

Communication at Work

Meetings, e-mails, phone calls, texts, presentations, and formal and informal discussions play an important role in business and require proper attention and protocol. Employees who have a basic understanding of how to effectively and appropriately communicate in the workplace are at a significant advantage. Knowing what, when, and how to communicate creates a positive impression on others and helps you achieve your objective. Effective professional and electronic communication is vital to workplace success. This chapter presents the fundamentals of professional communication. Chapter 10 will specifically focus on the appropriate use of electronic communications, including its tools, practices, and protocols.

Workplace Communication and its Channels

Imagine going to work, sitting at your desk, and for one day sending and receiving no communication. If there were no face-to-face contact, no phones, no e-mails, no text messages, no meetings, and no memos to receive or write, business would come to a complete standstill. Even if you are talented at your job, if you cannot communicate with others, you will not keep a job, much less succeed. This chapter discusses the process and importance of effective communication in the workplace and provides information on how to improve workplace communication skills. **Communication** is the process of a sender transmitting a message to a receiver with the purpose of creating mutual understanding.

Improving communication skills is an ongoing process. As explained in Chapter 5, information is power. Therefore, your goal at work is to share appropriate, timely, and accurate information with your boss, your coworkers, and your customers.

Topic Situation

TOPIC RESPONSE

What type of information do employees need to know?

While eating lunch with employees from other departments, Sarah listened to others complain about how their bosses did such a poor job communicating with them. The employees complained that they never knew what was going on within the company. Sarah had no reason to complain, because she has a manager who makes every effort to share whatever information he knows within the department. After each manager's meeting, Sarah receives an e-mail outlining major topics that were discussed. During Sarah's department meeting, her manager reviews the information a second time and asks his employees if there are any additional questions. Sarah appreciates the fact that the manager enjoys and values communicating important information with his employees.

You have a professional obligation to share timely and relevant information with the appropriate people at work. In the workplace, there are two primary communication channels: formal and informal. **Formal communication** occurs through the formal (official) lines of authority. This includes communication within your immediate department, division, or throughout the company. Formal communication occurs either vertically or horizontally within

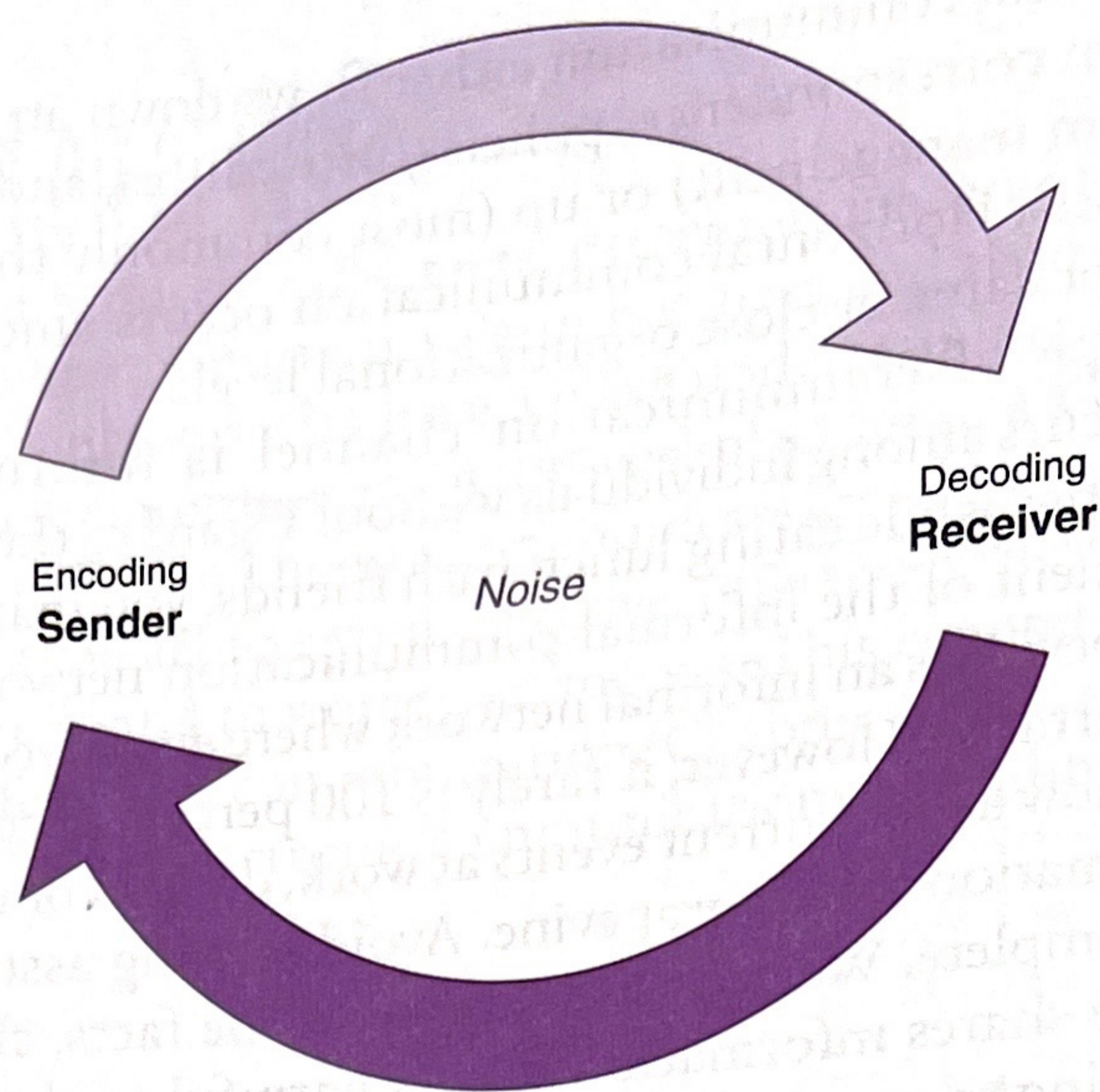


Figure 9.1

Communication Process

the sender. **Feedback** is a response to a sender based on the receiver's interpretation of the original message.

Many barriers can hinder the process of creating mutual understanding and successful communication, causing a breakdown in the communication process. The first barrier to overcome is clearly identifying the specific message to be sent. Once the message is identified, the sender needs to determine how best to send (encode) the message in a manner that will be properly interpreted (decoded) by the receiver. If the sender is not a strong communicator, his or her verbal, written, or non-verbal communication may be misinterpreted by the receiver because the message was at risk of being misinterpreted before it was even sent. The receiver contributes to the communication breakdown if he or she incorrectly interprets the message.

Another barrier to effective communication is **noise**. Noise is anything that interrupts or interferes with the communication process. The noise can be audible (you can actually hear it with your ears), or the noise can occur through other senses, such as visual, mental, touch, or smell. Noise may also include emotions such as hurt, anger, joy, sadness, or surprise.

Talk It Out

Identify the noise you experience during class.

TOPIC RESPONSE

How could Keira have been more open to the speaker?

Topic Situation

A supervisor in another department really irritates Keira. Keira has never shared this annoyance with anyone. One day, Keira was asked to attend a meeting led by the irritating supervisor. As Keira sat in the meeting, she had a hard time focusing on the message. Her mind was wandering through mental noise. At the end of the meeting, Keira was embarrassed that there were no notes to share. Dislike for the irritating supervisor affected her ability to listen and be a good receiver. Keira learned a tough lesson that day and made a commitment to be open to every communication, regardless of liking or disliking the sender.

Communication is complete only when all the components of the communication process work together to effectively send the message as they are intended to be sent. In order for this to occur, the sender must select the right medium and overcome noise. The receiver must then be willing to accept the message and provide feedback to acknowledge that the message has been received correctly.

As previously stated, a key element of effective communication is the communication medium (how the message will be sent). Communication media include verbal, non-verbal, and written communication. Let us further explore these three types of communication media.

Verbal Communication and Listening

Verbal communication is the process of using words to send a message. The words you select are extremely important. When you use only basic words in your communications, you risk appearing uneducated or inexperienced. In contrast, when you use a highly developed vocabulary, you may appear intimidating or arrogant. If others do not know the definitions of the words you are using, they will most likely not ask for clarification for fear of appearing ignorant. Therefore, your intended message will fail. When selecting words for your message, identify whether these words are appropriate or if the words can be misinterpreted. Use proper English and grammar. Be as clear as possible in your intent and how you verbally convey your message. When people are nervous or excited, they frequently speak at a rapid pace, increasing the probability that the message will be misinterpreted. Your tone of voice also conveys or creates images. It adds to others' perception of you, which either enforces or detracts from your message.

Successful verbal communication involves **listening**, the act of hearing attentively. Listening occurs not only with our ears, but also through our non-verbal responses. The three primary levels of listening are active listening, passive listening, and not listening at all. **Active listening** is when the receiver provides full attention to the sender without distraction. An active listener will provide frequent positive feedback to the sender through non-verbal gestures such as nodding, eye contact, or other favorable body language. Favorable verbal feedback may also include rephrasing the message to ensure or clarify understanding. With **passive listening**, the receiver is selectively hearing parts of the message and is more focused on responding to what is being said instead of truly listening to the entire message being sent. Passive listening is sometimes called conversational listening. In today's society, we have so many inputs trying to attract our attention that we often get anxious to share our point of view in a conversation and interrupt the sender. Interrupting is rude and disrespectful. Show others respect by not interrupting conversations. If you accidentally interrupt someone, immediately apologize and ask him or her to continue his or her statement. When a receiver fails to make any effort to hear or understand the sender's message, he or she is in **non-listening mode** and is allowing emotions, noise, or preconceptions to impede communication. Sometimes it is obvious the listener is not listening, because he or she either responds inappropriately or does not respond at all.

While the ideal is to consistently be an active listener, we know this is not always possible. However, every effort should be made to strive toward active listening. When you are talking, stop and listen for feedback. Too frequently, a person will have so much to say that he or she does not stop talking long enough to provide the receiver time to respond. The receiver's response is the only way a sender can verify that a message has been properly received.

Web Search

Are you a good communicator? Search the Internet to identify and take an online quiz related to effective communication.

Talk It Out

Identify situations where it is easy to be in non-listening mode. What can an individual do to improve his or her listening skills in such situations?

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is what you communicate through body language. Even without uttering a word, you can send a very strong message. Body language includes eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, and the positioning of your body. Non-verbal communication also includes the use of silence and space.

An obvious form of body language is eye contact. It is common to look someone in the eye to communicate honesty and sincerity. At other times, looking someone in the eye coupled with a harsh tone of voice and an unfriendly facial expression may imply intimidation. In the United States, those who fail to look someone in the eye risk conveying to their receiver that they are not confident or, worse, are being dishonest. Make eye contact with your audience (individual or group), but do not stare. Staring is considered rude and intimidating. If your direct eye contact is making the receiver uncomfortable, he or she will look away. Be aware of his or her response and adapt your behavior appropriately.

Eye contact is part of the larger communication package of a facial expression. A receiver will find it difficult to interpret your eye contact as sincere and friendly when your message is accompanied by a frown. A smile has immense power and value. On the other hand, make sure you don't smile when listening to someone who is angry or upset. He or she may misinterpret your smile as condescending or as pleased by the distress. As explained previously, when actively listening, a nod implies that you are listening or agreeing with a sender's message. Even the positioning of your head can convey disagreement, confusion, or attentiveness.

Another element of non-verbal communication is the use and positioning of your body. Having your arms crossed in front of your body may be interpreted in several ways. You could be physically cold, angry, or uninterested. When you are not physically cold, having your arms crossed implies that you are creating a barrier between yourself and the other person. To eliminate any miscommunication, it is best to have your arms at your side. Do not hide your hands in your pockets. In speaking with others, be aware of the positioning of your arms and those of your audience. Also, be aware of the positioning of your entire body. Turn your body toward those to whom you are speaking. It is considered rude to turn your back to or ignore someone when he or she is speaking. In this case, you are using your entire body to create a barrier. Avoid this type of rude behavior. This only communicates immaturity on your part.

Exercise 9.1

With a partner, take turns identifying and noting the physical cues for the following emotions: concern, distrust, eagerness, boredom, and self-importance.

The use of your hands is extremely important in effective communication. Through varied positioning, you can use your hands to nonverbally ask someone to stop a behavior, be quiet, or reprimand him or her. Be aware of the positioning

of your hands and fingers. In the United States, it is considered rude to point at someone with one finger. Many finger and hand gestures commonly used in the United States are quite offensive in other countries. If you have nervous gestures such as popping your knuckles, biting your nails, or continually tapping your fingers, take steps to eliminate these habits.

Apart from a professional handshake, touching another person at work is not acceptable. People in our society frequently place a hand on another's shoulder as a show of support; however, some interpret that gesture as a threat or sexual advance. Therefore, when at work, keep your hands to yourself.

Proxemics is the study of distance (space) between individuals and is also an important factor in body language. An individual's personal space is about one-and-a-half feet around him or her. The appropriate social space is four feet from an individual. Standing too close may be interpreted as intimidation or may imply intimacy. Neither is appropriate for the workplace. However, distancing yourself too far from someone may imply your unwillingness to communicate. Be aware of the space you allow between you and your receiver. Many variables are involved in effective nonverbal communication. Interpret body language within its entire context. For example, if you are communicating with a colleague with whom you have a positive working relationship and your coworker crosses his or her arms, your coworker is most likely cold. Consider the entire package: environment, relationship, and situation.

Silence is also an effective and powerful communication tool. Silence communicates to your audience that you are listening and are allowing the other party consideration. Not immediately responding to a message provides the sender time to clarify or rephrase a message and provides you time to control your response.

Silence sometimes makes individuals uncomfortable because our society is used to filling up silence with noise. Active listeners take time to digest what is being said and formulate a thoughtful response. An active listener will wait at least three to five seconds before responding. When first using silence, it may feel awkward, but you will quickly discover that you are becoming a better communicator because you are taking time to respond thoughtfully and appropriately. Recognize that there are times when it is appropriate to not speak. In stressful situations, silence is perhaps one of the most important communication tools you possess. Silence can also be a powerful tool when dealing with both conflict and negotiation. As presented in Chapter 5, recognize and respect cultural differences in verbal communication in regard to word use and meaning.

Emotion is another element that affects non-verbal communication. Although reality may cause you to express emotions that are difficult to control, try to control your emotions in public. If you feel you are beginning to cry or have an outburst of anger, excuse yourself. Find a private area and deal with your emotion. When you are crying or distraught, splash water on your face and regain control of your emotions. If you are getting angry, assess why you are angry, control your anger, and then create a strategy to regain control of how best to handle the situation in a professional manner. Any overt display of anger in the workplace is inappropriate, can damage workplace relationships, and could potentially jeopardize your job. When you become emotional at work, you lose your ability to logically deal with situations and risk losing credibility and the trust of others. Practice effective stress management and think before you respond.

Written Communication

Professional writing is a necessary skill for effective workplace communication.

Written communication is a form of business communication that is printed, handwritten, or sent electronically. Because the receiver of your message will not have verbal and non-verbal assistance in interpreting your written message, take great care to ensure that the correct message is being communicated. You are normally not present when a written message is received; therefore, the receiver will be drawing additional conclusions about you based on the grammar, vocabulary, and presentation used in the written communication.

As you advance in responsibility within an organization, you will be required to conduct an increasing amount of written communication, including formal business letters, memos, and e-mail messages. You may also have the opportunity to communicate through instant messaging, texts, blogs, or wikis, discussed more in Chapter 10. Written business correspondence represents not only your professionalism and intelligence, but also your organizational abilities. Consistently present written correspondence in a professional manner. Ensure all written communication is error-free by proofreading the message prior to sending. Choose words that clearly and concisely communicate your message. The three most common forms of written communication in the workplace are letters, memos, and electronic messages. Written communication in a professional workplace should be typed and not handwritten. An exception to this rule is when you are sending a handwritten note conveying a personal message.

— Plan your message for successful written communication. Identify what you want to communicate, to whom you need to communicate, and what desired action you want the reader to take after reading your message. After you have determined what you want to communicate, write a draft that is free of emotion and negativity. Written communication should begin with a professional greeting and end with a complimentary closing. If the purpose of your correspondence is to address a negative situation (e.g., complaint), begin with a positive note and then factually address the situation, but do not attack an individual. Do not send or write any message conveying anger. A good rule of thumb is to always put good news in writing and place negative information in writing only when necessary.

✓ After you have drafted your message and eliminated emotions and negativity, review your correspondence and delete unnecessary words. Keep written correspondence short and simple. Do not be wordy, and minimize personalization words (*I, my*) as much as possible. Well-written correspondence not only communicates a core message, but also clearly communicates how the sender wants the reader to respond to the communication. Include contact information and a deadline in your written communication if relevant.

Keep the correspondence simple. Identify and insert words that project a professional image. Know the definitions of the words you are using, and use these words appropriately. A thesaurus is an excellent tool to expand one's vocabulary, but do not overdo it, and be sure to use words in the correct context.

After you have finished writing your message, identify who should receive the message. Share your correspondence only with individuals who need to know the information and, when appropriate, with individuals whom the correspondence affects.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on common written business correspondence, including a business letter, a memo, and a handwritten note. Chapter 10 addresses written communication that occurs through electronic technologies, including e-mail, texting, instant messaging, blogging, and wikis.

Business Letters

A **business letter** is a formal, written form of communication used when your message is being sent to an individual outside of your organization. External audiences may include customers, vendors, suppliers, or members of the community. Although it is still common for formal business letters to be sent through traditional mail, many businesses now send formal business letters as attachments to e-mails. Letters are to be written in proper business format and on company letterhead. Clearly communicate your message and expected follow-up activity to the receiver in a professional and concise manner. Letters sent should be error-free. Proofread, sign, and date the letter before mailing.

Company **letterhead** is quality paper that has the company logo and contact information imprinted on it. Letters sent as attachments in an e-mail should be typed on company letterhead. Figure 9.2 shows the correct business

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| <p>(Do not type QS and DS, these are shown for correct spacing.)</p> <p>Since most business letters will be on letterhead (preprinted business address), you need about a two-inch top margin before entering the current <i>date</i>.</p> <p>The <i>inside address</i> should include the title, first, and last name of receiver.</p> <p>The <i>salutation</i> should have title and last name only.</p> | <p>August 1, 2018</p> <p>QS (4 enters or returns)</p> <p>Ms. Suzie Student Word Processing Fun 42 Learn Avenue Fresno, CA 93225</p> <p>DS (2 enters or returns)</p> <p>Dear Ms. Student:</p> <p>DS</p> <p>The first paragraph of a letter should state the reason for the letter. If you had any previous contact with the receiver, mention it in this paragraph.</p> <p>DS</p> |
| <p>For the <i>body</i>, all lines begin at the left margin. Use a colon after the salutation and a comma after the complementary closing.</p> <p>Keep the <i>closing</i> simple.</p> <p>The writer's first and last name should be four enters or returns after the closing to give the <i>writer</i> room to sign (remember to have the writer sign).</p> <p><i>Typist's initials</i> <i>Enclosure</i> is used only if you add something in the envelope with the letter.</p> | <p>The second (and possibly a third) paragraph should contain details. All information needing to be communicated should be included here.</p> <p>DS</p> <p>The last paragraph is used to close the letter. Add information that is needed to clarify anything you said in the letter. Also, add any follow-up or contact information.</p> <p>DS</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>QS</p> <p>Sarah S. Quirrel</p> <p>Sarah S. Quirrel Instructor</p> <p>DS</p> <p>bt Enclosure</p> |

Figure 9.2

August 1, 2018

Ms. Suzie Student
Word Processing Fun
42 Learn Avenue
Fresno, CA 93225

Dear Ms. Student:

It was a pleasure speaking with you over the telephone earlier today. I am delighted that you have agreed to serve as a guest speaker in my Communications class. The purpose of this letter is to confirm the details of the upcoming speaking engagement.

As I mentioned in our conversation, the date for your scheduled lecture is Wednesday, October 14, 2018. The class meets from 6:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m. You may take as much time as you need, but if possible please allow a student question and answer period. There are approximately 60 students, and the classroom contains state-of-the-art technology. If you have specific technology requests, do not hesitate to contact me. Enclosed is a parking permit and map of the campus directing you to the appropriate classroom.

Once again, thank you for continued support of our students. I and my students are looking forward to you sharing your communications insight and expertise with us on October 14. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail at S.Quirrel@teaching.com or call me at 123-456-7890.

Sincerely,

Sarah S. Quirrel

Sarah S. Quirrel
Instructor

bt
Enclosure

Figure 9.3

Letter Example

letter format. Figure 9.3 provides an example of a business letter. Please note that a business letter can have various styles; employees should follow the company-preferred style.

When a business letter is not being sent electronically, most companies utilize matching number 10 envelopes (Figure 9.4). Address the envelope with

Exercise 9.2

Practice folding a letter to fit into a number 10 envelope.

S&L Professionalism Corp.
222 Student Success Lane
Kahului, HI 93732

Ms. Suzie Student
Word Processing Fun
42 Learn Avenue
Fresno, CA 93225

the same information that is in the inside address. Fold the letter in thirds, starting at the bottom and folding up one-third of the way and then fold the top over the bottom, and place it in the envelope with the opening on top.

Business Memos

Business memos (sometimes called interoffice memorandums) are used internally—that is, when the written communication is being sent to a receiver within an organization. Although e-mail is the most common form of internal communication, a traditional business memorandum is still used for internal formal documentation and announcements and is sometimes attached to an e-mail message. A memo includes the receiver's name, sender's name, date, and subject. As with a business letter, include all facts needed to properly communicate the message, but be brief and to the point. Ideally, memos should be no longer than one page. Most word processing software has templates for creating memos.

Figures 9.5 and 9.6 illustrate common business memo formats. As with business letters, many companies have a preferred memo style. Check with your employer to ensure you are utilizing the proper format. A discussion on business e-mail is presented in Chapter 10.

Handwritten Notes

A handwritten note is a personal form of communication. In a professional workplace, it is appropriate to send a handwritten note to acknowledge special events in careers or personal lives (e.g., promotion, birthday, or birth of a child). It is also acceptable to send a handwritten note to encourage a colleague, offer condolences for the loss of a loved one, or to thank someone. Handwritten notes are written in pen on a note card. However, it is also acceptable to acknowledge an occasion with an appropriate greeting card. In some situations it is acceptable to send an electronic thank-you or personal message. Handwritten notes do not need to be lengthy; generally, just a few sentences are sufficient. Acknowledge or encourage coworkers, bosses, and others with whom you work by sending handwritten notes when appropriate.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, a thank-you note is a powerful tool for building relationships. When you express thanks, individuals are more likely to continue assisting and supporting you. Send a thank-you note when someone does

Talk It Out

Share a recent situation where it would have been appropriate to send a handwritten note.

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Include the date.</p> | <p><i>June 3, 2018</i></p> |
| <p>Start your note with a salutation and the receiver's name.</p> | <p><i>Dear Ms. McCombs,</i></p> |
| <p>Be brief but specific about why you are thanking the person. Include how you benefited from the person's kindness. Do not begin every sentence with <i>I</i>.</p> | <p><i>Thank you for loaning me your book on business etiquette. I especially liked the chapter on social events and dining. Your constant encouragement and mentoring mean so much to me.</i></p> |
| <p>Use a complimentary closing, and do not forget to sign your name.</p> | <p><i>Sincerely,</i> <i>Mason Yang</i></p> |

Figure 9.7

Thank-You Note

something for you that takes more than five minutes or when someone gives you a gift. Deliver the note as soon as possible. Handwritten thank-you notes are commonly sent to an interviewer after an interview. This will be further discussed in Chapter 15. Figure 9.7 displays the correct format and key elements of a handwritten note.

Documentation

Documentation is a formal record of events or activities. Some industries require documentation to track a project's progress or an employee's time for client billing. Documentation may be necessary for an employee evaluation, for advancement, in an instance in which a policy is not enforced, or when an abnormal event has occurred that has the potential to evolve into conflict at a later date. These events may support performance issues, business relationships, and business operations. It is not necessary to record every event that occurs at work. Employees should maintain a file of positive feedback received from coworkers, supervisors, or customers. Employees should also document relevant negative business situations, such as a workplace injury, an angry customer, or an employee conflict, in order to protect themselves and/or the employer. Although there are numerous methods of documenting and retaining important information and events, the basic elements to be recorded remain the same.

Depending on the purpose of your documentation, effective documentation records the who, what, when, where, and why of a situation. Effective documentation essentials include who was present when the event occurred and how witnesses to the event behaved or responded. When describing what happened, keep the documentation factual and do not allow feelings and assumptions to distort the facts. Include the date, time, and location of the event. Documentation can be kept electronically, in a journal, or through minimal notations on a calendar. If the documentation is for billing or client purposes, your employer will provide the documentation format. Whatever

system you choose, keep your documentation in a secure, private location along with copies of supporting memos, letters, or other communications. If you are ever called on to defend your actions, you will have the ability to easily gather pertinent information.

Presentations

Formal and informal presentations are normal workplace events, and sometime in your career you may be asked to give a presentation. Being prepared and professional will help increase audience interest and reception. Presentations are rich in media and may include written, verbal, visual, and/or non-verbal communication. A successful presentation begins with a goal. Identify the purpose of your presentation and ensure that every word, visual aid, activity, and/or handout will support the overall goal of the presentation. After the purpose of the presentation has been identified, an outline of key points should be identified to reinforce the message you want individuals to respond to or remember.

Formal presentations include three elements: the verbal content, the visual content, and support content. Verbal content provides the primary message, visual content summarizes the message, and support content reinforces the message. Verbal content includes the detailed information you wish to share with the audience. When presenting, do not read directly from the visual content. Speak clearly and at a normal pace using professional and appropriate language. Face your audience. If you are using a screen, keep your back toward the screen. Do not block the audience's view of your visual. Beware of both verbal and non-verbal gestures. Nothing will distract an audience quicker than an overuse of "um," "like," and "you know." Hands in pockets, crossed arms, or tapping feet are examples of distracting physical gestures. Dress professionally, and do not wear anything that may distract from your message.

Visual content includes anything the audience will view or any activity the audience will perform during your presentation. Often this involves some type of technology, including presentation software, videos, or music. When using presentation software, do not overdo the use of graphics, color, or animations. Test all equipment and software prior to the actual presentation to ensure the equipment is working and the software is compatible. Preparation and practice ensure that your visual content and/or activities are the appropriate length. If you are including your audience in an activity (e.g., game), make directions simple and the activity brief. Keep your audience focused, and do not allow the activity to distract from your message.

Support content normally comes in the form of a handout. This is an excellent way to reinforce your verbal and visual message in writing. A popular format for a handout allows the audience to fill in the blanks as you present your message. Add non-distracting professional and visual appeal to your handout. As you create your handout, follow the same order as the presentation outline. Check your visual presentation and support materials for clarity, spelling, and grammatical errors. When you are certain your support content is error-free and professional, make enough copies for each member of your audience.

Formal presentations are an excellent way to increase workplace credibility and individual confidence. Successful presentations are a result of planning. Remember, practice makes perfect.

Slang and Foul Language

Slang is an informal language used among a particular group. Although different generations, cultures, and technology use slang, avoid using slang in the workplace to ensure your message is not misinterpreted by others. Become a more effective communicator in the workplace by eliminating the use of slang.

Your words reflect what is going on in your heart and mind. There is no appropriate time to use profane and offensive language at work. Even in times of stress or at social functions, you are representing your company and must do so in a professional manner. Practice self-control. Attempt to eliminate foul or offensive language from your personal and professional vocabulary. If you utilize inappropriate language at work, immediately apologize. Make a mental note of what situation caused you to behave poorly and learn from the experience. Ask yourself how you could have better handled the situation, and mentally rehearse a proper, more acceptable method of verbally handling a challenging situation.

Think About It

What slang terms do you use in text messages that may be offensive to others?

Potentially Offensive Names

Names that could be considered sexist and offensive are inappropriate in a business setting. These include names such as honey, sweetie, and sexy. Using inappropriate names toward coworkers could expose you and your company to a potential sexual harassment lawsuit. Even if the individual being called these names acts as if he or she is not offended, the person may actually be offended or insulted but is afraid to tell you. Eliminate these words from your workplace vocabulary. In addition, do not use gender-specific titles when referring to certain jobs. For example:

| Instead of | Use |
|------------|------------------|
| Postman | Postal Carrier |
| Policeman | Police Officer |
| Waitress | Server |
| Stewardess | Flight Attendant |
| Maid | Housekeeper |

Not Always About You

There is one word that often dominates written and verbal communication but frequently turns receivers off. Unfortunately, too often, the sender is unaware of its overuse. The word is *I*. Be cautious with the use of this word. Self-centered people use it to draw attention; whereas those who lack self-confidence may subconsciously use the word to protect themselves. Many individuals who overuse this word may not know how to turn the conversation to others, so they choose to stay in a safety zone. When you are using verbal communication, think before you speak. When writing, if your initial sentence includes *I*, try to rephrase your message. Prior to sending written correspondence, review your message and reduce the number of sentences that begin with the word *I*.

Exercise 9.3

Take five minutes and interview a classmate about college and his or her career choice. While you are getting to know each other, keep track of how many times your new friend says the word *I*.

MyStudentSuccessLab

Please visit **MyStudentSuccessLab**: Anderson|Bolt, Professionalism Skills for Workplace Success, 4/e for additional activities, resources, and outcomes assessments.

Workplace Dos and Don'ts

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Do</i> carefully think through your message and the appropriate medium | <i>Don't</i> be in such a hurry to send your message that an incorrect message is sent |
| <i>Do</i> demonstrate professionalism in the formatting, word choice, and grammar in your written communication | <i>Don't</i> write and send messages when you are angry |
| <i>Do</i> express kindness to others with both your words and body language | <i>Don't</i> utilize foul language at work or at home |

Concept Review and Application

You are a Successful Student if you:

- Demonstrate proper formatting for a business letter and memo
- Write a handwritten thank-you note
- Create a documentation record
- Explain the difference between gossip and the grapevine