It's much easier to get up and go to work when you can whiz around on a bike at your office!

11

Communicating in Organizations
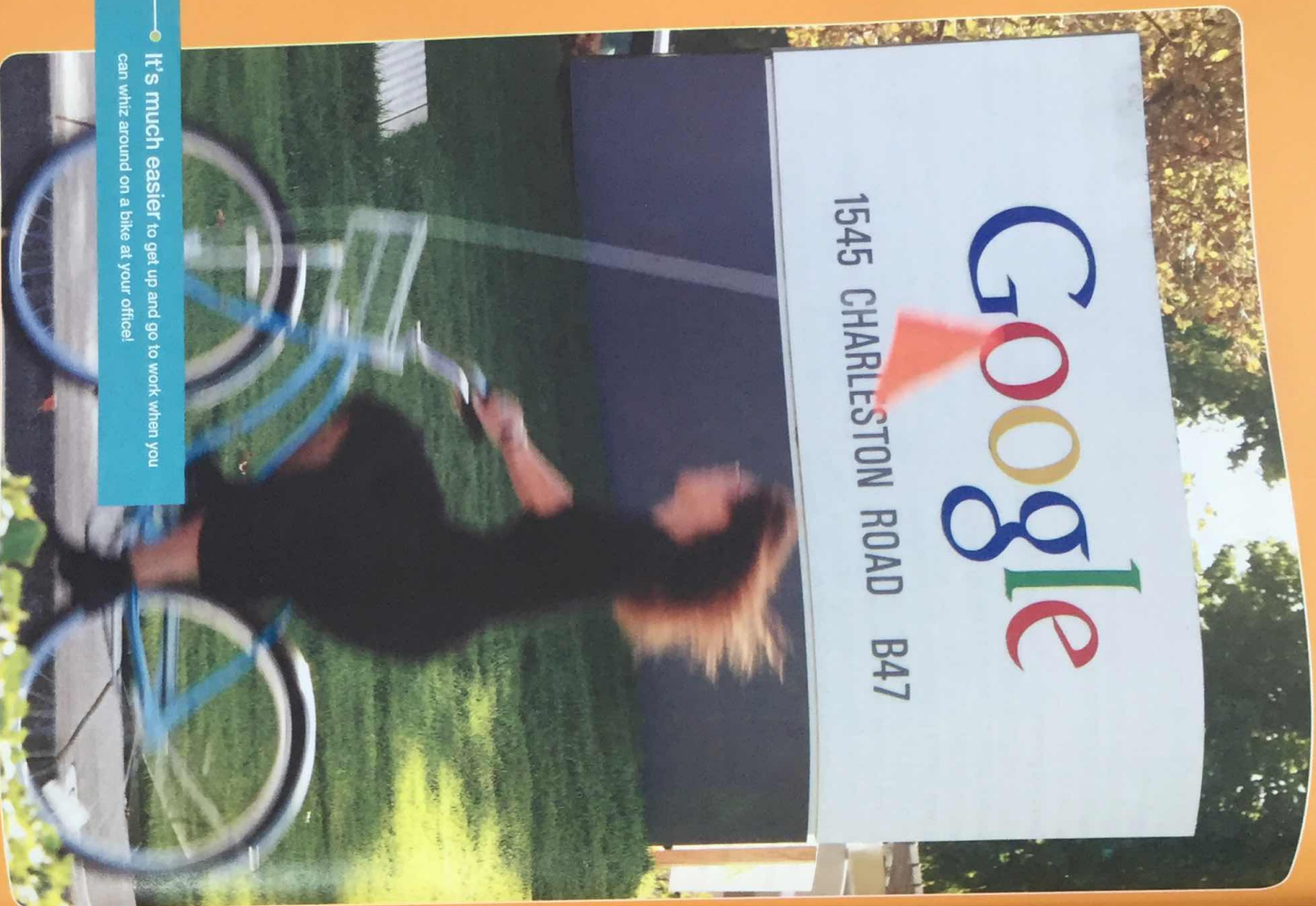
IN THIS CHAPTER

- Approaches to Managing Organizations
- Communicating Organizational Culture
- Relational Contexts in Organizations
- Challenges Facing Today's Organizations

Would you work harder or more efficiently if your employer provided you with free gourmet meals whenever you were hungry? Would a midday massage increase your creativity? Wouldn't life be easier if you could just get your laundry done while you're at work?

Folks at Google, one of the fastest-growing companies in the world, think it might. With a belief that happy employees are productive and creative employees, they built their sprawling campus in Mountain View, California, with a focus on fun. "Our atmosphere may be casual," the company notes, "but as new ideas emerge in a café line, at a team meeting or at the gym, they are traded, tested and put into practice with dizzying speed—and they may be the launch pad for a new project destined for worldwide use" (Google, 2009). Workers literally scoot—or bike—from office to office. Walls are covered with whiteboards where workers scrawl graffiti and cartoons that turn random thoughts into innovative ideas (Google, 2011a).

But is a fun place to work enough to fuel the kind of innovation that makes companies like Google work? Probably not. That's why the company does more than just let its people play; it gives them room—and time—to think. Google's policy requiring engineers to spend 20 percent of their time on personal per projects has yielded a few major innovations, including Google Suggest, AdSense for Content, and Orkut (Google, 2011c). The creative culture also leads to a few failures, such as Google Wave, a real-time collaboration app that never really caught on. When the company pulled the plug on it in August 2010, then-CEO Eric Schmidt offered no apologies: "Remember, we celebrate our failures. This is a company where it's absolutely okay to try something that's very hard, have it not be successful, and take the learning from that" (Siegler, 2010). This commitment to keeping employees happy and encouraging creativity has paid off. Just ask the people at *Fortune* magazine, who have ranked Google among the top five best companies to work for four years in a row ("100 Best," 2011).

chapter outcomes

After you have finished reading this chapter, you will be able to

- Describe and compare approaches to managing an organization
- Describe ways in which organizational culture is communicated
- Contrast relational contexts in organizations
- Identify the challenges facing today's organizations

The management at Google takes a particular interest in communication. The company cares about how employees communicate with one another, how management communicates with employees, and even what the office setting communicates about the company. And while not every workplace lets its employees take afternoon naps, these larger points about Google's communication hold for most **organizations**, groups with a formal governance and structure. You see this in action every day: your college or university, student groups, fraternity, religious community, volunteer organizations, and state and local governments are all actively involved in the process of communicating messages about themselves and their members. This is why we stress that **organizational communication**, the interaction necessary to direct an organization toward multiple sets of goals, is important that we understand these organizations and how we communicate in them. In this chapter, we'll look at several approaches to managing organizations, issues related to organizational culture, important contexts for communicating in organizations, and common issues facing organizations today.

Approaches to Managing Organizations

For as long as humans have been working together toward shared common goals, we've been trying to figure out how to organize ourselves to achieve success. Whether we're talking about effective ways to build a castle, establish a town in the wilderness, or run a factory, preschool, or student government, it's useful to learn the various approaches to managing organizations. Over the centuries, these approaches have changed quite dramatically, and the changes have had important implications for how people in organizations work together and communicate. In the following sections, we'll take a quick trip through time to see how this evolution has played out, beginning with the classical management approach and moving on to the human relations, human resources, and systems approaches.

Classical Management Approach

In classic children's novel *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Charlie, an impoverished youngster, wins a tour through the most magnificent chocolate factory in the world, run by the highly unusual candymaker Willy Wonka (portrayed in the 2005 film version by Johnny Depp). As Charlie tours the factory with a small group of other children, he sees an army of small men called Oompa Loompas. Each Oompa Looma is charged with performing a specific task: some do nothing but pour mysterious ingredients into giant, clanking candymaking machines; others focus on guiding the tour boats that ferry the children along rivers of sweet liquid. Still others work only on packing finished candies into boxes as the candies come off the assembly lines. You could almost compare the chocolate factory to a car and each worker to a specific part with a specific job— seat belt, brakes, steering wheel, and so on.

To Charlie, the factory might be a novelty or a curiosity, but to organizational communication scholars, it's a pretty clear example of the **classical**

management approach—an approach that likens organizations to machines, with a focus on maximizing efficiency. Not surprisingly, classical management reached its peak during the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century—a time when factories and machinery were proliferating rapidly in various parts of the world, particularly Europe, North America, and Japan.

Classical management depends on two central ideas, both of which have strong implications for communication. The first is a **division of labor**, or the assumption that each part of an organization (and each person involved) must carry out a specialized task in order for the organization to run smoothly. This is exactly what you see in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*: each worker has a very specific job, and there is little reason for individual workers—or groups of workers on different tasks—to communicate with one another. Classical management approaches also favor **hierarchy**, which refers to the layers of power and authority in an organization. To illustrate, in Willy Wonka's chocolate factory, Willy has the most power to control the working conditions, rewards, and other aspects of life for all the creatures who work in the factory. His team of lower-level "managers" (such as the head of the Oompa Loompas) have somewhat less power. And the assembly-line workers themselves have almost no power at all. As illustrated, communication in such situations usually flows from the top (management) down to the bottom (the lowest-level workers). It's unlikely that a worker pouring chocolate would contact Willie Wonka to make suggestions for improving the factory.

Human Relations Approach

If reading about the classical management approach makes you want to protest that you're a person, not a machine, you're not alone. Critics of such organizational practices became more vocal during the Great Depression and World

AND YOU?
Are you involved with any organizations that favor hierarchy and a division of labor? What are the pros and cons for communication in such organizations?

War II, times characterized by massive social and economic changes in the United States. For example, scholars Eric Eisenberg, Bud Goodall, and Angela Trethewey (2010) discuss the work of Mary Parker Follett (1868–1933), a Boston social worker who developed new and seemingly radical ideas about leadership, community, and communication. She believed that "only cooperation among people working together in groups under a visionary leadership produced excellence in the workplace, the neighborhood and the community" (p. 72). That's a far cry from the classical management approach. Follett and others set the stage for the **human relations approach** to management, which considers the human needs of organizational members (enjoying the

● THESE OOMPA LOOMPAS from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory are responsible for rowing a boat down this chocolate-filled river and not much else!

interpersonal relationships, sharing ideas with others, feeling like a member of a group, and so on).

The benefits of this approach came into sharper focus in the 1930s when Harvard professors Elton Mayo and F. J. Roethlisberger conducted an experiment at Western Electric's Hawthorne plant in Cicero, Illinois, in order to discover why employees were dissatisfied and unproductive. The researchers separated workers into two different rooms. In one room, the researchers slowly increased the amount of light; in the other, the amount of light was held constant. Much to the researchers' surprise, both groups of workers showed an increase in productivity, regardless of the amount of light they were exposed to. Why? It turns out that the employees were motivated by the increased attention they were receiving from management rather than the increased amount of light (Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey, 2010).

In organizations managed with the human relations approach, communication takes on a different flavor than in companies managed through the classical approach. Managers express more interest in employees (for example, encouraging them to give their best on the job), and they emphasize the notion that "we're all in this together," so employees have a greater sense of belonging to a larger cause or purpose. Similarly, organizational members are encouraged to interact on a more personal level, allowing for satisfying exchanges of thoughts and ideas.

Human Resources Approach

The human resources approach was an improvement over the classical one in terms of bettering workforce productivity. But it didn't take into account employees' own goals and motivations for success. While incorporating the basics of human relations, the **human resources approach** takes things one step further by considering organizational productivity from the workers' perspectives and considers them assets who can contribute their useful ideas to improve the organization (Miller, 2009).

In Chapter 16, we will introduce you to Abraham Maslow and his hierarchy of needs, which asserts that people must fulfill basic needs (such as obtaining food and shelter) before they can achieve higher needs (such as finding friendship, love, and enjoyable work). As you will discover, Maslow's work is particularly useful

when discussing persuasive speaking, but it has also had a powerful impact on communication in organizations. For example, managers learned that their workers tended to their higher-level needs (such as *self-fulfillment*) in addition to their lower-level needs (such as worker safety). Boston Consulting Group encourages employees to pursue social causes that are important to them; in 2009, for example, the company pulled employees off of projects and sent them to Haiti to provide help after the earthquake ("100 Best," 2011).

Maslow's ideas are also play out in other organizational situations. Imagine that you're a new member of a synagogue and you're not quite sure how to get involved. Your rabbi might find that you have a knack for working with kids; he or she might motivate you to become a more productive member of the community by telling you that you have a gift for teaching and encouraging you to fulfill your potential by volunteering with the Hebrew school class each week. Similarly, your manager at the tutoring center where you work ten hours a week might take the time to find out what you really value about your job. If you particularly enjoy tutoring Spanish, he or she might be interested in setting you up with students struggling in this subject; you'll be more engaged with your job, and the students will receive high-quality help, which can lead to improved grades and increased interest in tutoring services. Everyone wins.

The Systems Approach

You can see that human relations and human resources had a huge impact on the plight of organizational members. No longer is an employee a "cog in the machine" of the classical approach; an employee is now a person with feelings and ambitions who is a valuable, contributing member of an organization. But note that neither approach considers the importance of *both* the individual *and* the organization as a whole. This realization led to the **systems approach,** which views an organization as a unique whole made up of important members who have interdependent relationships in their particular environment (Monge, 1977). This means that no individual can work in isolation; no company, group, or team can insulate itself from the interactions of its members; and outside forces can change the communication processes of organizations.

Figure 11.1 on page 315 shows how a college or university works as a system. Its members include faculty, students, office staff, financial aid staff, and the bursar, all of whom have relationships with one another. The college exists within an environment, which includes other systems that directly affect it. These other systems might be the city and state where the college is located, the legislature that sets tuition, local employers who offer students full-time or part-time jobs, the families that the students come from or live with, and the high schools that supply many of the students.

Two of the most important components of organizations as systems are openness and adaptability. **Openness** in a system refers to an organization's awareness of its own imbalances and problems. For example, in our university example, let's

● THE HUMAN RESOURCES approach takes into consideration your needs and interests.

say that our college begins receiving messages from local elementary schools that the university's student teachers seem ill prepared for the classroom. The university has two choices: it can ignore this feedback about the health of its program, or it

real communicator

NAME: Pat Driscoll
HOMETOWN: Belle Harbor, NY
OCCUPATION: Online producer
FUN FACT: While working as an NBC page, I was "fired" live on the Today show by Donald Trump.

When I was in college, I remember hoping that I'd one day work for a company that takes a human resources approach to organizational communication. I didn't want to end up like the Charlie Chaplin character in *Modern Times*, the guy who works on an assembly line and then gets sucked into the machine, his body pulverized by giant wheels, cogs, and levers.

Today I work as a writer-producer for black20.com, a comedy network on the Internet. Thankfully, black20—like all organizations with an HR approach—stresses interpersonal relationships and the sharing of ideas. It's how we make comedy.

Black20 was founded by three friends who worked together at a major television network, and many people who have joined the company have a personal relationship with one of the original three. In other words, we're all friends—which makes for a unique organizational culture. There are supervisors, but we share responsibilities. Producers work with writers who work with the on-air talent who are themselves writers and producers. We get to work at 10:00 A.M., and everyone stays until that day's work is done.

Because of the human relations approach, quirky ideas can quickly snowball into a polished comic video. For instance, a black20 employee was—for no discernible reason—singing the Feist song "1-2-3-4" in a vampire accent. Because every office door in the company is always open, I overheard him. I came into his office and said,

"What if Dracula loved pop hits?" From there we started singing different songs in Dracula's accent. We figured he'd probably be a fan of Puff Daddy's "Bad Boys for Life" and Kid Rock's "Bawitdaba." A video was taking shape.

I went to one of my bosses—he's more like a mentor, actually—and he laughed. With most jobs that's probably a bad sign, but not here. We held a meeting, which is an informational presentation in which the audience is made up of heckling class clowns. Everyone's ideas were mapped out on a whiteboard. Instead of one music video, we decided it would be funnier to do a fake commercial selling a CD called (in a takeoff of those *NOW! That's What I Call Music* compilations) *NOW! That's What Dracula Calls Music*. We spent hours debating how the video should be approached, how particular lines should be spoken, whether to film Dracula at a cemetery or popping out of a coffin (we went with both). We took all ideas, and—as always—majority ruled.

Since we're all friends, I have the utmost trust in the people I work with. No one is trying to outdo the other. And because we're young comedians working at a start-up Web site, each of us realizes that our career is riding on the person next to us. There's a sense of common goals and interdependence. I just happen to work at a place in which the common goal is pretending to sell a CD that doesn't exist sung by a fictional neck-biting vampire. That's my job. Somebody's got to do it.
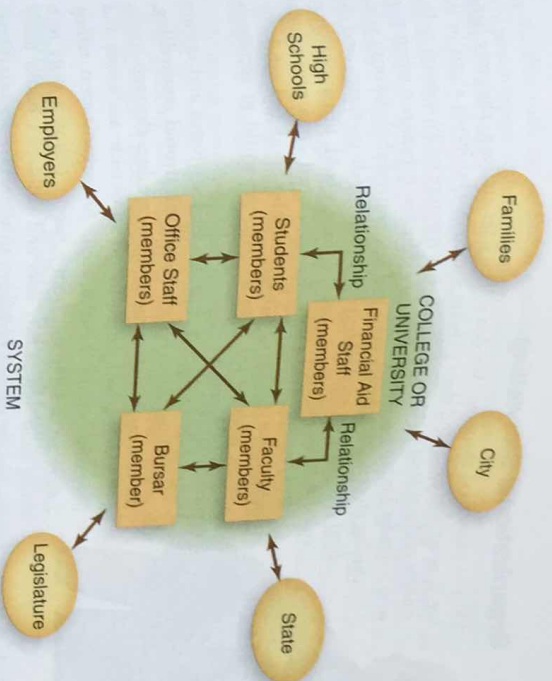
FIGURE 11.1
**A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

can look to correct the problem, perhaps restructuring its elementary education program with feedback from local educators, professors, students, and government and policy representatives. The latter choice clearly helps the organization move forward by allowing for change and growth in light of changing times and circumstances. This ability to adjust is known as **adaptability**. And at the heart of it all is communication. If everyone involved in the system, from students to professors to principals, keeps to themselves and never voices concerns or ideas, the system can become closed and collapse under the weight of its own problems.

Communicating Organizational Culture

The management approaches you learned about in the preceding section can cause one organization to feel quite different from another. If you were working in a nineteenth-century factory that valued classical management, you probably wouldn't have team birthday parties or picnics the way you might under the management of the human resources approach, which values individuals. Yet understanding how different organizations come to give off different vibes is more complex than simply understanding their management styles. We must come to understand **organizational culture**, an organization's unique set of beliefs, values, norms, and ways of doing things (Harris, 2002). What's particularly fascinating to scholars in our discipline is the pivotal role that *communication* has in both the shaping and the expression of organizational culture. We'll elaborate on this topic in the sections that follow, looking at the popular Trader Joe's grocery store chain.

AND YOU?
Think of a situation when an organization you belonged to was faced with criticism. Was the organization open to suggestions for change, or was it closed off from such discussions? What was the end result?
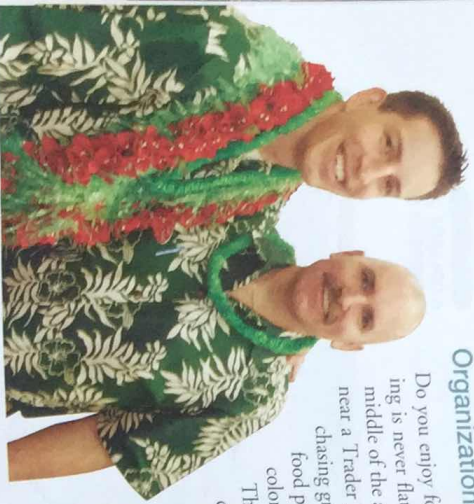
Organizational Storytelling

Do you enjoy food shopping? We don't. The lines are long, the store lighting is never flattering, and there's always someone who leaves a cart in the middle of the aisle so that you can't pass. But if you're lucky enough to live near a Trader Joe's, you might have a very different experience when purchasing groceries: employees smile and recommend their favorite salsa, food prices remain reasonable despite nationwide increases, and the colorful South Seas décor gives the place a bold, fun appearance.

This is because Trader Joe's has developed an organizational culture that values a friendly, neighborhood feel while offering quality food from all over the world at seemingly reasonable prices.

One of the ways that Trader Joe's forms and ensures its cultural values is through **organizational storytelling**, the communication of the company's values through stories and accounts, both externally (to an outside audience) and internally (within the company). An organization telling a story isn't so different from a parent telling a story to a young child. Just as fairy tales and children's books teach kids important lessons, like the dangers of talking to strangers, organizational stories help would-be customers and potential members answer the question "What is this company all about?" or "Why should I support or join this organization?" They also help employees and current members of an organization understand why they work for a company or support a particular organization (Aust, 2004; Boje, 1991). James and Minnis (2004) also note that when the organization is a for-profit business, "Good communicators use storytelling to sell products, generate buy-in and develop and cultivate corporate culture" (p. 26).

What Trader Joe's stories communicate and shape their organizational culture? We'll look at several examples. First, consider the stories that the store itself tells us. As we noted earlier, it looks different from other grocery stores. Employees wear sneakers and Hawaiian shirts, hand-lettered signs tout low prices, and someone with really nice penmanship takes the time to write puns on a giant chalkboard ("Leaf it to us to give you your favorite bagged salads"). The message is clear: we're fun, we've got cool stuff, and we're cheap. Trader Joe's Web site and newsletter (Trader Joe's Fearless Flyer) also present fun drawings, facts about the company, and cleverly written highlights of featured products (anyone up for some Spanish gazpacho soup or Lemon Raspberry Zinger bundt cake?).

In addition, like many successful organizations, Trader Joe's makes use of metaphors in its storytelling. A metaphor, you may recall, is a figure of speech that likens one thing to something else in a literal way, although there is no literal connection between the two (Jacobs & Heracleous, 2006). You probably use metaphors often: "This classroom is a freezer" or "This assignment is a nightmare." Trader Joe's metaphor is, essentially, "We are a ship." Ships are associated with travel, perhaps even vacation, which highlights the company's commitment to provide quality products from all over the world. The employees at Trader Joe's are all crew members, including the captain (store manager) and the first mate (assistant store manager) (Lewis, 2005). Each member is essential to keep-

● AT TRADER JOE'S, employees always have bright smiles—and plenty of tasty food recommendations!

---

ing the ship running; no one is expendable. These titles communicate Trader Joe's commitment to being employee-friendly, which in turn leads to friendly employees and happy customers.

Trader Joe's also makes use of stories about **organizational heroes**, individuals who have achieved great things for the organization through persistence and commitment, often in the face of great risk (James & Minnis, 2004; Schulman, 1996). Trader Joe's employees and would-be customers alike all learn about "Trader Joe" himself, a Stanford University M.B.A. graduate named Joe Coulombe who opened a chain of Pronto Market convenience stores in the Los Angeles area during the 1950s. In the 1960s, 7-Eleven convenience stores in Southern California, threatening to crush Joe's business. Rather than admit defeat, Coulombe changed his tactics: trusting that the burgeoning airline industry would entice more Americans to travel—and that those Americans would want to find the foods they enjoyed abroad once they were back home—Coulombe began stocking imported foods other convenience stores didn't carry. Thus began the first Trader Joe's in 1967 (Hoover, 2006).

Learning About Organizational Culture

Could someone who dislikes people, Hawaiian shirts, and exotic foods find a successful career at Trader Joe's? According to Cohen and Avanzino (2010), **organizational assimilation** is the process by which newcomers learn the nuances of the organization and determine if they fit in. Studies suggest that successful assimilation is often based on a newcomer's ability to figure out and make use of behaviors that will be appropriate and effective in a given organization (Mignerey, Rubin, & Gorden, 1995). Typically, new organizational members are quite motivated to get these behaviors figured out because the uncertainty of not knowing what to do or say can be challenging (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010). Organizations understand this as well and generally seek to help. That's why religious organizations often have new-member meetings or classes and employers often have an orientation program to acquaint newcomers with the organization.

At Trader Joe's, for example, new employees are subject to the group "huddle," when all staff members at the store come together in a circle to share information and introduce themselves, perhaps noting where they're from or how long they've been with Trader Joe's. The idea is to make each new employee feel like part of the team (or in this case, crew) and to get to know everyone. You can imagine a new employee walking away from the huddle thinking, "OK, these people value friendliness and team building," which in turn reflects what Trader Joe's values and communicates to customers. A new employee at a different organization who eats lunch alone in a corner would likely experience a very different set of values.

Similarly, an additional perk of working for Trader Joe's is the free samples. Employees are always encouraged to try new products and even make up recipes for everyone to try (Lewis, 2005). The benefit of this is that employees become actively engaged with the products; they feel personally connected to the products and can make heartfelt recommendations to customers, thereby furthering Trader Joe's value of a friendly, interactive shopping experience.

CONNECT

Organizational storytelling can also help new individuals assimilate. For example, stories illustrate praiseworthy and unacceptable behaviors, reflecting the values of an organization (Meyer, 1995). Imagine you're new at a part-time job at your local library. The environment seems really laid back and casual, but not about everything. The children's librarian, Faith, approaches you and says, "Did you hear that the boss screamed at Shira this morning for being five minutes late? Her car wouldn't start, but he didn't care. She's in the bathroom crying right now." Your boss could tell you two hundred times that being on time matters in this organization; he could leave countless memos in your mailbox stating the same thing. But neither is as effective or as powerful as the message that your colleague is weeping in a bathroom stall after getting yelled at for violating the boss's rules.

● JACK DONAGHY struggles to see eye-to-eye with the new CEO when the business model at 30 Rock transitions from a classical management approach to a more human relations–centered approach.
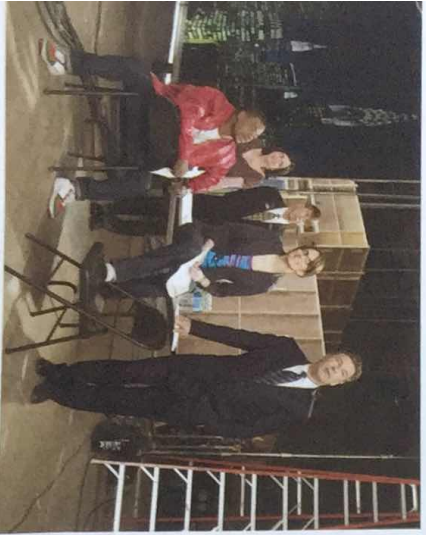
Relational Contexts in Organizations

In the fictionalized version of NBC/Universal depicted on *30 Rock*, Jack Donaghy was in his element. The network, owned by General Electric (a subsidiary of the Sheinhardt Wig Company) embraced a classical approach: writers and actors on the show report to Liz Lemon, who in turn reports to Jack. But when the network is sold to Kabletown, Jack is challenged by the new organizational culture: the CEO insists on hugs instead of handshakes and invites low-level employees to eat in the executive dining room. Jack worries about these changes, from the open office hours to the memos containing emoticons: "If this is how Kabletown does business, I don't know if I have a future here!" (Fey, Hubbard, & Riggi, 2011). We laugh as Jack learns to navigate the new organizational culture at NBC and the way it affects his communication with his managers, peers, and employees. Let's consider each of these relationships in turn.

Supervisor-Supervisee Relationships

Few relationships are parodied as often as the relationship between supervisors and the people they manage. Think of Homer Simpson reporting to Mr. Burns, or the gang on *The Office* dealing with former manager Michael Scott. We often enjoy portrayals of the "bad" boss or the "crazy" boss who causes employees to sit around the lunch table complaining, even though in real life, most bosses are fairly reasonable people. Perhaps we find pleasure in these portrayals because supervisors, inherently, have power over us. Bosses negotiate our salaries and approve our vacation time; they might determine our hours or whether or not we get promoted. There are supervisory roles in nonworkplace situations as well. Your priest may require you to attend premarital counseling sessions before he will agree to marry you and your fiancé; you have to get your student government president to approve your idea for this year's budget before you can actually plan to do anything with that money. And

to achieve anything worthwhile with your supervisor, the two of you must be communicating regularly.

If you're involved in a professional, community, or student organization where people are reporting to you, don't be a Mr. Burns! You should know how to get the most out of your conversations with the people you supervise. Often you can improve communication by following just a few simple steps:

▸ Schedule adequate time for important conversations. For example, if you are the president of a student organization and you need to speak to the treasurer about his messy bookkeeping, don't do it in the ten minutes you have between classes. Set up an appointment, and allow adequate time to discuss the problem and generate solutions.

▸ Minimize distractions or interruptions in order to give your full attention to your supervisee or employee.

▸ Ask supervisees for suggestions and ideas. For example, if you're working as a manager in a bank, you might ask the tellers for suggestions to make the work schedule more equitable.

▸ Demonstrate that you're listening when a supervisee is speaking to you, giving appropriate verbal and nonverbal responses, such as paraphrasing what you're hearing and nodding.

Even if you manage several people, you almost certainly report to a supervisor yourself—and it's important that you be able to communicate competently in this context as well. You can certainly follow the guidelines regarding listening and avoiding distractions that we mentioned earlier, but there are a few additional points to consider when you're the person with less power:

▸ Spend some time thinking about what you'd like to say to your boss. What are the main points you want to make? What do you hope to achieve through this discussion? It's embarrassing to start talking with a supervisor only to realize that you forgot what you wanted to say.

▸ Then spend some time *rehearsing* what you want to say to your manager. You might even ask a friend or family member to rehearse the conversation with you so that you can hear yourself speak.

▸ When you speak with your manager, try to avoid being emotional or hurling accusations such as "You always . . ." or "You never. . . ." It's typically more productive to be specific and logical and to ask for clarification: "When you removed me from the Edwards project, I took that to mean that you didn't think I was capable of handling it. Am I misunderstanding something?"

▸ Remember to be open-minded in discussions (whether with your boss or with other members of your organization). In the example above, for instance, your boss may have taken away a particular project because he or she has something else in store for you. Be an active listener.

▸ Keep the lines of communication open. Misunderstandings or unfocused goals are often the result of a lack of clear communication.

CONNECT

In addition to the tips we list here, competent communication with your boss will also include competent use of nonverbal communication (Chapter 5). Be sure to make appropriate eye contact, avoid fidgeting, and use an appropriate tone of voice. Shifty eyes, rapid movements, or a sarcastic tone can make you come across as guilty, hostile, or anxious—not desirable when discussing a difficult situation with your manager.

Mentor-Protégé Relationships

Somewhat related to the supervisor-supervisee relationship is the mentor-protégé relationship. A **mentor** is a seasoned, respected member of an organization who serves as a role model for a less experienced individual, his or her **protégé** (Russell & Adams, 1997).

If a new employee or member of an organization has a supervisor or access to some other person in a position of authority, does he or she really need a mentor? Doesn't that just muddy the waters and create confusion for the newcomer? Research shows that mentoring actually provides a number of key benefits for everyone involved (Jablin, 2001). For one thing, it accelerates the protégé's assimilation into the organization and its culture, which helps the newcomer become productive faster and thus helps the organization meet its goals (particularly in reducing the number of members leaving an organization) (Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010). Protégés win too: in one study, protégés reported that mentors helped make their careers more successful by providing coaching, sponsorship, protection, counseling, and visibility (Dunleavy & Millette, 2007). Protégés experience greater job satisfaction, and the mentors benefit by receiving recognition as their protégés begin to achieve in the organization (Kalbfleisch, 2002; Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010).

Many colleges and universities set up mentorships for incoming students in order to help them adjust to life at the college or perhaps even life away from home. In many cases, second-, third-, or fourth-year students agree to be "big brothers" or "big sisters" to help the newcomers figure out campus parking, where to get a decent sandwich between classes, or which professors to take or avoid. First-year students may then become mentors themselves in future years. As you can imagine, the communication between mentor and protégé changes over time in this example. At first, the protégé may rely quite heavily on the mentor, since everything in the college environment is new and perhaps somewhat frightening. However, as the first-year student adjusts and begins to feel comfortable and self-assured, he or she will rely less and less on the mentor. By the next fall, the protégé may well be on an equal par with the mentor, and the relationship may have turned into a friendship or may have dissolved entirely. Understanding that mentor-protégé relationships go through four distinct stages— initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition—can help both parties adjust to these natural changes. See Table 11.1 for more on these stages and the communication that takes place during each.

If you are new to an organization—be it a community college, a house of worship, or a job—and a mentorship interests you, you can see if the organization has a formal program. If such a program does not exist, you can still find a mentor, albeit in a more informal way. Consider the following tips (Kram, 1983):

CONNECT

For competent communication in the evolving relationship between mentor and protégé, you need to understand key aspects of the relational context—history, goals, and expectations—discussed in Chapter 1. As a protégé, you might be uncomfortable if your company mentor asked you for professional advice; it might be equally awkward to ask your mentor for advice on searching for a new job when you first meet. Such communication defies expectations.

● WITH COLLEGE
MENTORING programs, older students help new arrivals to acclimate, from navigating an unfamiliar campus to completing those first daunting class assignments.

TABLE 11.1
STAGES IN MENTOR-PROTÉGÉ RELATIONSHIPS

Stage	Communication Goal	Mentor Responsibilities	Protégé Responsibilities
Initiation	Get to know one another	• Show support through counseling and coaching • Help protégé set goals	• Demonstrate openness to suggestions and loyalty to the mentor
Cultivation	Form a mutually beneficial bond	• Promote the protégé throughout the organization (for example, by introducing him or her to influential people) • Communicate knowledge about how to work best with key people and what the organization's culture is	• Put new learning to use (for example, by forging relationships with influential people) • Share personal perspective and insights with mentor
Separation	Drift apart as protégé gains skill	• Spend less time with protégé	• Take more initiative in the organization • Strive for development or promotion
Redefinition	Become peers	• Occasionally provide advice or support as needed	• Stay in touch with mentor at times if additional advice is required

- ▸ Ask your peers (colleagues, members of a congregation, and so on) to recommend individuals who might be interested in serving as a mentor.

- ▸ Identify people who have progressed in the organization in ways that interest you, and determine whether one of them would make a good mentor.

- ▸ Build rapport with someone you think would be an effective mentor. Ask if he or she would like to sponsor you in a mentor-protégé relationship. Explain why you think he or she would be a good mentor, and describe your qualifications as a protégé—such as your ability to learn or to cultivate networks quickly.

Peer Relationships

One of the most fun aspects of watching the television show *Grey's Anatomy* is keeping track of the web of relationships among the staff at Seattle Grace Mercy West Hospital. Workplace friendships, secret crushes, full-fledged romances, and bitter resentments could definitely keep your night interesting! Yet these interactions also interest us as scholars because such **peer relationships** reveal the importance of **peer communication**, communication between individuals at the same level of authority in an organization. Researchers, management coaches, and popular magazines warn that Americans are spending more and more time in the workplace, leaving less time for outside personal relationships. Yet we all need

AND YOU?

Have you ever been involved in a mentoring relationship? If so, did you find that this relationship benefited you in any way? Did it benefit your organization as well? How would you describe the changes in communication that took place over the course of the relationship?

friends and confidants. So where do we find them? You guessed it—in the organizations we devote time to, particularly the organizations we work for. Research, however, seems to say some contradictory things about whether or not this phenomenon is healthy.

In a survey of more than five million workers over 35 years, 29 percent of employees say that they have a "best friend" at work (Jones, 2004). This statistic matters: Out of the approximately three in ten people who state that they have a best friend at work, 56 percent are engaged with, or enjoy, their work, while 33 percent are not engaged. Only 11 percent are ac-tively disengaged and negative about their work expe-rience. On the other hand, of the seven in ten workers who do not have a best friend at work, only 8 percent are engaged, whereas 63 percent are not. The remaining third of employees without a workplace best friend are actively disengaged from their work (Gallup, cited in Jones, 2004). These findings have powerful implications for employers; having a workplace best friend makes workers seven times more likely to enjoy their work and consequently be more productive. Perhaps this is the thinking behind organizational initiatives to help employees get to know one another—office picnics, hospital softball teams, and school Frisbee and golf tournaments.

But there's also a potential downside to these workplace intimacies. One is that the relationships may not actually be so intimate after all. *Management Today* warns that professional friendships are often based on what is done together in the workplace. While that may be beneficial for finding personal support on work-related issues, the friendship can easily wither and die when the mutual experience of work is taken away ("Office Friends," 2005). Privacy and power also come into play, since sharing personal details about your life can influence how others see you in a professional setting. For example, Pamela, an insurance broker from Chicago, did not want her colleagues or boss to know that she was heading into the hospital to have a double mastectomy in order to avoid breast cancer. But she did tell her close friend and colleague, Lisa. When Pamela returned to the office, there was a "get well soon" bouquet of flowers from her boss waiting on her desk. Lisa had blabbed; Pamela felt betrayed and had the additional burden of her colleagues' knowing this private, intimate detail about her life (Rosen, 2004). It's also important to remember that friendships in the workplace—and all organizations—are going to face trials when loyalty and professional obligations are at odds.

Please don't take this to be a warning against making friends in the organizations you belong to. Relationships with colleagues and other members of organizations can be both career-enhancing and personally satisfying; many workplace friendships last long after one or both friends leave a job. But it's important to be mindful as you cultivate such relationships. The following tips can help (Rosen, 2004):

▼ *Take it slow.* When you meet someone new in your organization (be it your job or your residence hall association), don't blurt out all of your personal details right away. Take time to get to know this potential friend.

● THE GREY'S ANATOMY surgeons spend so much time at Seattle Grace Mercy West Hospital that their work life is their social life—and what results is a complex web of peer relationships.

CONNECT

When communicating with peers in organizations, remember communication privacy management [Chapter 7], which helps you understand how people perceive and manage per-sonal information. You may decide that certain topics, such as your romantic life, are off-limits at work. You must determine for yourself what is private in different relationships—and it's also wise to consider the cultural expectations of your organization before sharing.

▼ *Know your territory.* Organizations have different cultures, as you've learned. Keep that in mind before you post pictures of your romantic partner all over your gym locker for the rest of the soccer team to see.

▼ *Learn to handle conflict.* If your friend Alisha from a particular student or-ganization wants to run for president despite the fact that you plan to run as well, talk it out. Manage the conflict or awkwardness before it becomes problematic.

▼ *Don't limit yourself:* It's OK to take the time to make friends outside of fraternity or sorority or outside of your job!

▼ *Accept an expiration date.* Sometimes friendships simply don't last outside of the context they grew in. You may have found that you lost some of your high school friends when you started college; this point is also particularly true for friendships on the job. Accept that life sometimes works out like this and that no one is to blame.

AND YOU?

Who are your three closest friends? Are they members of any organizations that you belong to? If so, has your joint membership affected the friendship in any par-ticularly positive or negative ways? Explain your answer.

EVALUATING COMMUNICATION ETHICS

More Than Friends at Work

You've begun to notice that two colleagues at work, Cheryl and Michael, are spending an inordinate amount of time together, and you suspect that they may be romantically involved—or at least engaged in a very strong flirtation. They work together on several projects, so it's natural that they spend a lot of time together, but you—along with a few of your colleagues—are beginning to be annoyed by the amount of time the two spend in one or the other's office, chatting about personal and other nonwork issues and generally goofing off during working hours. Both of them are beginning to fall behind on their work, and their slacking off is affecting the performance of your entire department. You've approached Michael about it, noting that "people are beginning to notice" how much time he spends with Cheryl. They cooled it for a few days after that, but gradually, they returned to their old behavior.

Personally, you don't have a problem with the two of them having a relationship outside the office. Although the company has a policy requiring employees to disclose any romantic relationships between coworkers, you think the policy is an invasion of privacy and you don't agree with it at all. But the constant chatter and goofing off that they do at the office is begin-ning to affect your own work, not to mention feeding the gossip mill around the water cooler, thus distracting other members of your team from getting their work done.

You've considered speaking to your boss, who works on a different floor and isn't aware of Cheryl and Michael's day-to-day behavior, or even talking to human resources about it. But you're reluctant to "rat them out," especially because you're not even sure that the two are actually romantically involved. What should you do?

THINK ABOUT THIS

1. What's the real issue here, Cheryl and Michael's behavior or their relationship? If they acted more professionally at work, would the status of their romantic relationship matter?

2. How does your opinion of the company policy on dating at work factor into your decision? Does the impact of your coworkers' flirtation change your opinion of your coworkers?

3. What other approaches could you take to get Cheryl and Michael to change their behavior? Is going over their heads your only option?
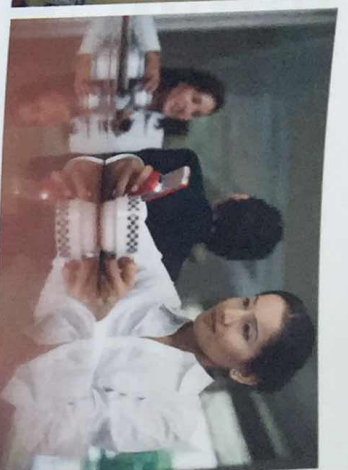
Challenges Facing Today's Organizations

Diversity is a word you likely hear a lot nowadays. We use it throughout this book to highlight the importance of understanding and respecting people from various co-cultures with experiences different from our own. But you also hear about companies needing to "diversify" and the importance of tailoring messages to a "diverse" audience. What does it all mean? It means that today's organizations need to branch out and be open to new ideas and experiences. They must make use of new communication technology and address colleagues and other organizations worldwide. Organizational members must find ways to balance the multitude of pressures for their time and must learn to be tolerant of each other's differences and behave competently and respectfully at all times. We examine these important issues in the sections that follow.

Communication Technology

Advances in communication technology—including instant messaging, professional and social networking sites, and videoconferencing—enable members of organizations to communicate more easily, particularly with clients and colleagues who work offsite or in home offices. But they've also introduced new challenges for organizations.

First, there's the question of figuring out which channel is most appropriate for a particular message in an organizational setting. We discussed this point in earlier chapters—you might, for example, text a friend an apology if you're too embarrassed to call her. But there are additional ethical and legal considerations when choosing channels in organizations. If you're a manager, you simply cannot fire someone in an e-mail with the entire department copied. Rather, you would need to have a private face-to-face meeting—or perhaps a phone call if the employee works elsewhere in the country or the world. This is an illustration of **media richness,** the degree to which a particular channel is communicative (Daft & Lengel, 1984, 1986). Media richness theory suggests that people must consider the number of contact points a particular channel offers for a message (Montoya, Massey, Hung, & Crisp, 2009). Face-to-face communication is the richest because it allows for verbal and nonverbal contact. Speaking on the phone is slightly less rich because it allows for verbal contact and some limited nonverbal contact (tone of voice, rate of speaking, and so on) but removes the opportunity to communicate with body movements. Text messages are even less rich because they lack most nonverbal cues and need not be responded to immediately. The level of richness people expect in their communication vehicles depends on their goals. So if you need to tell the treasurer of your student organization that your meeting has been moved to a different room, you can just text her. However, if you needed to discuss the fact that you noticed a $250 discrepancy on the books, you'd have better luck with a face-to-face conversation.

Research shows that most people do make conscious decisions about which communication vehicle to use based on the situational and relational context. Table 11.2 offers a look at various organizational goals and people's perceptions about the most competent channel for achieving those goals.

With such a variety of communication technologies available to organizational members to keep in close contact with one another, it should come as no surprise that people wind up using technology to achieve personal goals as well. Twenty years ago, employees might get in trouble if they spent too much time making personal phone calls on the job. So consider how much more distracting it can be to have the ability to bank online, text your romantic partner, and read your brother's blog during the day. Sixty-nine percent of workers admit that they access the Internet at work for nonwork-related purposes, and many of them are quite busy on social networking sites like Facebook (Schweitzer, 2007). Richard Cullen of the Internet filtering company SurfControl, for example, states that Facebook alone may be costing Australian businesses $5 billion a year due to decreased worker productivity (West, 2007).

What's more is that organizations aren't just concerned about *when* you're updating your status, but also about *what* you're posting—particularly whether or not you're posting comments about the organization or individuals associated with it. Consider, for example, the 2011 case of Natalie Munroe, a high school English teacher who was suspended and faced termination over unflattering comments she made about her students on her personal blog. The blog

- IF YOU HAVE something sensitive to discuss with a colleague, it's better to do so in a face-to-face situation rather than with a text message.

Task	By E-Mail	By Phone	In Person
Edit or review documents	67%	4%	26%
Arrange meetings or appointments	63%	23%	12%
Ask questions about work issues	36%	17%	44%
Bring up a problem with one's supervisor	6%	6%	85%
Deal with sensitive issues	4%	9%	85%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Email at Work Survey, April–May 2002; *N* = 1003; margin of error = ± 3%.

was relatively anonymous—Munroe never used her full name or identified individual students—and was only followed by nine friends and family members. In addition, the vast majority of posts had nothing to do with the school, the students, or the teaching profession (Werner, 2011). But as with many other high-profile social networking suspensions and terminations, organizations have a keen interest in the way employees represent them in the virtual world.

Concerns over employee Internet use have led many organizations to an increase in workplace **surveillance** or monitoring of employees to see how they're using technology (Ball, 2010; Williams, 1993). On some levels, monitoring seems to make sense, particularly when employees are spending time on questionable nonwork-related activities. Yet it still raises several important ethical questions: Does monitoring constitute an invasion of employees' privacy? Should workers accept monitoring as a fact of organizational life? These questions are stimulating important research and lively debates in legal circles, but no one seems to have a clear answer. One thing seems obvious, however: in any organization, you'll be much more productive if you limit the amount of time you spend using communication technologies for personal matters.

WIRED FOR COMMUNICATION

Back to the Future

Back in the 1980s, when the Internet emerged and the prices of personal computers began to fall, there were countless predictions regarding the effects of an Internet-connected populace on communities, cities, and workplaces. In 1984, *Time* magazine estimated that by 1999, as many as ten million corporate employees would be working from home, electronically connected to coworkers and supervisors via the World Wide Web, fax, and phone. The prevailing wisdom was that as telecommuting became cheaper and easier, the importance of the office as a work environment would lessen: fewer people would commute to work, traffic jams would become a thing of the past, and cities would become obsolete (Grieves, 1984).

In the years since these predictions took hold, the Web has indeed become pervasive. It is estimated that today, some thirteen million corporate employees are working from home more than eight hours each week. Online learning programs allow students to enroll in colleges and universities hundreds or even thousands of miles away and take classes from home. Telecommuting is indeed becoming a part of the nature of work, education, and play in the twenty-first century. Logic would suggest that such ease of communication would make distance a nonissue in the postindustrial world, and employers would be happy to do away with expensive corporate offices in pricey cities in favor of cost-saving electronic offices for their employees. Yet despite 1980s notions about the future of the workplace, telecommuting hasn't replaced corporate offices or university centers or even lessened their importance. Consider, for example, that in recent years, Hewlett-Packard—once a trailblazer in telecommuting—has focused on bringing more workers back into the office to facilitate brainstorming and teamwork (Holland, 2006). Why do location and distance still matter?

It turns out that although the Internet is great for sharing and exchanging information, it is less useful when it comes to completing other functions of communication, such as expressing affiliation and influencing others. That's why electronic communication simply cannot replace the value of "face time," especially between employers and employees: we rely heavily on face-to-face communication in order to build trust (Harford, 2007). It turns out that even telecommuters need to have some face time with their bosses and colleagues in order to communicate well.

THINK ABOUT THIS

1 Do you think that organizations benefit more from having employees work face to face or from having employees work from home? Does it have to be one way or the other?

2 What communication benefits does telecommuting offer employees? What does it offer the organization?

3 How can organizations ensure that telecommuting staffers are able to develop strong working relationships? How can they build "face time" into a virtual team?
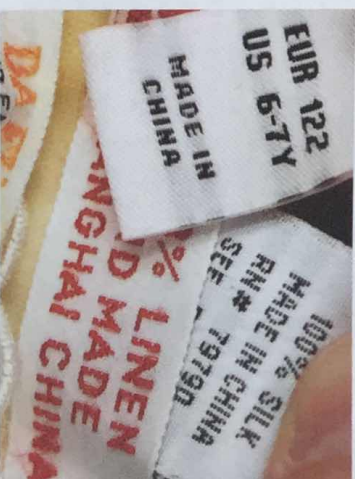
Globalization

Daily direct flights to locations around the world, instant messaging and videoconferencing, international wire transfers—we're living in an age where the other side of the world is an instant message away. Globalization is the buzzword in today's society—you hear it on the evening news, read about it in magazines and newspapers, and see the evidence of it in your everyday life. If you've bought something with a "Made in China" sticker or if you've recently seen a foreign film at your local theater, you've experienced the effects of globalization. **Globalization** is the growing interdependence and connectivity of societies and economies around the world.

Globalization is especially evident in the business world. Increases in communication technology and the convenience of travel have allowed companies to expand their labor force beyond geographical boundaries. More often than not, when you call customer service for help on the DVD player you bought in the United States, the person who picks up the phone is in India. More and more services are being outsourced to developing countries, where wages and operating costs are lower. Take Kenneth Tham, a high school sophomore in California. Most afternoons, he signs on to an online tutoring service, TutorVista. His tutor is Ramya Tadikonda, a twenty-six-year-old mother in Chennai (formerly Madras), India. TutorVista's president, John J. Suppy, thinks that in this day and age, global tutoring makes the most sense because it makes "high-quality, one-on-one tutoring affordable and accessible to the masses" (Lohr, 2007). This example highlights a few of the benefits of globalization. U.S. companies benefit from the lower costs of operating in developing countries, and people in those countries benefit from better-paying jobs and a higher quality of life.

While globalization has torn down some of the barriers to legitimate commerce between countries, it has also made unethical labor practices easier. **Human trafficking**, the recruitment of people for exploitative purposes, is an example of the darker side of globalization. As wages rise in countries that have grown past the early stages of development, there is a need for even cheaper labor to be shipped in from even poorer countries, such as Cambodia and Bangladesh. Workers are lured in by shady labor brokers with false promises of high wages. The workers pay their brokers huge sums of money for this opportunity, only to work for paltry sums of

● HAVE YOU EVER bought something in the United States with a "Made in China" label? That's globalization at work!

money and often in unsavory working conditions. The story at Local Technic, a Malaysian company that makes cast aluminum bodies for hard disk drives, is a typical example of the forced labor that has increased with globalization. An unnamed executive at Local Technic admits that most of the company's guest workers have been duped into working there. He insists it's not the company's fault: sleazy brokers promise more than the company can afford. However, once the workers arrive and find out they've been taken for a ride, they can't quit, because under Malaysian law, they have had to sign multiyear contracts and surrender their passports to their employer. The parts made at Local Technic are used in virtually every name-brand machine on the market, thus implicating companies like Western Digital that have used components made by Local Technic. Although Western Digital is a member of the Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition (EICC), which aims to improve industry working conditions, its relationship with Local Technic sends a conflicting message (Wherfritz, Kinetz, & Kent, 2008).

Globalization is a powerful force, and its impact on organizations is undeniable. However, without clear global labor laws, unethical practices such as human trafficking are difficult to control and police.

Work-Life Balance

Diane is a single mom with a seven-year-old son. She works forty hours a week as a receptionist in a medical office and is currently completing class work to become a dental hygienist. She is also the "room parent" for her son's second-grade class and is frequently called on to help bake for classroom celebrations and to chaperone class trips. Luis is a nineteen-year-old sophomore at a state university. He is working two part-time jobs to help meet the cost of tuition and is taking six classes with the hopes of graduating one semester early. He dreams of studying in France next year and would love to live in foreign-language housing in order to improve his French, but he's not sure how he could add the mandatory conversation hours to his already overbooked schedule.

These two individuals have different lives, different goals, and different constraints. Yet they have one thing in common: they are sinking under intense pressures from the organizations in their lives. We've already indicated that Americans are spending more and more time on the job, making it increasingly difficult to enjoy outside relationships. But other types of organizations make huge demands on our time as well. If you are a parent, you may, like Diane, find that your child's school or the PTA simply expects you to be available for events. As a college student, you may discover that taking on too many classes and academic responsibilities prevents you from enjoying other aspects of the college experience, such as joining a particular club, volunteering, or just hanging out with friends. In any of these examples, the end result is often **burnout**—a sense of apathy or exhaustion that results from long-term stress or frustration. Burnout hurts its victims as well as the organizations and communities they belong to. Many researchers maintain that burnout leads to negative self-evaluations and emotional exhaustion

● BURNOUT IS THE HARMFUL result of prolonged labor and stress, as well as a reminder of how vital it is to strike a manageable balance between work and life.

(Hallsten, Voss, Stark, & Josephson, 2011; Maslach, 1982). And no wonder: television shows and movies celebrate glamorous people who manage to work hard, play hard, meet the partner of their dreams, raise adorable kids, and look great doing it all. So we ask, "Why can't I do it all too?" Yet the more we try, the more we burn out.

Many workplaces are aware of the dangers of burnout and implement programs to assist employees with **work-life balance**, which involves achieving success in one's personal and professional life. Such programs include flexible work arrangements, paid vacation, and onsite child care. In addition, more and more companies are recognizing that they must top their competitors in offering new and creative work-life options in order to recruit the best job candidates. According to a survey by the Association of Executive Search Consultants, 85 percent of recruiters have seen outstanding candidates reject

COMMUNICATIONACROSSCULTURES

Work-Life Balance: Around the Globe and Around the Block

If you're like most Americans, chances are that when you consider a job or career, you think not only about salary but also about benefits. As we learned in this chapter, some of the most appealing companies to work for offer enticements like flexible work hours, in-house dining, child care, and even laundry services. These kinds of perks are relatively new, still largely unexpected, and rare enough that the companies offering them are able to fill their staff rosters with the best talent. But what about the most basic benefit of any job—time away from the job?

Two weeks of vacation time is standard in most American companies—but it's not guaranteed. There are no laws in the United States requiring employers to give their employees any paid vacation time or paid holidays. According to recent studies, the average private sector worker in the United States receives only about nine paid vacation days per year and six paid holidays. Almost one in four American workers has no paid vacation or holidays at all. Of course, most successful American companies do offer vacation time to employees, even if they are not required by law to do so. But lower-wage workers typically receive fewer paid days off (seven on average) than higher-wage workers (an average of thirteen) (Ray & Schmitt, 2007).

In other rich nations, things are quite different. Australia, New Zealand, and European Union countries are required to give each employee a minimum of twenty paid vacation days per year; in some European countries the number is as high as twenty-five or thirty. At least ten vacation days are guaranteed in Canada and Japan. In some of these nations, laws are designed to ensure that employees actually take the time off: in Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland, for example, employers are prohibited from offering incentives like additional pay to get employees to give up their vacation time (Ray & Schmitt, 2007).

THINK ABOUT THIS

❶ Does it surprise you that vacation time is not mandated in the United States but is mandated in most other wealthy nations? Do you think that Americans would be more or less productive if they had more vacation time?

❷ Consider the cultural variations discussed in this chapter and in Chapter 3. How is the largely masculine, individualist culture of the United State reflected in American policies on and attitudes toward vacation time?

❸ What are your expectations for paid time off from work? Do you expect to be paid for holidays like Independence Day and Thanksgiving? Are your feelings about religious holidays different from your expectations for national holidays?

a job offer because the position didn't provide enough work-life balance (Ridge, 2007).

Yet even in seemingly supportive work environments, many employees are still unable to balance their work and their personal life. For some, this is a choice: "I never go on vacation," says New York City real estate agent Ellen Kapit. "And when I do, I have my computer, my Palm, my e-mail, and my phone with me at all times" (Rosenbloom, 2006). For employees like Kapit, choosing the organization over other areas of life may be a sign of ambition, pride, guilt, a sense of overimportance, or simply a love of work, according to Ellen Galinsky, president of the Families and Work Institute (as cited in Rosenbloom, 2006). Yet it can also be a sign of fear. CBS News (2010) reports on a recent survey by the Conference Board Research Group noting that only 43 percent of today's workers feel secure in their jobs (down from 47 percent in 2008 and 59 percent in 1987). The sad truth remains that in far too many workplaces, there is an unspoken rule that if you take a vacation, put your family first, or have outside interests that take up a lot of time, you are not committed to the organization.

So if you're feeling burned out or on the verge of collapsing from organizational pressure, what should you do? This question is at the forefront of a great deal of research in sociology, psychology, business, and communication. Here are a few tips that various scholars, medical doctors, and other professionals find helpful (Mayo Clinic, 2006):

▸ *Keep a log.* Track everything you do for one week, including school- and work-related activities. Note which activities are nonnegotiable (such as taking a mandatory math class), and decide which other commitments matter the most to you. Consider cutting commitments that are not fulfilling or necessary.

▸ *Manage your time.* Organizing your life can help you feel more in control of your circumstances. Set up specific times to study, work, and have fun—and try your hardest to stick to your schedule.

▸ *Communicate clearly.* Limit time-consuming misunderstandings by communicating clearly and listening carefully to the important people in your life.

▸ *Nurture yourself.* Set aside time each day for an activity that you enjoy, such as watching a particular TV show, working out, or listening to music.

▸ *Get enough sleep.* Enough said!

Sexual Harassment

There are days when none of us like being at work or at school, particularly when the weather is nice or there's some other fun activity to take part in. Imagine, however, if your main reason for not wanting to head to class or to your job is fear. For many women and men around the world, a fear of being bullied or harassed in the workplace, on campus, or in other settings is far too common. **Harassment** is any communication that hurts, offends, or embarrasses another person, creating a hostile environment. It can take many forms, such as antagonizing people about their sex, race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or abilities (Federal Communications Commission, 2008).

One particularly offensive type of harassment is **sexual harassment,** which the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (2011) defines as follows: "Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other

what about you?

Are You Off Balance?

1. Which statement best describes you when you leave work or school to take a vacation with your family or friends?
   A. E-mail? What's that? I'm reading a novel on the beach.
   B. I've given one person permission to call me on my cell phone only in an emergency.
   C. My vacation consists of me doing the work I normally do . . . just in a different, more scenic, location.

2. Your partner expresses disappointment that you arrived home from work or a group meeting at 8pm (the third time this month). How do you respond?
   A. "I know, I'm sorry. I need to make my personal life more of a priority."
   B. "I understand. It's just a deadline for this one big project. It will get better next month."
   C. "You have no right to be upset! This is my work we're talking about here!"

3. It's project deadline week. What are you up to?
   A. I need to work on it, but I also need to catch up on episodes of Game of Thrones.
   B. I'm working on the project steadily but making sure to get enough sleep and to see my partner or friends at meals.
   C. I haven't stopped working in three days. What are food and sleep?

4. How do you attempt to organize your various personal, professional, and educational obligations?
   A. They're all in my head. I usually remember them—or at least try to.
   B. My g-mail calendar sends me reminders when something is due so I can plan in advance and prioritize the obligations.
   C. Every minute of my day is organized in a color-coded system that guarantees I'll get those obligations met.

5. Your group members at school or work aren't pulling their weight on a project. You respond by _____.
   A. Angrily expressing your resentment to your best friend.
   B. Talking to your group members about their obligations and, if necessary, enlisting support from your instructor or boss.
   C. Doing all of the work yourself.

If your answers are mostly A's: You don't let work rule your life! However, there are times (e.g. final exams, a work deadline) when you may need to give your organization more time and consideration.

If your answers are mostly B's: You work hard to maintain a healthy balance. Keep up the good work.

If your answers are mostly C's: You may be headed toward burnout and all of its negative consequences. Please consider some of the strategies we discuss to find more balance between your personal and organizational life.

verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature . . . when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted)." Specific conduct that can create such an environment may include sexist remarks, embarrassing jokes, taunting, displays of pornographic photographs, and unwanted physical contact such as touching, kissing, or grabbing.

How big a problem is sexual harassment? Well, over 90 percent of *Fortune* 500 companies have reported cases of sexual harassment (Keyton, Ferguson, & Rhodes, 2001), and in fiscal year 2010, the EEOC (2011) received 11,717 complaints of sexual harassment. In addition, the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation notes that nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of two thousand college students surveyed in 2005 said that they had been subject to sexual harassment in college (National Organization for Women [NOW], 2006). Women are most commonly the victims of sexual harassment, but men can also experience its negative effects. In fact, 16.4 percent of the charges filed with the EEOC in 2010 were complaints from men (2011). In addition, three-quarters of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students report that they have experienced incidents of sexual harassment on campus (NOW, 2006). These statistics are clearly problematic, but what is even more challenging is that victims often feel shame and embarrassment, preventing many of them from filing official complaints. For example, only seven percent of students say that they reported sexual harassment to a member of their college or university; LGBT students in particular report that they are extremely angry and embarrassed by their experience (NOW, 2006). Still other victims fear that they will lose their jobs if they speak out—particularly if they are harassed by a boss or other individual with power (Vijayasiri, 2008; Witteman, 1993).

Sexual harassment costs organizations millions of dollars every year and robs individuals of opportunities, dignity, and sense of self-worth. For this reason, organizations have instituted official codes of conduct and clear definitions and penalties for sexual harassment. Many even offer training to educate organizational members. For example, some programs discuss gendered communication, noting that women socialized in feminine nurturing are more likely than men to disclose personal information in the workplace. Men, who tend to be more private about personal information at work, may interpret that behavior as flirting and may respond with a sexual advance. Similarly, men may use smiling, extensive eye contact, and touch as signals that they are sexually attracted to someone, while many women use these same nonverbal behaviors to demonstrate their interest in a conversation topic and their support of the person who is speaking (Berryman-Fink, 1993). By understanding and being aware of such communication differences, incidents can be prevented before they happen. Nonetheless, when incidents do occur, victims should recognize that the law is on their side; they should feel empowered to take action against an illegal act. If you are a victim of sexual harassment—or even if you think you might be—consider the following communication strategies:

CONNECT

Cultural differences, like those discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, can lead to perceptions of harassment when communicators fail to remember the cultural context. Gestures that are entirely appropriate in one culture might be considered offensive elsewhere. The same can be said for verbal messages such as commenting on an individual's appearance. Companies and communicators should take time to clarify perceptions and adapt messages in order to avoid miscommunication.

▶ Clearly and firmly tell the harasser that his or her advances are not welcome.

▶ Immediately report the incident to someone who can assist you: a trusted professor, a counselor, or your boss. If the harasser is your boss, you can contact a representative in your organization's human resources department.

▶ Document each incident in writing. Include a description of the incident, the date, the person or persons involved, and any action you took.

▶ If anyone else in the organization witnessed the harassing behavior, have each witness verify the details of the incident and add that information to your documentation.

▶ Likewise, be careful not to inadvertently behave in a harassing manner yourself. For example, if a friend e-mails a dirty joke or pornographic photo to you at work, *don't forward it to anyone else in the organization.* It's not appropriate under any circumstances. And if your organization is like many, it may well fire you on the spot.

BACK TO   Google

At the beginning of the chapter, we explored life at Google's Mountain View, California, headquarters. Life there seems like a techie paradise, a place where the best and the brightest minds in computer engineering work and play around the clock. Let's revisit the Googleplex and consider how and why the people at Google structured their organization—and organized their offices—in this particular way.

▶ The organizational structure at Google shows little in the way of corporate hierarchy. There is, however, a strong emphasis on creating networks of individuals who share ideas and work together, and the company's interest in keeping employees challenged and happy (reflected most clearly in the policy of allowing engineers time to pursue nonwork-related projects) shows the influence of the human resources approach.

▶ Google takes pride in its story as a company focused on the goals of building the perfect search engine and of creating fast, easy, and practical tools for accessing the ever-growing amount of information on the Web. The company's founders often say that Google "is not serious about anything but search" (Google, 2011b). They take pride in the company's reputation as one where work represents a challenge rather than a chore.

▶ Google is in many respects the face of technology and innovation today. It is interesting to note, however, that the company also sees the value in old-fashioned, face-to-face communication. The cafés, gyms, sofas, and layout of offices encourage employees to meet and mingle, bounce ideas off one another, and work out problems together. Decidedly low-tech whiteboards abound to capture ideas and inspiration as they occur.