone in Brazil is either very rich or very poor?" as it is very likely you will be talking with someone that isn't either one!</p>
<p>The United States of America</p>	<p>Offer a firm handshake, lasting 3–5 seconds, upon greeting and leaving. Maintain good eye contact during your handshake. If you are meeting several people at once, maintain eye contact with the person you are shaking hands with, until you move on to the next person. Introductions include one's title if appropriate, or Mr, Ms, Mrs, and the full name.</p>		<p>Business cards are generally exchanged during introductions. However, they may also be exchanged when one party is leaving. Ask permission to smoke before lighting a cigarette or cigar.</p>	<p>Business conversations may take place during meals.</p>	
<p>Canada</p>	<p>Use a firm handshake with good eye contact when meeting and leaving. Both the French-speaking and English-speaking areas use and expect a firm handshake. Men will wait for a woman to extend her hand for a handshake. French Canadians will shake hands more frequently, even with a subsequent encounter the same day. Use a person's title if he or she has one. Otherwise, use Mr, Mrs, Ms, and the surname.</p>				<p>Personal space and body movement or gestures differ between the English-speaking and French-speaking provinces and cities. Don't be boastful, and don't overstate your product or service's capabilities. You could implicate your company in a legal situation. French Canadians may use their first names when talking to you on the telephone, but will generally use their full name when meeting in person. If your natural tendency is to make large sweeping arm gestures, restrain yourself when meeting and talking with Canadians (other than French Canadians).</p>

(Continued)

Figure 1.1A (Continued)

Country or countries	Greetings/introduction	Decision-making	Gifting/Business cards	Dinner/entertaining	Communication/Others
Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait	A customary greeting is "As-Salaam Alaykum." Shaking hands and saying "Kaif hal ak" comes next.	Your host may interrupt your meeting or conversation, leave the room and be gone for 15 to 20 minutes for the purpose of his or her daily prayers.			Guests should never show bare shoulders, stomach, calves, or thighs. Visitors are expected to abide by local standards of modesty; however, do not adopt native clothing. Despite the heat, most of the body remains covered.
		At a meeting, the person who asks the most questions is likely to be the least important. The decision-maker is likely a silent observer.			The left hand is considered unclean and reserved for hygiene. Avoid gestures with the left hand. Do not point at another person and do not eat with the left hand. Men walking hand in hand is a sign a friendship. Try not to cross your legs when sitting. Never show the bottom of your feet. The "thumbs up" gesture is offensive.
					Do not discuss the subject of women, not even to inquire about the health of a wife or daughter. The topic of Israel should also be avoided. Sports is an appropriate topic. Names are often confusing. Communications occur at a slow pace. Do not feel obligated to speak during periods of silence. "Yes" usually means "possibly."
Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand	Being punctual is critical. Maintain good eye contact during meetings and conversations.	Meetings are important but conducted informally. People are generally addressed by their first names.	Dress conservatively for business meetings.	Good gifts are wine, a box of chocolates, or flowers.	Generally informal; avoid high-pressure or aggressive techniques to convince people; avoid exaggerated claims.

	<p>Shake hands when meeting and when leaving. Although uncommon, some women may greet each other with a kiss on the cheek. Exchanging business cards is common among professionals. Australians are friendly and open, but directness and brevity are valued. Do not overtype yourself, your company, or your information.</p>	<p>Meetings are fast-paced, but decision-making is slower and happens at the top level.</p>			<p>Australians appreciate brevity. Stick to facts. These are modest people with a sense of humour. Sightseeing and sports are good conversation topics.</p>
<p>Africa</p>	<p>The handshake is the most common greeting. There are a variety of handshakes between ethnic groups. Use titles and surnames to address people. Do not rush deals.</p>	<p>South Africans prefer a win-win situation. Listen and then summarize what you believe the speaker has said. Make sure you're clear on the intended message before continuing the conversation.</p>	<p>Business cards have no formal exchange protocol.</p>		<p>Speak slowly and enunciate clearly. Don't assume a person with a heavy accent is "slow." Avoid humour because humour is almost always culture-specific. Before using a cliché or jargon, consider the words at face value. Instead of using jargon, say what you mean directly.</p>
<p>Singapore</p>	<p>Introductions are centered on age or status. Arrive punctually. Use handshakes.</p>	<p>Meetings should be planned well in advance. Seating arrangements in formal business dealings follow hierarchy and position.</p>	<p>Receive business cards, examine them to show respect, and then put them in a card case.</p>		<p>Age, hierarchical levels, and status are important. Group harmony is important. Personal relationships help build business relationships well.</p>

Appendix 2 | SAMPLE MINUTES OF A MEETING

SUMMARY					
Meeting topic	Topic name				
Date	Date/month/year	From	hh:mm	To	hh:mm
Location	Location details	Note taker	First name Last name	Duration	00:00 hrs

AGENDA	
Time	Topic
15 mins	1. Topic name and brief description
35 mins	2. Topic name and brief description
10 mins	3. Topic name and brief description

PARTICIPANTS				
#	Name	Position	Present?	Reason for absence
1	First name Last name		Y	
2	First name Last name		Y	
4	First name Last name		N	Out sick

MEETING NOTES	
1	Mention significant points of the meetings in third person and using bullets.
2	Mention significant points of the meetings.
3	Mention significant points of the meetings.

MAJOR DECISIONS TAKEN			
#	Task	Person responsible	Due date
1	Brief description	Department name or First name Last name	Date/Month/Year
2	Brief description	Department name or First name Last name	To be decided
3	Brief description	Department name or First name Last name	Date/Month/Year

Appendix 3 | A SAMPLE PROPOSAL

CareerSkills Consulting Ltd.

We are proud to introduce ourselves as successful recruitment, staffing, and outsourcing consultants. We offer experience and knowledge to help clients find the right person for the right job. We provide professionals from wide range of verticals to perform functions in various fields on a temporary (staffing) or permanent recruitment basis. Our recruitment consultants are highly trained and experienced in their own areas of expertise.

Staffing Services from CareerSkills Consulting

CareerSkills Consulting is a leading staffing firm with expertise in the following functional areas, levels, and industries:

Information Technology (IT) Staffing: In our IT Resource Management Services & Solutions division, we can deploy human capital to meet your IT goals using internal/external consulting resources. We have large, qualified pool of “ready to contribute” resources in following functions:

- Developers
- Business Analysts
- Testing Experts
- Quality/Process Management

We have staff with knowledge of the following:

- Java/J2EE
- Microsoft .Net
- Open Source, PHP, MySQL, Ajax
- SAP
- Oracle Applications
- Siebel
- Salesforce.com CRM
- Testing
- Other (We are open to staff in other technical areas based on the client’s requirements)

Non IT Staffing: In our non-IT Management Services & Solutions division, we can deploy human capital to meet your business goals using internal/external consulting resources. We have large, qualified pool of “ready to contribute” resources in following functions:

- HR
- Sales
- Finance & Accounts
- Operations
- R&D

We have staff with knowledge of the following:

- Banking, Finance, Security, Insurance (BFSI)
- FMCG/Consumer Durables
- Healthcare and Medical Equipment
- Infrastructure, Construction, Project Management
- ITES/BPOs
- Manufacturing (Steel, Petrochemical, Chemical, Fertilizer, Cement, etc.)
- Telecom
- Services

Why you should make CareerSkills Consulting your staffing partner?

There are plenty of reasons to choose us, but first and foremost is our commitment to ensuring that you succeed in your business. Apart from this, a few other reasons are:

- We use unconventional sourcing methods (like head hunting, e-groups, networking forums, referrals, and many more) and do not just depend on portals to find staff, ensuring that you get the right resource.
- We have an experienced team of industry-specific consultants and head hunters.
- We ensure that you save time and money when staffing through us.
- We will not bother you with unsuitable candidates as our resources are double-checked by two consultants before reaching you.
- We provide value-added services like reference and background checks.
- We use world-class recruitment process software to aid in the recruitment process and manage our consultants.

We take this opportunity to express our wish to extend staffing services to your esteemed organization.

If given an opportunity to place candidates, we are confident of providing the right CVs for interviews, filtered to suitably match your skill-set requirements. We look forward to working with and serving your organization in this regard. For any further clarification, please contact me at the address given below.

Thanks and regards,

P. Arivathan
Business Development Consultant
CareerSkills Consulting
1124, Avantika Apartments
Link Road Chennai
E-mail: Careerskills@org.in

Appendix 4 | A SAMPLE LONG REPORT

Investment Opportunities for Equityplus' Open-ended Growth Fund

Date: February 3, 2010

Junior Analyst Core Team, EquityPlus

Anubhav Mukherjee,
Kalyan R.
Vimal Anandh G.
Sornam A.R.

Sample Letter of Transmittal

Junior Analyst Core Team
EquityPlus Mutual Funds

Louise Zenith Xavier
Senior Analyst
EquityPlus Mutual Funds
February 3, 2010

Dear Ms Xavier,

Clear statement
of purpose

Please find enclosed a copy of the final report "Investment Opportunities for EquityPlus's Open-ended Growth Fund." This report is as per the directives to analyse the performance of publicly listed companies with the aim of suggesting three stocks for the company's new fund. It contains a summary of our findings from the work that I completed in the past three weeks.

Summary of the
main finding,
conclusion and
recommendations

This report will aid the senior analysts at EquityPlus in selecting investment grade stocks for the new fund. The report takes into consideration the growth prospects of the various industry verticals, performance of specific stocks in the last financial year, an in-depth analysis of key financial ratios of the underlying company, and growth prospects of the company in future. The report compares the performance of a company with its competitors and peers. In addition, the report also considers the management's vision for the firm as expressed in their messages to shareholders in the annual report of each firm. The report concludes with recommendations for the three most robust and potentially profitable stocks.

Courteous
closing statement

If you have any questions and/or comments regarding this report, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for granting me this project, and I look forward to working on such exciting assignments again.

Sincerely,
Junior Analyst Core Team

Enclosure: Final Report

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude towards EquityPlus and Louise Xavier for providing us with an opportunity to work on this challenging assignment. This opportunity has helped us improve our equity analysis skills, besides giving the joy of being part of an exciting new endeavour. The idea of contributing towards the larger goals of the organization was a great satisfaction in itself.

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4. Conclusions

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ABSTRACT

EquityPlus Mutual Funds is planning to launch a new Open-ended Growth Fund at the end of next quarter. This requires the analysts at the firm to select suitable stocks in line with the fund's objectives. This report is the outcome of research undertaken to analyse potential investment opportunities for the new fund. The major findings of the research were as follows:

- a) As the global economy emerges out of the 2008 financial meltdown, some specific industry verticals are set to witness enormous growth rates; these include information technology, infrastructure, and banks
- b) Based on the key financial ratios, the stocks with lowest price to earnings ratio and price to book value ratio seem lucrative as they have been undervalued
- c) Comparisons among peers, future growth prospects, and recommendations of brokerages confirmed the findings of the financial ratios. The management's vision of the future of the firm has also been considered in the selection of stocks. The study recommends that Infosys Technologies Ltd. (information technology), Larsen & Toubro (infrastructure) and State Bank of India (banks) are ideal investments for the new fund.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

EquityPlus's Mutual Funds include a range of offerings. The new fund, which is planned as an Open-ended Growth Fund, is expected to ride high on the booming economic scenario and capitalize on the post-recessionary investment drive of investors. In this frenzy of investment, selection of stocks based on their growth potential and strong fundamentals becomes all the more important. These stocks should be in line with the stated investment objectives of the new fund, which is to generate long-term capital appreciation along with risk minimization through diversification. Such a fund, which seeks cautious growth, needs to identify specific industry verticals to diversify investments. The current post-recessionary phase indicates the presence of industries that are set to grow at stupendous rates in the near future.

India's IT and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industries are all set for a major change in economic fortunes. As the IT industry exits its worst year ever, it will return to growth in 2010, with IT spending expected to total USD 3.3 trillion, a 3.3 per cent increase from 2009, according to Gartner. This phase will be driven by demand from emerging markets in the Asia-Pacific region in addition to the usual IT hubs of the United States and Eastern Europe. The IT spending of Australia alone is set to reach USD 56.4 billion by 2013, at a compound annual growth rate of 1.3 per cent. Gartner expects the global IT spending in 2010 alone to be USD 3.3 trillion. This is heartening news as far as IT services vendors in India are concerned. The established players like Infosys, TCS, and Wipro are expected to make the most of this boom, a fact confirmed by the hiring spree that these companies have engaged in recently.

India's infrastructure industry is also set to see a revival of its fortunes. Riding on the back of an economic revival, the major infrastructure companies will be shaping urban India in the next few years. As the residential sector faces a shortage of 19.4 million units, the future of these companies looks bright with near certain huge cash inflows. Recognizing the critical importance of the infrastructure sector, the Government of India has accorded it a high priority. Accordingly, both the central and the state governments have been working in tandem to upgrade infrastructure to meet international norms and standards. It is but certain that the government will rope in the services of private players at the earliest in this endeavour. By sheer virtue of their size, infrastructure giants like RIL, L&T, GMR, and Gammon will be walking away with the lion's share of this pie.

The domestic economic outlook in India continues to look positive and is set to replicate a close-to-2009 level of GDP growth. In this regard, the banking industry is expected to do well. Banking should do well on account of an increase in credit growth. However, according to Gartner, the common man has yet not recovered from the trauma of the financial meltdown and is unlikely to place his faith in the private sector banks. Public sector banks are likely to capitalize on this opportunity. While this growth story is likely to be replicated in both commercial and retail banking, it is the latter that will be a major driver of growth for these companies. Public sector banks like Punjab Bank, SBI, and Bank of Baroda are all likely to cash in on the euphoria.

1.2 Problem Statement

The study aims at a detailed analysis of the performance of Infosys Technologies Ltd., Larsen & Toubro, and State Bank of India (SBI) stocks. Past data for stocks has been gathered from various sources. This data has been analysed along various parameters to decide the suitability of these stocks for the new fund offering.

The following parameters were used to arrive at the viability of the stocks:

1. Key financial ratios
2. Stock performance over the last year
3. Comparative analysis with peers
4. Future outlook for the industry in general and the company in particular

5. The management's vision
6. Opinions of experts and stock market analysts

1.3 Motivation

The purpose of this research is gather information about three viable industry verticals and specific stocks belonging to those industries. Such viable stocks would then be recommended for the new open-ended growth fund of EquityPlus.

1.4 Coverage and Scope

The present research focuses on analysing and testing the viability of the three stocks (Infosys Technologies Ltd., Larsen & Toubro, and SBI).

1. The study does not include an analysis of the individual competitors of the stocks identified. However, a comparative study with the industry and competitors has been included.
2. The study performs a stock analysis of the data spread across seven years. This is to ensure that a holistic picture of the stock's performance emerges.
3. The current study has sought to minimize risk by diversifying investments across industries.
4. The opinions of experts and management have been duly considered.
5. The analysis used to select the specific industries (IT, infrastructure, and banking) studied for the purpose of stock selection is out of the scope of this research.

1.5 Limitations

The limitations of the research methodology are:

1. The methodology and models assume that there would be no drastic changes in the international scenario that would impact these industries.
2. The study fails to consider the correlation among the three stocks. To decrease the overall risk of the fund's portfolio, non-correlated assets are recommended.

1.6 Report Organization

The report explains the methodology followed to evaluate stocks. The "Methodology" section begins with a discussion of how the objectives influenced the choice of research techniques. It is followed by a detailed explanation of the evaluation criteria and the justification and relevance of choosing the selection criteria. The methodology section ends with a description of the research methods followed to evaluate the stocks within the chosen criteria. The "Findings" section follows the "Methodology" section. It elaborates on all the findings for the three recommended stocks under each evaluation criteria. The analysis ends with the conclusions and recommendations. The "Conclusions" section contains all the conclusions made regarding the three recommended stocks. The "Recommendations" section contains our suggested course of action for investment in the three stocks.

2. METHODOLOGY

The first step in the research process was a thorough industry analysis to identify the sectors for investment. This was followed by an analysis of the performance of Nifty 50 Index stocks. Data regarding the stocks under consideration was collected from authentic sources such as the Web site www.moneycontrol.com. Further, the data was cross-checked with that available on CapitalLinePlus to ensure its authenticity. Then the relevant stocks were evaluated along the following parameters:

1. Appreciation in stock price over the last year
2. Key financial ratios

3. Comparative analysis with their respective industries and peers
4. Evaluation of future projects and the management's vision for the future of the firm
5. Recommendations of stock analysts and brokerages

The research techniques and financial analysis undertaken are elaborated in detail in the following section.

2.1 Objectives

The objective of the research was to select three stocks that offer the best investment opportunity for the new fund to be launched by the firm. The suitability of the stocks was measured based on the following criteria:

- Maximization of invested capital
- Minimization of risk
- Investing in sectors that are robust

The research undertaken to select the three stocks was developed to evaluate the stocks on the above parameters.

2.2 Research Techniques

2.2.1 Stock Price Gains

The gain in stock price for the relevant companies was calculated from the stock data gathered from www.moneycontrol.com. Then, the gains in share prices of the companies under consideration were compared to identify the stocks that posted the highest gains in the last year.

2.2.2 Financial Ratio Analysis

Relevant financial ratios were calculated for the companies under consideration. The ratios calculated and their significance is explained in brief below:

- *Price to Earnings Ratio:*

$$\text{P/E Ratio} = \text{Market price of a share/EPS}$$

Its numerical value indicates what multiple the market capital of a firm is of the earnings of the firm.

- *Price to Book Value Ratio:*

$$\text{P/BV Ratio} = \text{Market price of a share/Book value per share}$$

Its numerical value indicates what multiple the market capital of a firm is of the book value of the equity of the firm.

- *Current Ratio:*

$$\text{Current Ratio} = \text{Current Assets/Current Liabilities}$$

It is a measure of how easily the firm can meet its short-term liabilities from its short-term assets.

- *Return on Capital Employed:*

$$\text{ROCE} = (\text{Earnings after Tax} + \text{Interest} - \text{Tax Advantage on Interest})/\text{Average Total Assets}$$

It is a measure of how the firm is able to generate a return on capital employed in its business.

- *Interest Coverage Ratio:*

$$\text{Interest Coverage Ratio} = \text{Earnings before Interest and Taxes/Interest}$$

Its numerical value indicates what multiple the earnings are of the interest obligations of the firm.

- *Net Profit Ratio:*

$$\text{Net Profit Ratio} = \text{Earnings after Interest and Taxes/Net sales}$$

It is an indication of the profitability of the firm.

The above ratios were calculated for each of the firms for the last 7 years, that is, from 2003 to 2009. The ratios were then analysed to evaluate the companies on the following factors:

1. *Financial health of the company:* The current ratio was analysed to ensure that the company has enough liquidity to continue its operations.
2. *Consistence of its earnings:* The ROCE and the Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) margins generated by the company over the period were used to test how consistently the firms have generated earnings in the past.
3. *Valuation of the stock:* P/E ratio and P/BV ratios were used to evaluate whether the stock is available at a lucrative price.
4. *Ability of the firms to service its debts:* The interest coverage ratio was used to evaluate the ability of the firms to make interest payments on debts out of their earnings.

2.2.3 Comparative Analysis with Industry and Peers

A comparative analysis was also done to evaluate the company's performance with that of the industry as a whole and with some of its peers. The following ratios were compared with those of the industry and its peers:

1. *ROCE & EBITDA margins:* The consistency of the firm's earnings, as indicated by ROCE and EBITDA, were compared with those of their respective industries and peers. This was done to determine how the returns generated by the companies fared in comparison to the industry aggregate and to its peers.
2. *Interest Coverage Ratio:* The debt default probability as indicated by the interest coverage ratio of the companies was compared with those of their respective industries and peers. The aim was to see how consistently the companies were able to generate earnings enough to repay their interest obligations in comparison to their respective industry and peers.
3. *Current Ratio:* The ability to meet obligations as indicated by the current ratio of the companies was compared with that of their industry and peers.

2.2.4 Evaluation of Future Projects and Management's Vision for Firms

The analysis of future prospects and quality of future ventures was done by identifying the latest focus area of the company. Information was taken from valid sources to identify important deals made and important decisions taken by the firms recently. The companies' annual reports and expert interviews with the firms' top executives were used to gauge future prospects and areas of focus. In addition, industry coverage reports from different sources and magazines were researched to form an opinion on the outlook of the different sectors.

2.2.5 Ratings of Stock Analysts and Brokerages

The stock reports shared by different brokerages such as India Infoline, Karvy Stock Broking, and so on, and the opinions of reputed technical analysts were read to understand the expert opinion on the outlook of the stocks. The experts' opinions were taken into account in final selection of the stocks.

3. FINDINGS

The evaluation methods discussed in detail in the previous section were used to select the following three stocks:

1. Infosys Technologies
2. Larsen & Toubro
3. SBI

Table 4.1A
Stock Prices: Current and Past

	Price One Year Ago (as on 29/01/2009) (in INR)	Price Six Months Ago (as on 29/07/2009) (in INR)	Recent Price (as on 29/01/2010) (in INR)	Percentage Gain in Stock Price Over Last Year
Larsen & Toubro	684.00	1,484.00	1,425.05	
SBI	1,125.00	1,680.00	2,056.60	87.09%
Infosys	1,300.00	1,960.30	2,452.40	88.95%

Table 4.1 A shows the prices of the three selected stocks one year ago, six months ago and one month ago. It is clear from the data that there has been considerable appreciation in the stock prices of all three companies, which makes the stocks a lucrative investment opportunity.

In the report, only the data, analysis, and associated findings for the selected stocks are presented. The findings are reported separately for each of the three companies below.

3.1 Infosys Technologies

3.1.1 Analysis of Financial Ratios

Stock price valuation Figure 4.1A shows the P/E ratio of Infosys. Currently, Infosys is trading at a lower P/E ratio (23.62) than the P/E ratio (28.91) of the software industry. This indicates that the Infosys stock is undervalued and has the potential to rise in the near future.

Figure 4.2A shows the P/BV ratio of Infosys. It is evident from the graph that the Infosys stock is trading at a low P/BV ratio (6.98) as compared to its historical value (around 9). So, it is a suitable time to invest in Infosys stock, as it is poised to go up.

Figure 4.1A P/E ratio of Infosys from Jan 2003 to Jan 2010

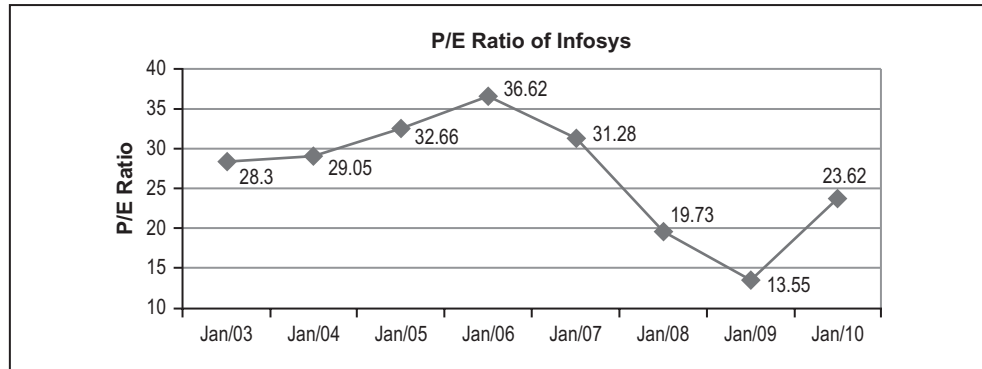
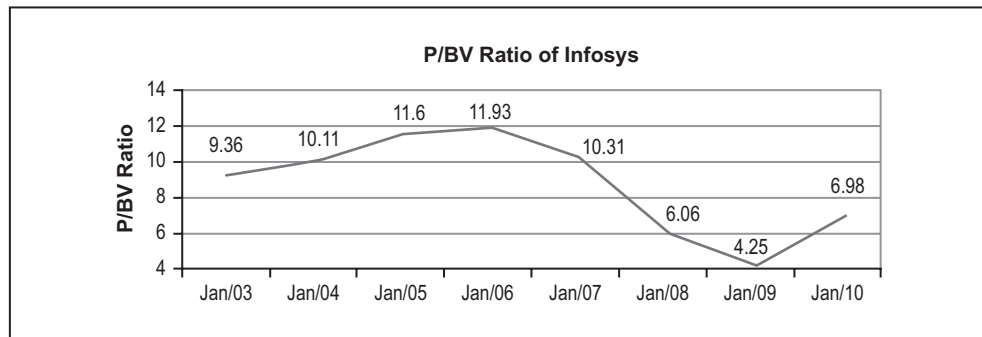


Figure 4.2A P/BV ratio of Infosys from Jan 2003 to Jan 2010



Ability to meet liabilities Figure 4.3A compares the current ratio of Infosys with that of the software industry. The graph clearly indicates that Infosys has maintained a higher current ratio than the software industry. One can infer from this that Infosys has high liquidity, and its business is robust.

Ability to service debts Figure 4.4A shows the ability of Infosys to fulfil interest payments on the loans it has taken. The high interest coverage ratio that Infosys has maintained over time indicates its commitment to meeting its obligations towards its debtors. Its earnings have been constantly robust enough to easily enable it to make interest payments.

Consistency of earnings Figure 4.5A compares the returns (ROCE and EBITDA) Infosys has generated over the years with those of the software industry. It is clearly visible

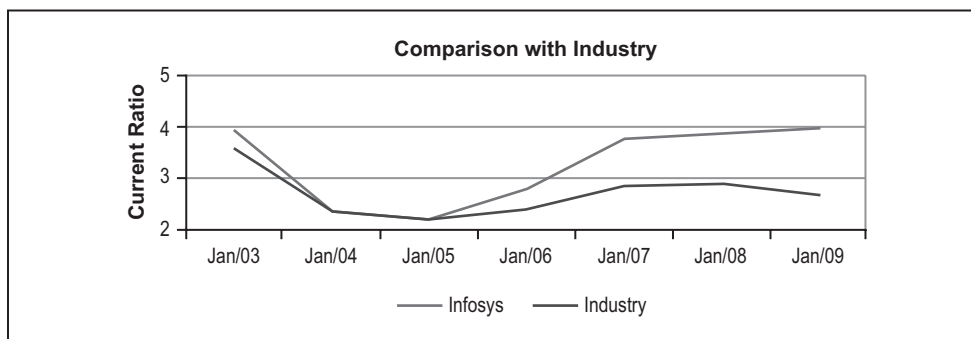


Figure 4.3A Comparison of current ratio of Infosys with that of software industry

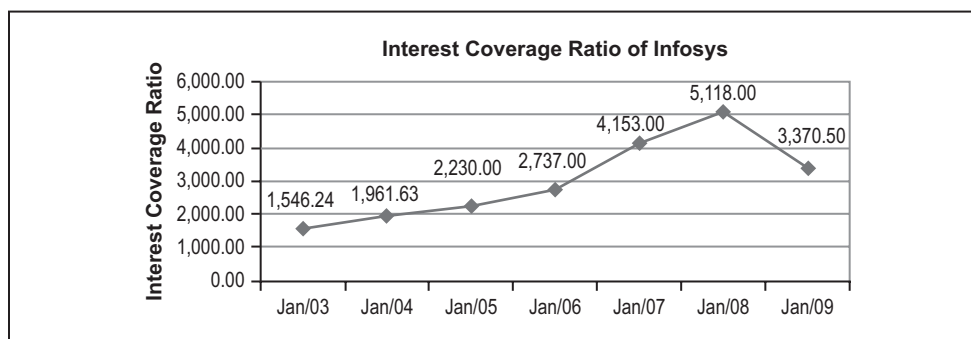


Figure 4.4A Interest coverage ratio of Infosys from Jan 2003 to Jan 2009

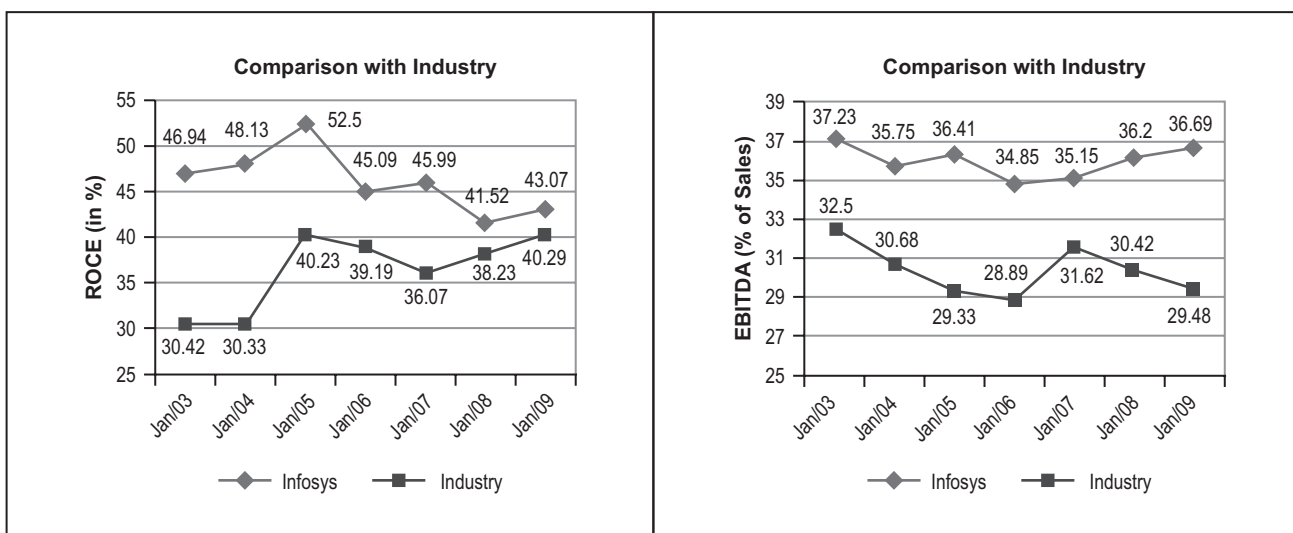
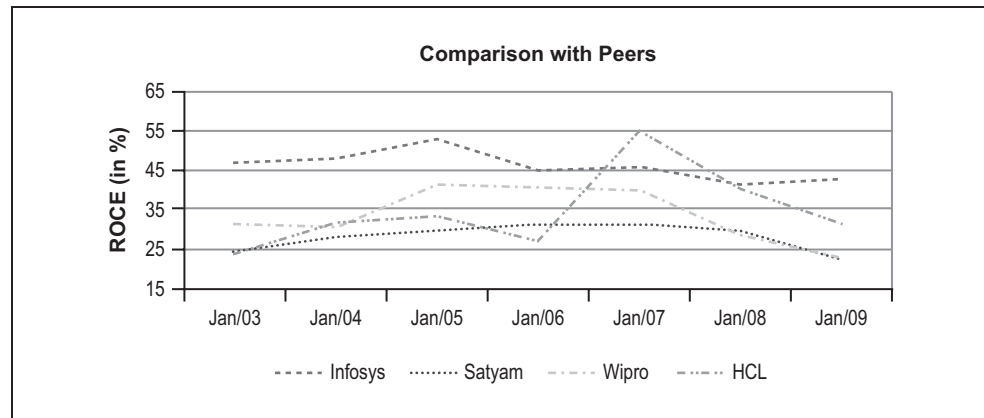


Figure 4.5A Comparison of earnings performance of Infosys with that of software industry

Figure 4.6A Comparison of ROCE of Infosys with its peers



that the returns generated by Infosys have consistently beaten the industry's returns. This highlights the profitability of Infosys' business and the acumen of its management. The consistency of its earnings performance makes Infosys a very lucrative investment option.

Figure 4.6A compares the returns generated by Infosys with those of its peers. It is clear from the graph that Infosys has consistently outperformed its peers such as HCL, TCS, and Wipro. This indicates that Infosys is the most reliable investment option in the Indian software industry.

3.1.2 Future Projects

The annual report of Infosys was read to identify some of the important projects that will drive the growth of the firm. Some of the key future projects Infosys plans to invest in are listed below:

1. Infosys plans to generate USD 1 billion in revenue from the Indian market. According to the head of its India business unit, this would be accomplished in two to three years. They are already making progress by bidding for at least 10 large government projects.
2. METRO Group, one of the largest pioneer international retailing companies, has selected Infosys as a partner in its Future Store Initiative (FSI) for the advancement of cutting-edge technologies and innovative shopping concepts.
3. Infosys launched Flypp, which mobile operators can use as a technology platform to offer a wide spectrum of applications, in December 2009. It has already tied up with Aircel, a unit of Malaysia's Maxis, to offer a wide range of mobile phone applications.
4. Infosys will design and implement the Research Informatics System at Elan Pharmaceuticals, Inc., a leading biotechnology company, to accelerate discovery research using a path-breaking co-creation engagement model that leverages Infosys' existing intellectual property in this field.

3.1.3 Management's Vision and Expert Opinion

Some of the key points gathered from the management's messages in the annual report are:

1. According to CEO K. Gopalakrishnan, Infosys is trying to shift from a capital expenditure-based model to an operational expenditure-based model post recession. Also, it would concentrate more on larger deals. Moreover, Infosys is expecting to generate at least USD 1 billion in revenue by 2013 by grooming infrastructure management, independent testing and validation, business process management, and system integration.
2. According to CFO V. Balakrishnan, Infosys, having a cash pile of nearly USD 3 billion, may look at buying companies in the consulting, back office, healthcare, and utilities segments.

- Infosys is focusing on R&D in software engineering and focusing on reducing energy consumption through green buildings.

Some of the expert opinions on Infosys and the Indian IT industry are as follows:

As per the NASCOM report, IT revenue for 2010 is anticipated at USD 73–75 billion. The growth of the Indian IT industry is likely to be very good in the future.

According to the NASSCOM 2009 strategic report, India has 28 per cent of the total suitable talent pool available to work in the IT/BPO industry. With increases in the trend towards offshore technology service, cost benefit, and high-quality delivery, the Indian IT industry still has a lot of growth potential.

3.1.4 Brokerage and Analyst Ratings

The recommendations and ratings of some well-known brokerages and stock analysts are:

- Bank of America-Merrill Lynch upgraded Infosys stock to “buy” from “underperform” on January 12, 2010.
- Angel Broking recommended a “buy” rating on Infosys with a target of INR 3,020 on December 19, 2009.
- Karvy Stock Broking recommended a “market performer” rating on Infosys with a target of INR 2,617 on December 9, 2009.

3.2 Larsen and Toubro

3.2.1 Analysis of Financial Ratios

Stock price valuation Figure 4.7A shows the P/E ratio of L&T from 2003 to present. Currently, L&T is trading at a lower P/E ratio (21.61) than the P/E ratio (26.3) of the infrastructure industry. This indicates that the L&T stock is undervalued and has the potential to rise in the near future.

Figure 4.8A shows the P/BV ratio of L&T. It is evident from the graph that the L&T stock is trading at a low P/BV ratio (5.19) as compared to its values in 2006 to 2008. The L&T stock fell drastically in 2009, which is reflected in the fall in its P/BV ratio from 2008 to 2009. The fall was due to the Indian stock market crash brought about by the downturn in the Indian economy. As the economy has started recovering, the L&T stock has started to move up as indicated by the rise in P/BV ratio (from 3.17 to 5.19) in 2010. As the P/BV ratio is still much lower than its historical highs (9.28), one can expect the stock price to appreciate further. So, it is a suitable time to invest in L&T stock.

Ability to meet liabilities Figure 4.9A compares the current ratio maintained by L&T over the years with that of the industry. It indicates that L&T has maintained a current ratio in line with the industry average. So, one can conclude that L&T maintains a balanced current

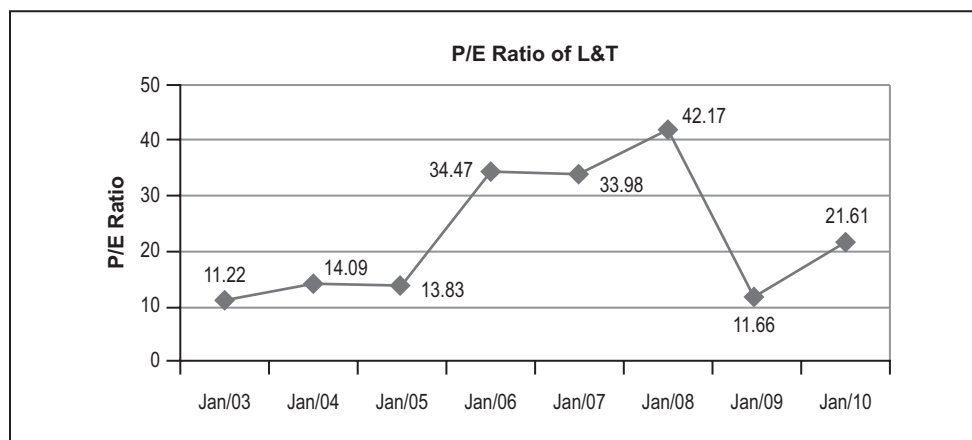


Figure 4.7A P/E ratio of L&T from Jan 2003 to Jan 2010

Figure 4.8A P/BV ratio of L&T from Jan 2003 to Jan 2010

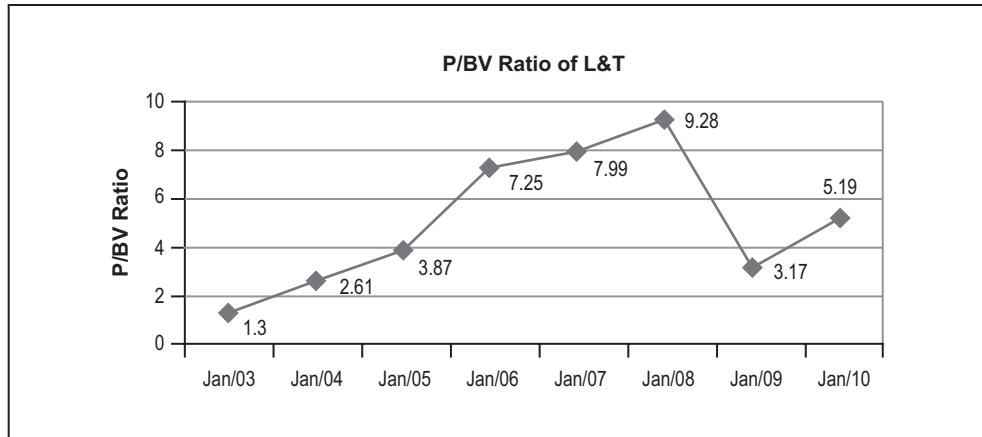
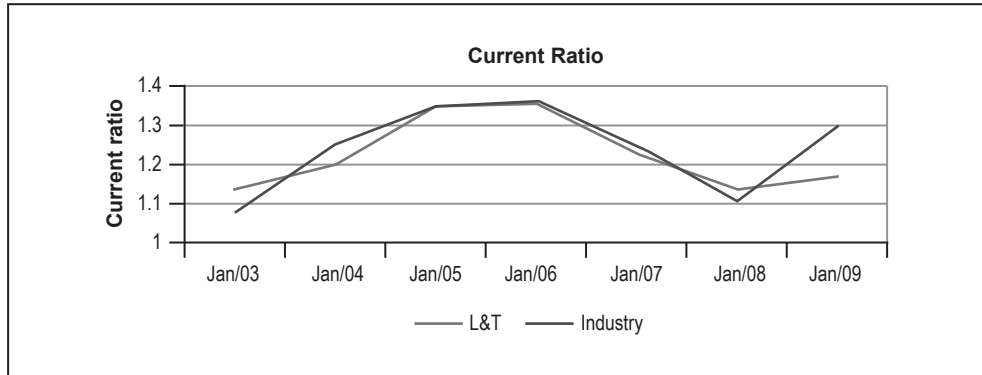


Figure 4.9A Comparison of current ratio of L&T with that of capital goods industry

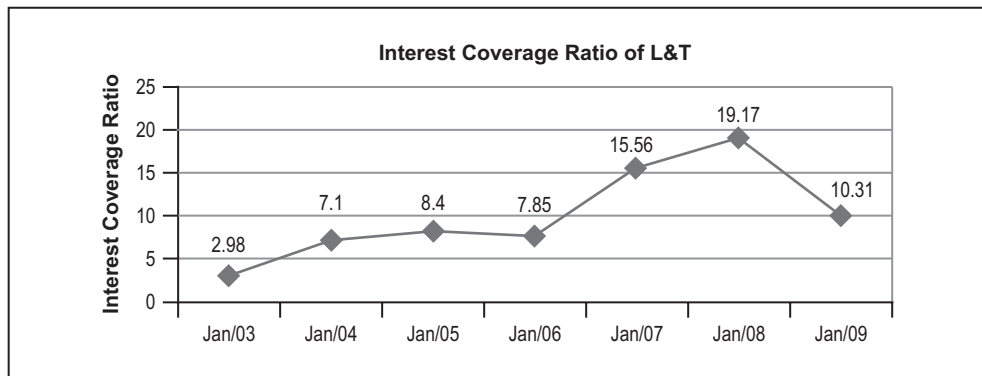


ratio as followed by its peer companies in the industry. It does not maintain excessively high current assets as that leads to its cash being blocked. On the other hand, it does not want its assets to be too low, as that can lead to a default on its obligations.

Ability to service debts Figure 4.10A shows the ability of L&T to fulfil interest payments on the loans it has taken. The high interest coverage ratio that L&T has maintained over time indicates its commitment to meeting its obligations towards its debtors. Its earnings have been constantly robust enough to easily enable it to make interest payments.

Returns to shareholders The graphs in Figure 4.11A compare the earnings (as represented by ROCE and EBITDA) L&T has generated over the years with the industry’s average. The returns generated by L&T have consistently beaten the industry’s average returns. This indicates the

Figure 4.10A Interest coverage ratio of L&T from Jan 2003 to Jan 2009



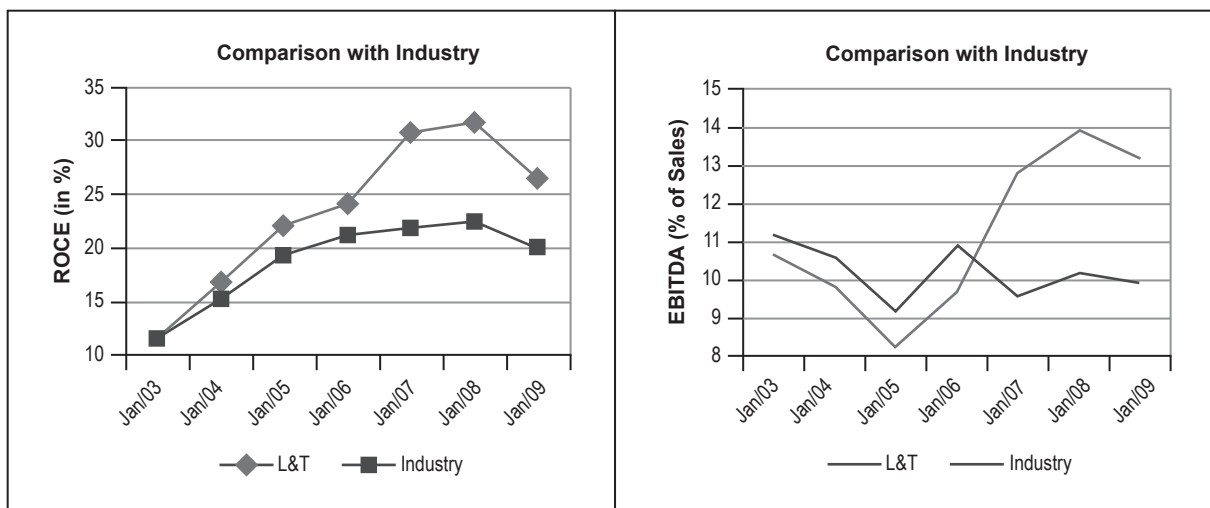


Figure 4.11A Comparison of earnings performance of L&T with that of capital goods industry

profitability of L&T’s business and the acumen of its management. The consistent earnings performance of L&T makes it a very lucrative investment option.

Figure 4.12A compares the returns generated by L&T with those of its peers. The graph clearly shows that L&T has consistently generated higher returns than its peers such as ABG Infra and Reliance Industrial Infrastructure Ltd. (RIIL).

3.2.2 Future Projects

The annual report of L&T and media sources were read to identify some of the important projects that will drive the growth of the firm. Some of the key future prospects for L&T are listed below:

1. L&T is eyeing road and highway projects, as these have started receiving focused government attention.
2. It is planning to expand its power equipment manufacturing as the growth forecasts for power equipment are very lucrative.
3. Nuclear power generation, which is slated to grow by an order of magnitude over the next decade and even more in India, spells major growth opportunities for India in the long term.

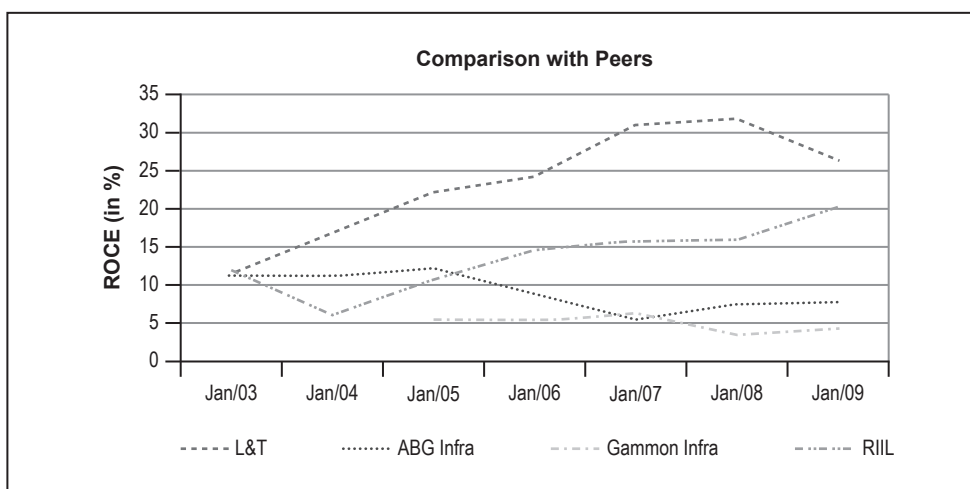


Figure 4.12A Comparison of ROCE of L&T with its peers

4. The defense sector, when privatized, offers large business potential as L&T is well positioned in this area.
5. L&T's joint venture with Mitsubishi means that L&T is well positioned for business in the highly lucrative super-critical boilers and turbines segment.
6. L&T is expecting INR 35 billion of orders from the railways in 2010.

3.2.3 Management's Vision and Expert Opinion

Some of the key points gathered from the management's messages in the annual report are presented below:

1. The management is confident of maintaining its guidance of 25 per cent increase in order inflows for 2010 because of a strong order book of more than INR 700 billion. Moreover, the management sees huge upcoming opportunities in infrastructure, so the company is spending massively on capital expenditure. It has already spent INR 15 billion in forgings and INR 8 billion in installation of offshore parts.
2. As per the statement of A.M. Naik, Chairman and Managing Director of L&T, the company is going to focus on its hydrocarbon business, both in upstream oil and gas exploration/extraction and in midstream refineries.
3. As per Y.M. Deosthalee, Chief Financial Officer of L&T, the company has maintained its forecast of a 25 per cent growth in its orders book for 2010. This growth is most likely due to fresh addition of infrastructure projects.

3.2.4 Brokerage and Analyst Ratings

The recommendations and ratings of some well-known brokerages and stock analysts are:

1. India Infoline recommended a "buy" rating for L&T on January 11, 2010.
2. Motilal Oswal upgraded L&T to "buy" from "neutral" on December 21, 2010.

3.3 State Bank of India

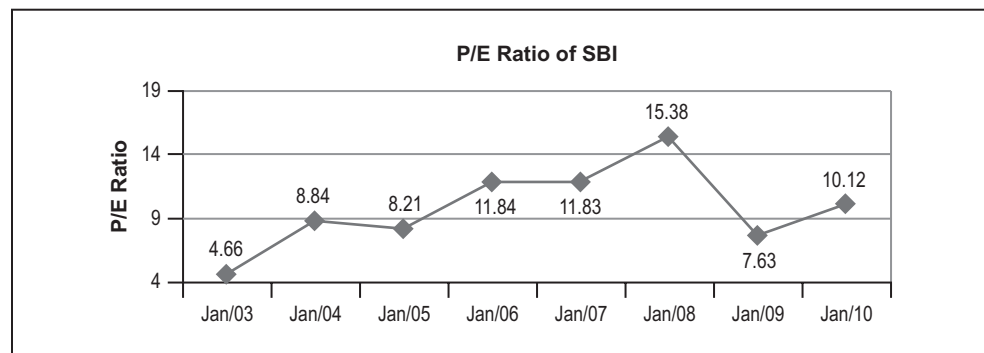
3.3.1 Analysis of Financial Ratios

Stock price valuation Figure 4.13A shows the P/E ratio of SBI from 2003 to present. Currently, SBI is trading at a lower P/E ratio (10.12) than the P/E ratio (13.53) of public sector banks. This indicates that the SBI stock is undervalued and has the potential to rise in the near future.

Figure 4.14A shows the P/BV ratio of SBI from 2003 to present. The fall in P/BV ratio (from 2.06 to 1.17) of SBI in 2009 was due to the stock market crash of 2009. With the economic recovery, SBI's stock price has rebounded, leading to a rise in its P/BV ratio. However, there is still scope for the stock to appreciate, as the P/BV ratio is still much lower than its highest value (2.06). So, it is the right time to invest in SBI stock.

Earnings performance Figure 4.15A compares the return on net worth (RONW) of SBI with that of the public sector bank industry. It is clear from the graph that SBI has consistently

Figure 4.13A P/E ratio of SBI from Jan 2003 to Jan 2010



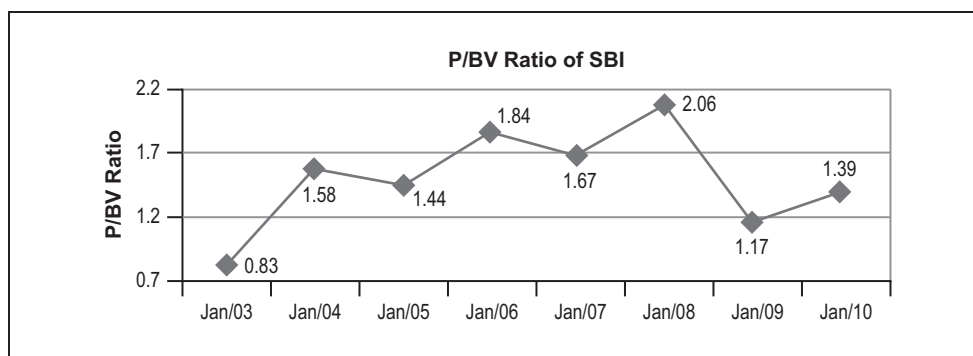


Figure 4.14A P/BV ratio of SBI from Jan 2003 to Jan 2010

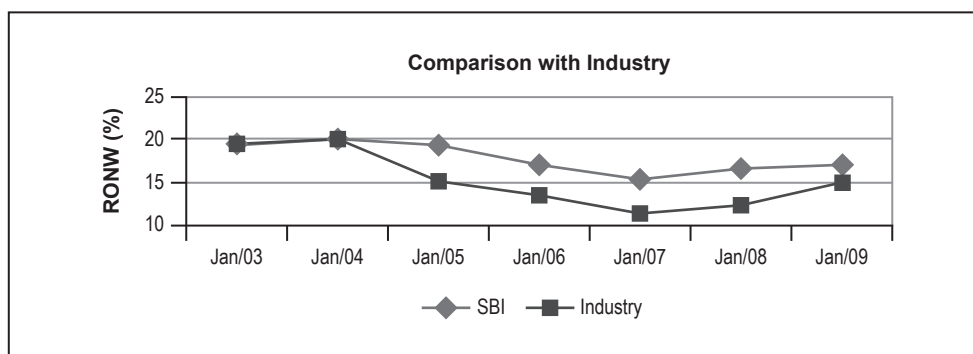


Figure 4.15A Comparison of earnings performance of SBI with that of public sector banking industry

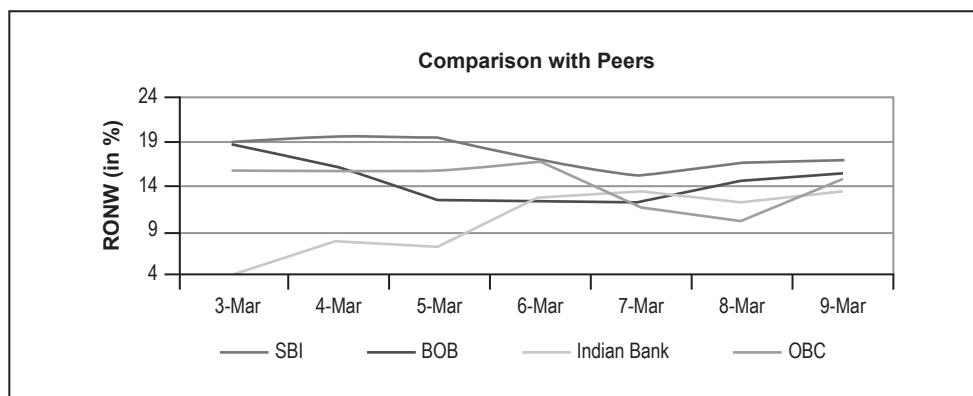


Figure 4.16A Comparison of earnings performance of SBI with other public sector banks

performed better than the aggregate banking industry. So, one can infer that SBI is a lucrative investment option in the banking industry as it has a proven track record of beating industry performance.

Figure 4.16A compares the returns generated by SBI with those of its peers. The graph clearly shows that SBI has consistently generated higher returns than other public sector banks such as Bank of Baroda, Oriental Bank of Commerce, and Indian Bank.

3.3.2 Future Projects

SBI's annual report and media sources were analysed to identify some of the important projects that will drive the growth of the firm. Some of the key future prospects for SBI are listed below:

1. SBI has identified the United Kingdom as a priority market and is eyeing USD 1 billion acquisitions there. SBI's retail operation is performing well in the United Kingdom despite the economic slowdown.

2. SBI is planning to increase its branch network in rural areas.
3. SBI is assessing markets like Western Europe, North America, East Africa, South Africa, Far East, and West Asia. It is expected to open 20 to 25 overseas branches or representative offices in three months.
4. SBI is planning to merge its associate banks to avail of larger resources, including human resources, and improve its operational efficiency.

3.3.3 Brokerage and Analyst Ratings

The recommendations and ratings of some well-known brokerages and stock analysts are:

1. Analyst Sudarshan Sukhani recommends buying SBI stock.
2. Karvy Stock Brokings recommended a “market performer” rating for SBI with a target of INR 2,555 on January 28, 2010.

4. CONCLUSIONS

A set of conclusions about each of the three stocks, Infosys, L&T, and SBI, are listed below:

Infosys

1. Infosys’ move to look for opportunities in India will lower its dependence on the U.S. market. Most of the decisions will be made in favour of high spending in India.
2. It is constantly performing and meeting high-end technology needs.
3. The move to venture into mobile technologies will help Infosys tap the highly competitive industry whose operator presence is increasing rapidly.
4. The company is also making steady progress in providing technological service to the emerging biotechnology industry.

Thus, the future prospects and growth of Infosys (and of the IT industry) are very optimistic. Going by its past performance and growth rate, Infosys is a very good pick for investment.

L&T

1. The future prospects of infrastructure are very bright as India is in acute need of better infrastructure. The Indian government has also realized the importance of infrastructure development and has sanctioned several large infrastructure projects. L&T, being the top infrastructure player in India, is poised to capitalize on these new opportunities.
2. L&T can tap most of the future opportunities emerging from its capital expenditure spending due to the government’s increased focus on infrastructure spending.
3. L&T’s focus on high-growth areas like nuclear power and infrastructure will boost L&T’s growth considerably.
4. L&T has a wide array of business portfolios. So the risk to its business and earnings potential is low.

The future of infrastructure and the capital goods industry is very bright in India, as there is massive spending and support by the government for infrastructure projects. L&T being the top infrastructure player in the country is poised to take advantage of the growth opportunities in the infrastructure industry.

SBI

1. The core system modernization undertaken by SBI would reverse a trend of customer attrition and consolidate its affiliate banks. Additionally, the bank can now further expand its product offerings and improve customer service.
2. With the extensive deployment of its core banking technology and other technology initiatives, SBI has emerged as one of the most cost-efficient banks, beating its private sector counterparts HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank.

3. The move by SBI to make acquisitions in the United Kingdom will increase the volume of local business there. At present, SBI operates in the United Kingdom through its seven branches there. The bank would show an even better performance through mergers in the United Kingdom.
4. Mobile banking for entry-level mobiles would drive more people to use the feature. Also, this would reduce SBI's operational costs considerably.

The Indian banking system is financially stable and resilient to the shocks that may arise due to higher non-performing assets and the global economic crisis, according to a stress test done by the Reserve Bank of India. Thus, investing in SBI is a good option.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this industry- and stock-specific analysis, the report recommends the stocks of Infosys Technologies Ltd., Larsen & Toubro, and State Bank of India for investment. The stocks of these companies have strong fundamentals. They are also highly undervalued, which is suggestive of their future prospects. These stocks have been recommended by experts and stock market players. The managements at three firms are trusted for their leadership and vision. These stocks have been found to be viable and in line with the objectives of EquityPlus's new fund.

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Appendix 5

SAMPLE OF A SHORT INFORMAL REPORT

To: Anita Rajmohan
Personnel Manager

From: Gautam Sinha
Assistant Manager

Ref: HR/09/007

Date: October 16, 2009

Report on the value of training programmes attended by employees at level III and level IV

1.0 INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, September 28, you asked me to investigate the values derived by the employees who attended various training programmes and to suggest ways in which this might be enhanced further. My report was to be submitted to you by October 20, 2009.

2.0 FINDINGS

2.1 Applications in current jobs

About 76 per cent of the level III and 67 per cent of level IV employees claimed to use the concepts taught to them in various training programmes in their work life. Most of the employees felt that concepts such as leadership, communication, and performance management could be internalized. On average, about 89 per cent of employees claimed to be thinking in new directions and reported greater work satisfaction.

2.2 Change in attitude

Most employees felt that attitude changes were gradual and depended in large measure on the work environment in general. They reported that while they felt enthused, their superiors and subordinates did not always feel that way.

2.3 Feedback

There was a marked difference between employees who received training at premier national institutes and those that received training at second-rung institutes. Employees felt that for a permanent change, training should percolate at all levels, should be imparted by a premier institute, and should be at regular intervals.

2.4 Cost-benefit analysis

Training cost at level III was approximately INR 800,000 for 30 participants and INR 200,000 for 27 participants belonging to level IV. Travel and miscellaneous costs were approximately INR 100,000 for both sets of participants. Benefits are realized gradually in terms of increased input-output, enhanced productivity, greater motivation, and better performance.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigation I have made does justify the concerns relating to value-addition compared to the amount we spent on employee training and development. The benefits of training can be higher if we adopt uniform procedures across both levels. I should therefore like to recommend the following information for your consideration:

3.1 A meeting with senior HR heads must be called to assess the value of training considering the amount we spend.

3.2 ABC is doing considerably well; therefore, we can afford to send our employees to premier training institutes.

3.3 Consideration should be given to centralizing all training programmes so as to ensure that cost-effective approaches are optimized.

3.4 Departmental policy on training should be revised and all staff notified.

I hope you find the suggestions useful. I will be glad to provide any clarifications you require in this regard.

(Signature and Date)

Appendix 6 | ROUTINE REPORTS (ONE PAGE)

M.I.S. REPORT - HR DEPARTMENT # FOR THE MONTH OF _____

Department Head Name:

Manpower position in

- Managers
- Staff
- Operations
- Temporary

Total

New joinings in

Left service employess in

Total Manpower At The End _____

New Employees Duties and Responsibilities: See the attachment

Time for monitoring attendance.

Disciplinary actions taken for the reasons: See the attachment

Monthly appraisal system from the heads received: Comments, see the attachment

Suggestion from the department heads and employees: See the attachment

Reports from the statutory authorities received: See the attachment

Appendix 7 | ROLE PLAYS

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Each of the situations described here requires two students to act them out. During the role play, the other students (the audience) should take note of the pros and cons of the communication. Each role play should conclude with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the communication, the utility of the communicated message, and the style and efficacy of message delivery of both the actors. The chapters that the students need to go through before dealing with each situation have been mentioned after every role play.

THE ROLE PLAYS

The following are the various real life situations which the students need to act out.¹

The Missing Assistant Manager

You are a senior manager in World Works Ltd, a company producing customized software for leading business clients. One morning, you want one of the assistant managers, Rajeev, to handle an emergency. However, you learn that he has still not reached the office. You are informed that Rajeev was working late the previous day. Even then, you are annoyed at his unpunctuality. You had noticed Rajeev coming late to office on several previous occasions. When Rajeev eventually reaches the office in the second half, you decide to talk to him.

Identify a fellow student to play the role of Rajeev. List the key points that you would like to convey to Rajeev. As the senior-most member of the team, what steps will you take to ensure that such a situation does not arise in the future?

Chapters go through before attempting this: Chapter 2, “Theories of Interpersonal and Organizational Communication”; Chapter 3, “Interpersonal Communication”; Chapter 4, “Analysing Transactions: The Units of Communication”.

The Reluctant Employee

You are the senior manager at the branch office of a prominent white goods firm. There is an upcoming prestigious trade fair in Amsterdam where your company hopes to showcase its latest innovations. You want Mohan, one of the assistant managers, to accompany you to the trade fair. However, Mohan is supposed to be going away on a vacation at that time and he had informed you of the same well in advance. However, this fair means a lot to the company and you cannot afford to let it go. You decide to call Mohan to your office and talk to him about it.

Identify a fellow student to play the role of Mohan. What are the main points you would like to communicate to him? How will you ensure Mohan’s participation in the fair without being unfair to him?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 5, “The Language of Persuasion”.

1. The ideas for some of the role plays have been provided by Raghu Sangal, T. Balakrishna, Anand Dorairaj, B.S. Arvind Babu, Himanshu Gupta, Thyagarajan D., Sugandha Srivastava, Tom C. Jose, Ankush Malik, Sanjay Dhir, Deepesh and Raghav.

The Inappropriate E-mail

You are one of the management trainees in a fairly conservative organization. You have graduated from a reputed engineering institute and feel that a relaxed, informal atmosphere and a shift to modern methods of communication will actually increase productivity. One day, you send the following e-mail to your supervisor Raghav.

Subject: Meeting minutes

Hi Sir,

Please find details of the meeting held last Friday. I have enclosed the decision chart with the mail. Please contact me for any other clarifications, if required.

Lily

p.s. I missed the deadline by ten minutes. I hope that's not an issue with you. 😊

I love miracles. In fact, I rely on them. Occasionally, I create some!

After a while, Raghav calls you to his cabin to talk about the e-mail. He sounds visibly annoyed at the tone and mode of the message.

Choose someone from your class to play the role of Raghav. What are the ways in which you might communicate your point of view to your boss without annoying him even further? How will you convince your boss that your informal tone did not mean any disrespect?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 5, “The Language of Persuasion”; Chapter 10, “Introduction to Business Writing”; Chapter 11, “The Writing Strategy”; Chapter 12, “Business Letters, Memorandums, and E-mails”.

Persuading the Distributor

You have been the territory manager for a reputed consumer goods enterprise for three years now. However, things have started to change in the company. With the brand management team looking to prune a few popular brands from your portfolio, it is the distributor who stands to lose the most in terms of gross margins and revenues. Keeping all this in mind, you decide to fix a meeting with Raju, a distributor you haven't been in touch with recently, hoping to inform him about all the changes happening.

Identify one of your classmates to play the role of Raju. What are the points you need to communicate to him? How are you going to persuade him to stick to your company even though initially he might lose money with the new brands?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 5, “The Language of Persuasion”; Chapter 8, “Business Meetings and Negotiations”.

Reassuring the Agent

You the divisional manager of one of the most trusted insurance firms of India. Due to internal restructuring, the company now has a new aggressive marketing strategy which includes targeting high-end customers in order to obtain more premium from the individual client. However, Abhijeet, an older agent, has been particularly vocal against the new policies of the company, saying that the new marketing strategies will jeopardize his relationship with his clients. He also claims that he doesn't have the sufficient training necessary to deal with high-end customers. You decide to invite him to a private meeting and talk to him about these issues.

Identify one of your batchmates to play the role of Abhijeet. How will you convince him to change his mind and work with you towards a common goal? What methods of communication will you employ?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 1, “Introduction to Business Communication”; Chapter 3, “Interpersonal Communication”; Chapter 4, “Analysing Transactions: The Units of Communication”; Chapter 5, “The Language of Persuasion”.

Saying No!

You have been working for a new communication service provider company that has been hailed as the new big thing in the Indian market. To celebrate this success, your CEO Harshit has thrown a gala party where he announces that he is giving you a huge promotion and making you the divisional head. However, in order to take up this position, you need to move to a different city. You live with your ailing mother and as such, it is impossible for you to relocate. You decide to request a private meeting with Harshit the next day and talk to him about this.

Choose one of the students from the class to play the role of Harshit. How will you communicate to your boss your inability to relocate without sounding ungrateful? What are the points that you need to focus on in order to communicate successfully in this case?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 1, “Introduction to Business Communication”; Chapter 3, “Interpersonal Communication”; Chapter 4, “Analysing Transactions: The Units of Communication”; Chapter 5, “The Language of Persuasion”.

Negotiating for the Right Price

Your company has been supplying packaging material to a well-known giftware manufacturer for four years now, and it is time to renew your contract. Afraid of losing the brand value that this manufacturer brings to your company, you had agreed to a lower price the last time. This time, however, the market rates have increased so much that you have decided to insist on a higher price for your material. Your company had barely made any profit last year because of this and you are determined not to repeat that again this year. You decide to send an e-mail to Shantanu, the purchasing manager of the giftware company, requesting an urgent meeting with him.

Identify one of your classmates to play the part of Shantanu. How will you convince him to increase the price? Which methods of communication should you use in order to get your point across successfully?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 8, “Business Meetings and Negotiations”.

Refusal to work Overtime

You have been working for a construction company for ten years and have trained a lot of young recruits during that time. Rajeev is a new employee straight out of college. He is good at his job but leaves by five every day. He claims that he teaches underprivileged children in the evenings and cannot give more time to office. However, you have a couple of urgent new projects coming in and you want everyone to put in extra hours in the office in order to finish the projects on time. You decide to call Rajeev to your cubicle and have a talk with him.

Choose one of your fellow-students to play the part of Rajeev. How will you convince him to put in extra hours at work? How will you ensure that his extra curricular activities are not permanently hampered due to this?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 3, “Interpersonal Communication”; Chapter 4, “Transaction Analysis: The Units of Communication”.

Non-confirmation of Employment

You are in the final semester of your electrical engineering course and have been offered a position by a well-known electrical goods manufacturing company. However, it has been over six months and the company has still not given you your joining letter. Repeated e-mails and calls to the recruiting manager have not yielded any results either. You decide to visit the company’s headquarters in Delhi along with a few of your batchmates and demand an explanation. Once there, you are summoned by Ashish, the company’s national director of sales, for a private meeting.

Make one of your classmates play the part of Ashish. Which are the methods of communication you will employ to communicate your distress to Ashish? How will you convince him to give you a definite joining date?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 1, “Introduction to Business Communication”; Chapter 5, “The Language of Persuasion”.

Failure to Inform

You are fresh out of college and are working in a fast-moving finance company. Currently, you are working on a prestigious project on a short deadline. After a particularly gruelling day, you wake up the next morning and realize that you have high fever. You send your boss Ritesh a text, informing him about your inability to come in that day. Then you go back to sleep. When you wake up you see that you have had several missed calls from Ritesh and realize that the text you had sent earlier hasn't been delivered. You decide to give him a call and explain things to him.

Choose one of the students in your group to play the part of Ritesh. What are the communication skills that you will draw upon in order to resolve this amicably? How will you convince him that your disappearance was an honest mistake and that you had a genuine reason for not turning up?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 1, “Introduction to Business Communication”.

Confusion with Time

You are a new hire for a technology outsourcing company and have been assigned a project that will be lead by Megan from New York, your onsite project manager. On your first day of working with Megan, you get a call from her, asking you to finish an Excel sheet by tonight. Though initially you have difficulty comprehending her accent, you finally manage to understand what it is that you are required to do. You decide to work on the Excel sheet a little later. However, after a while, you get another indignant call from Megan, and it is then that you realize that by ‘tonight’ she didn't mean night in India but night in the United States of America. You decide to write her a mail, explaining why you couldn't finish the work on time.

Get one of your classmates to play the role of Megan. How will you write an e-mail so that she is convinced that there was a genuine communication gap? What steps will you take to ensure that such a thing does not happen in the future?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 6, “Communicating in a Diverse Work Environment”; Chapter 7, “Crisis Communication Strategies”.

One who was Inexperienced

You are fresh out of business school and have joined a leading firm as a regional manager right after graduation. However, the local sales team has a number of members who are considerably more experienced and older than you. Once they learn of your prior inexperience, they stop taking your suggestions of paying any heed to your directions. Akhtar, a sales executive who has been working in this area for ten years, is especially vocal in this regard. As a result, sales figures plummet and you get a warning from your bosses. You decide to talk to Akhtar in a private meeting.

Choose one of your classmates to play the part of Akhtar. How will you acknowledge his long years in the field as well as making him see that even though you have little hands-on experience, your opinions and suggestions are not to be ignored?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 1, “Introduction to Business Communication”; Chapter 3, “Interpersonal Communication”.

Faulty Assumptions

While you were serving notice period in your company, you were given a new, research-oriented project to work on. You are informed that Paul from the London office will work along with you on the project. You write a detailed e-mail to Paul, proposing how you two

might divide the work. However, Paul seems strangely reluctant and says that he would prefer to review your work instead of actually writing something. You think Paul is shirking his duties and decide to do everything yourself, preferring to ignore his suggestions. It is only after you submit your project that you realize that Paul is in a managerial post and has been annoyed by your lack of cooperation. You decide to call Paul in order to explain the situation.

Ask someone from your group to play the part of Paul. How will you let him know that you did what you did because of a communication gap? Which methods will you employ in order to make sure that this doesn't happen again?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 1, "Introduction to Business Communication".

The Faulty Presentation

You have been working for a multinational company as their chief database engineer. While on a visit to their New York office, you are asked to give a presentation on database infrastructure. You start off the presentation with a quip about the inefficiency of IT workers in general. During the break, however, your manager Jenna brings this up and asks you to "tone it down a bit". You also realize that your audience, which consists mostly of IT professionals, are not too pleased with you. You are surprised at the unusually harsh reactions because you had done the exact same presentation in India, with favourable results. You decide to talk to Jenna about it.

Choose one of your batchmates to play the part of Jenna. List the key points you would like to convey to her. How will you convince her that this was unintentional and that something like this won't happen in the future?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 6, "Communicating in a Diverse Work Environment"; Chapter 9, "Preparing and Delivering Presentations".

The Arrogant Retort

You work for a famous IT company in Mysore. As your hometown is Kozhikode, which is hardly an hour away, you spend most of your weekends at home. You are on good terms with your manager, Naveen. You come back after a long Easter weekend and see that your team has decided to work next Saturday. You are distressed at the fact that one of your weekends is going to be spoilt and lose no time in filing a leave application for Saturday. After a while, Naveen walks in and informs you pleasantly that as you had just had a long weekend, he cannot grant you another leave. For some reason, you take his words to heart and respond rather rudely, telling him that you are entitled to the leave and see no reason why it won't be granted. It is when Naveen walks away with a visibly disapproving expression that you realize that you had probably crossed a line. You decide to talk to Naveen and mend things.

Ask one of your classmates to play the role of Naveen. What are the tools of communication that you will employ to ensure that you are back on pleasant terms with him again? List the key points that you would like to communicate to him.

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 1, "Introduction to Business Communication"; Chapter 3, "Interpersonal Communication".

The Faulty Official Interaction

You work in an engineering company and are part of a team that is involved in the detailed structural analysis of a switchyard at one of the company's projects. You are given the responsibility of getting the required data from the electro-mechanical department. You have a formal interaction session with them and come to an oral agreement about the information they would provide. As they are part of the same company, you do not think it is required for you to get a formal written agreement. Three weeks into the project, you are informed of a change in requirements by the electro-mechanical department, thus rendering your previous work

completely useless. Your team leader Ankush is furious with you when he realizes that you haven't kept any written record of your discussions. You decide to talk to him, explaining what happened.

Ask someone from your group to play the part of Ankush. What are the main points you would like to convey to him and how will you do it? How will you ensure that this doesn't happen again?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 1, "Introduction to Business Communication"; Chapter 3, "Interpersonal Communication"; Chapter 10, "Introduction to Business Writing".

The Dilemma over E-mails

You work for a reputed financial firm and are good at your job. However, there is one problem that you face regularly. You can never be sure whether to use "I" or "we" while writing official e-mails. You prefer to write "we" but are aware that your teammates always use "I" even when there are other people working on that project with them. However, over a period of time, you realize that your manager, Farooq, has developed an opinion that you are not contributing as much as the other members of the team are. During your appraisal, he gives you the feedback that you are not stepping up to take enough responsibilities. You think this opinion stems from the fact that you use "we" in your mails. You decide to talk to Farooq and clear his misconception.

Choose one of your batchmates to play the part of Farooq. How will you convince him that you take enough responsibilities? As a hard working employee, how will you ensure that something like this is not repeated?

Chapters to go through before attempting this: Chapter 3, "Interpersonal Communication"; Chapter 10, "Introduction to Business Writing"; Chapter 12, "Business Letters, Memorandums, and E-mails".

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