

Part II: Supportive Scores

Provisionalism		Spontaneity	
Question 2 _____		Question 20 _____	
Question 4 _____		Question 22 _____	
Question 6 _____		Question 24 _____	
Subtotal _____		Subtotal _____	
Empathy		Problem Orientation	
Question 8 _____		Question 26 _____	
Question 10 _____		Question 28 _____	
Question 12 _____		Question 30 _____	
Subtotal _____		Subtotal _____	
Equality		Description	
Question 14 _____		Question 32 _____	
Question 16 _____		Question 34 _____	
Question 18 _____		Question 36 _____	
Subtotal _____		Subtotal _____	
Subtotals for Supportive Scores			
Provisionalism _____		Spontaneity _____	
Empathy _____		Problem Orientation _____	
Equality _____		Description _____	
Total _____			

18	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90
Supportive				Supportive to Neutral				Neutral to Defensive				Defensive		

Note: See Jack Gibb's article on "Defensive Communication" in *Journal of Communication* 11 (3) (1961): 141-148 or in *The Reader* for an explanation of the framework underlying this instrument.



THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your brains won't get you anywhere. ... I hadn't yet learned what I know now—that the ability to communicate is everything.

Lee Iacocca, former CEO of Chrysler

Communication is an essential skill at all levels of business. Poor written communication carries a high price tag for organizations.¹ Coleco lost \$35 million in 1983 in just one quarter when frustrated customers returned its products because their instruction manuals were incomprehensible.

After discovering that military officers took as much as 23 percent less time to read clearly written documents, researchers concluded that the Navy could save over \$26.5 million in wasted person-hours by writing more simply and plainly. Clear writing is especially crucial in e-mails, which have become the dominant form of communication in many organizations. Our purpose in this chapter, however, is to focus on interpersonal rather than written communication.

Communication skills are the most important competency for entry-level job candidates, according to the managers who hire them.² At the M.B.A. level where technical proficiency is assumed, the top three characteristics recruiters look for in a job candidate are strong communication and interpersonal skills, proven ability to perform, and cultural fit with the company.³ As an experienced executive recruiter noted, "There are lots of brilliant people who can't relate with others—we replace that kind of person every day."⁴

Mintzberg's ground-breaking study on the nature of managerial work identified communication as the most frequent and important of managerial activities.⁵ He described the manager's work as essentially that of communication. Mintzberg claimed that many managers spend 80 percent of their time in verbal communication.⁶ And even when managers are not trying to communicate, their actions (or lack thereof) are taken as messages. It's impossible to not communicate; rather the question for managers is, "Am I communicating effectively what I want to convey?" The definition of communication is the process by which information is exchanged between communicators with the goal of achieving mutual understanding.

To better understand this complex process of interpersonal communication, let's examine the basic model of communication that follows.

THE COMMUNICATION MODEL

The Greeks believed that the god Mercury plucked ideas from the brain of the speaker, impaled the ideas on the end of a spear, and plunged them into the listener's brain. Today, communication is viewed as a transactional process.

The model shown in Exhibit 1 has two communicators who participate equally and sometimes simultaneously in the communication process.⁷ While Person A sends a message, Person B listens and responds, verbally or nonverbally, sending a message of his or her own. Thus, as

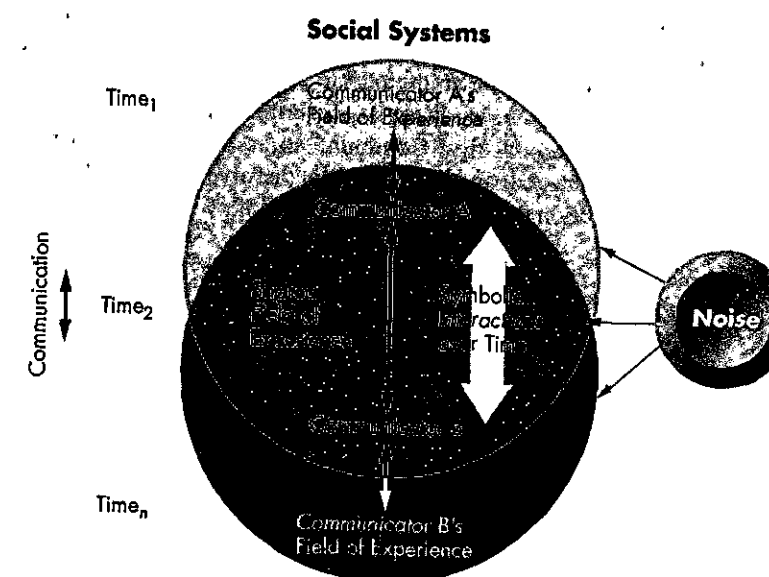


EXHIBIT 1 Transactional Model of Communication

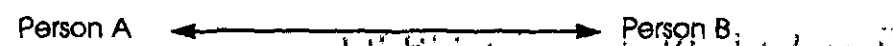
Source: J. T. Wood, *Communication in Our Lives* (New York: Wadsworth, 1997): 21. Reprinted with permission.

Person A speaks, he or she is also "listening", and receiving a message from Person B. This is called a *transactional model* because it acknowledges that our responses to speakers' messages lead them to modify what they say next. Furthermore, the different time periods reflect the changing nature of communication over time, depending on what transpires between people. For example, we might communicate in a formal manner with a new boss (Time₁), more informally if we become good friends with the boss (Time₂), and even more formally and infrequently if we have a serious argument or falling out (Time₃).

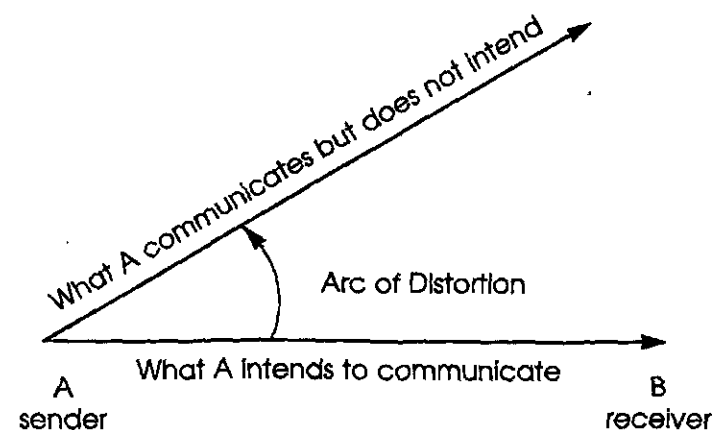
Communication occurs within social systems, and each communicator has a personal context, a field of experience (e.g., family, religious associations, friends). Our individual backgrounds and personality cause us to encode and decode messages in a unique fashion. This makes mutual understanding more challenging and explains why the two communicators must find a shared field of experience (e.g., shared town, culture, organization, views). The *n* in Time_n in Exhibit 1 represents the infinite number of interactions that could occur between Communicators A and B. Both the personal and shared fields of experience can change over time.

The model also includes *noise*, which is defined as anything that interferes with the intended communication. There are three types of noise that prevent effective listening: (1) environmental (e.g., hot rooms, lawnmowers, etc.), (2) physiological (e.g., headaches or hunger pangs), and (3) emotional (e.g., worry, fear, anxiety). We can see how emotional states create noise in the following example: The employee who arrives late for an 8:30 A.M. meeting because of a domestic skirmish is unlikely to capture all the messages coming his or her way.

A rational mechanical view of the process of communication could be depicted in the following manner:



Person A says something to Person B who hears and understands what A said. If this were so simple, we would never experience what has been labeled the "arc of distortion,"⁸ which is shown below. The arc of distortion is the difference between what the sender intended to communicate and what the receiver actually understood. Person A communicates something to Person B that was not intended; Person B reacts to this unintended communication, which confuses or even frustrates Person A. For example, a general manager spends little time at work with an experienced department head, who interprets this lack of attention as lack of interest and respect. When confronted about spending more time with some department heads than others, the general manager explained that he spent more time with employees whose work he did not trust. In this instance, the general manager's behavior communicated a lack of interest, rather than trust and recognition of a job well done. All behavior communicates a message even when it is not verbal. In the broadest sense, therefore, when we study the concept of interpersonal communication, we are dealing with interpersonal relationships. Communication is the process vehicle through which relationships form, are managed, and, occasionally, dissolve. Relationships are only one of several barriers to communication that are described in the following section.



BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

The potential for distortion in the communication process is great, and there are numerous causes of distortion that function as barriers to mutual understanding.

Poor Relationships. Communications must be understood within the context of the interpersonal relationship. If two people have been involved in an ongoing, bitter argument over a business decision, it will be more difficult for them to hear the other's messages without distortion. We communicate in a different, more effective manner with people who are supportive than with people who are not. Poor relationships and poor communication go hand in hand when trust is lacking. Covey explains this in terms of an Emotional Bank Account that exists for each relationship.⁹ We make deposits and build up a reserve when we are kind, courteous, honest, and dependable in our interactions with the other person. This results in a high level of trust that allows the other person to overlook our communication errors and give us the benefit of the doubt when interpreting what we mean. However, when we treat the other person in ways that indicate a lack of consideration (e.g., discourtesy, ignoring them, being arbitrary, etc.), our Emotional Bank Account with them becomes overdrawn. The level of trust is so low that each word must be chosen with great care so that the other person does not misinterpret the meaning and assume the worst. In reality, most people say many things that were better left unsaid or were better stated in a different manner. In the context of good relationships, such communications are tolerated and forgiven, and mutual understanding is much more likely to be achieved.

Lack of Clarity. The way Person A encodes the message may not accurately reflect the message he or she wants to transmit. "No, that's not what I meant," frequently accompanies communication attempts. Failure to consider how one's audience will perceive the message can result in unclear messages. Ambiguous language causes confusion, and jargon (technical language and acronyms as well as recognized words with specialized meanings) is incomprehensible to outsiders and newcomers. Poor communicators mistakenly assume that their meaning is obvious to others.

Individual Differences in Encoding and Decoding. The way Person A encodes messages and the way Person B decodes them is strongly related to their individual field of experience. Both encoding and decoding are heavily influenced by personal factors such as education, personality, socioeconomic level, family and child rearing, work history, culture, personal experience, and organizational role. This is one of the reasons that meaning lies in people, not in words. An "all-nighter" means staying up all night to finish a paper or study for an exam to a college student; but to people over fifty, it can mean sleeping through the whole night without waking. A feminist decodes a male boss's reference to "you girls" differently than a more traditional older woman. The recently hired low-level employee interprets a memo from the company president differently than a vice president with years of knowledge about the players and organizational history. The most effective communicators are "receiver oriented" because they gear their messages to the receiver. They ask themselves, "If I were the receiver, how would this message strike me? How would I interpret it?"

Gender influences how we encode communication. According to research,¹⁰ women as a group are more concerned with connecting to others and maintaining the relationship with the person to whom they are speaking. Women focus on seeking and giving confirmation and support, and they are more likely to aim for consensus (cooperation). Men tend to be more concerned with status and trying to achieve or maintain the upper hand in a conversation (dominance). When groups argue, women are more likely to ask questions and agree with others and less likely to challenge the views of others and frame their arguments.¹¹ These are style differences that reflect gender role stereotypes and how men and women are socialized. Although gender alone does not influence how messages are decoded or interpreted, it can certainly influence how messages are sent and encoded.¹²

For example, gender affects the way we transmit messages and converse. Communication experts usually interpret gender differences in conversation as a reflection of power differences between men and women. For example, men and people with higher status speak more than women and people of lower status, invalidating a common stereotype that women are always more talkative than men. In formal meetings, men gain and keep "the floor" for more time, regardless of their status. Men are more likely to interrupt others who are talking, and women are interrupted more often than men. Women in powerful positions, however, sometimes interrupt others. Men are more likely to control the topic and redefine what women say ("What you mean is ..."). Other characteristics of female communication are attributed to their lower power status. For example, women are more likely than men to soften their statements by the use of qualifiers such as "maybe, perhaps, sort of, I guess, kind of." When men use qualifiers, they are perceived as warm and polite; when women use qualifiers, they are perceived as weak and less assertive. Women are also more likely to use disclaimers that weaken their position ("I'm not really sure about this, but ..." "This probably doesn't mean anything, but ..."). Because women are socialized to be more polite than males, they tend to phrase orders more politely ("Please finish the report" as opposed to "Get that report done"). Women are also more likely to frame orders as questions ("Can you meet me at my office?" rather than "Come to my office"). Compared to men, women use more intensifiers, adverbs that exaggerate the strength of an expression ("I am so-o-o-o hungry," "It was a very, very productive meeting"). As a result, female speech is sometimes perceived as overemotional in the workplace.¹³

Perception. It is a fact of communication that people pay selective attention to the communication that comes their way and only hear some of the message. They may hear what they wish to hear or only hear messages that reinforce their own beliefs. Furthermore, people are likely to interpret messages they hear subjectively rather than objectively. Social perception is the name for this phenomenon, which will be explained in greater depth in the following chapter. Perception is another reason why meaning lies in people, not words. Perception is also culturally determined.

Culture. Differences in cultural backgrounds that can be another barrier to achieving a shared experience and mutual understanding. The ability to speak another language fluently does not guarantee that one understands all the nuances involved in a particular context. Words can have different meanings in different languages, and some concepts are nonexistent. There is no word for "late" in the Navaho language since their time is not measured by the clock.¹⁴ A Spanish proverb observes that "*Mañana* is often the busiest day of the week." To a Spanish speaker, *mañana* is an imprecise term meaning "in the future" or "soon." This explains the confusion or frustration this causes for people from countries who define "tomorrow" as a precise term indicating the next 24 hours. Style differences also prevent people from accurately perceiving, analyzing, and decoding cross-cultural communication. People in collectivist cultures are more likely to encounter situations in which there is a preference for silence and high context, indirect, and self-effacing (modest) communication. The emphasis in collectivist cultures is to save face and not stand out (e.g., "The nail that sticks up is hammered down"). In contrast, individualists are more likely to encounter situations in which there is a preference for talkativeness, low-context, direct, and self-enhancing (bragging) communication.¹⁵

High-context versus low-context cultures vary in the extent to which they use language itself to communicate the message.¹⁶ Low-context communication, found in individualistic cultures such as Germany, Switzerland, and the United States, relies on explicit verbal messages to convey intention or meaning. E-mail messages are the ultimate example of low-context communication because the message consists only of words, devoid of any context. By contrast, in high-context communication, found in collectivist cultures in Asia and Latin America, most of the information is either contained in the physical context or internalized in the person. Very little information lies in the coded or explicit part of the message. Therefore, in high-context communication, the onus lies on listeners to "read" meaning into the message based on their understanding of the historical context, social norms, roles, situational and relational context.

In low-context communication, the onus lies on the sender to craft and transmit a clear, explicit message that is easily decoded.¹⁷

Silence is perceived and used differently according to cultural norms. A comparative study of 16 countries found that Finns had the highest preference for silence and succinct communication.¹⁷ Silence plays an important role in high-context cultures in Southeast Asia, such as China, Japan, and Korea, where silence can indicate respect for someone with a higher status and careful consideration of the speaker's words. For traditional Chinese, silence is used as a social control, such as indicating their displeasure and disapproval of their children's behavior.¹⁸ Silence in Japan implies harmony rather than lack of understanding, disagreement, or having nothing to say, which members of more talkative cultures may wrongly assume. In multicultural teams, members of highly verbal communication cultures who do not perceive that silence conveys meaning tend to fill in pauses and silence; by doing so, they do not allow enough room for people with a more succinct style to interact.

Direct versus indirect communication refers to the extent to which language and tone of voice reveals or hides the speaker's intent. Speakers using a direct style specify their intentions in a forthright manner, whereas speakers using the indirect style hide their meaning in nuances in their verbal statements. For example, if a Japanese neighbor compliments your piano playing, she may really be telling you to close your windows or not play when she is trying to sleep. To say that directly, however, would be impolite and involve a loss of face. The indirect style is generally found in Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures and most of Latin America, whereas the direct style is more common in Western cultures. A comparison of Hebrew, Canadian French, Argentinean Spanish, Australian English, and German speakers ranked them from most direct to least direct. The Argentinean Spanish speakers were the most direct, followed by the Hebrew speakers. The French Canadians and Germans were moderately direct, while the Australian English speakers were least direct of this group.¹⁹ In multinational teams, it is not uncommon for different nationalities to need time to adjust to varying levels of direct and indirect speech. For example, Japanese members might be disconcerted if Israeli members of bluntly say, "You're wrong" or "Not true" in a business meeting.²⁰

In all cultures, there are specific contexts in which both direct and indirect styles are utilized. For example, people in the United States tend to be very direct. However, they are less so when communicating to people of higher status. The following dialogue was transcribed and excerpted from the black box tape of the Air Florida plane that crashed in the Potomac River just after taking off from Washington, DC's National Airport in January 1982. The pilot failed to use the engine anti-icing system during takeoff or to de-ice the plane a second time while waiting in line to take off in a winter storm. The ice that had accumulated on the engine pressure probes caused incorrect readings on the Engine Pressure Ratio gauge, leading the pilot to assume there was more takeoff thrust than there actually was.²¹ The copilot was more experienced than the pilot when it came to flying in icy weather and was diplomatically trying to warn the pilot.²²

Copilot: Look how the ice is just hanging on his, ah, back, back there, see that? See all those icicles on the back there and everything?

Pilot: Yeah.

[The copilot also expressed concern about the long waiting time since de-icing.]

Copilot: Boy, this is a, this is a losing battle here on trying to de-ice those things; it [gives] you a false feeling of security, that's all that does.

[Just before they took off, the copilot expressed another concern—about abnormal instrument readings—but again, he didn't press the matter when it wasn't picked up by the pilot.]

Copilot: That don't seem right, does it? [3-second pause] Ah, that's not right. Well—

Pilot: Yes it is, there's 80.

Copilot: Now, I don't think that's right. [7-second pause] Ah, maybe it is.

A few minutes later, the plane crashed, killing all but five people on board. A linguist who analyzes black box tapes from airplane accidents like this found that the ambiguous indirect style employed by copilots and navigators with pilots caused accidents. Subsequently, copilots were trained to be more assertive in their communication to pilots.

The *self-enhancement versus self-effacement* style varies in terms of how one refers to one's effort or performance. The self-enhancement verbal style emphasizes the importance of boasting about or drawing attention to one's accomplishments and abilities. The self-effacement verbal style, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of humbling oneself via verbal restraints, hesitations, modest talk, and the use of self-deprecation concerning one's effort or performance. Failures to establish shared meanings occur when people from self-enhancing cultures do not perceive the accomplishments and real worth of people from self-effacing cultures. Furthermore, employees from self-effacing cultures may find "selling themselves" to be hired or gain promotions in self-enhancing cultures very difficult. For example, a Chinese engineer working in a rural area in the United States was unhappy about being repeatedly overlooked for a promotion. An American coworker coached him, saying "Just tell the boss why you're the best person for the job and brag about all the good things you've done." The Chinese engineer couldn't bring himself to do this and opted instead to get a job at Intel, a firm that was relatively more cross-culturally sensitive and relatively accustomed to working with Asians. Negative perceptions can also occur when the boastful mode of self-enhancers is not well received in self-effacing cultures. Collectivist (Asian) cultures are generally self-effacing while Arab and African-American cultures are generally self-enhancing.²³

Misinterpretation of Nonverbal Communication. Nonverbal communications convey important messages and are produced more automatically than words. They include body movements and gestures, facial expressions and facial gazing, tone of voice and the emphasis of certain words. Generally speaking, our nonverbal signals relate to the feeling level of the content we communicate. Even when words are used, more meaning is taken from nonverbal signals. Mehrabian and Weiner found that words account for only 7 percent of the meaning we make out of communications; 55 percent of the meaning comes from facial expressions and posture, while 38 percent comes from vocal intonations and inflection.²⁴ This means that managers who continue doing paperwork while their employees are trying to talk to them are severely handicapping the communication process.

According to some researchers, as much as 70 percent of communication between people in the same language group is nonverbal.²⁵ Furthermore, it is possible that people rely even more heavily on nonverbal messages in cross-cultural communications. However, the same nonverbal behavior can have very different meanings across cultures, and the same meaning is conveyed by different nonverbal cues in different cultures. For example, in Samoa people sit down to show respect, whereas in many cultures they stand up. Showing the sole of one's shoe in a Muslim society is a sign of great disrespect. Some common hand gestures in North America—repeatedly crooking the index finger with the palm up to beckon another person to come or the tip of the index finger to the tip of the thumb to signal "A-OK"—are obscene gestures in some cultures.

Defensiveness. Defensiveness is one of the most common barriers to good communication. Once people become defensive, they have difficulty hearing or interpreting messages accurately—they are too caught up in protecting or justifying themselves. Defensiveness in communication is usually caused by the sender's poor communication skills or by the receiver's low self-concept.

Carl Rogers, the famous psychologist, found that defensive communication in therapy sessions could be avoided by being descriptive rather than evaluative and by assuming an egalitarian rather than a superior stance.²⁶ Gibb contributed four more ways to avoid provoking defensive communication: (1) assuming a problem-solving orientation rather than trying to control the situation and telling others what to do, (2) being spontaneous (authentic) rather than strategic (calculating), (3) showing empathy (feeling what others feel) rather than neu-

trality (unfeeling), and (4) being provisional (open-minded) rather than certain (close-minded).²⁷

An example of being certain rather than provisional is the manager who tears into employees when an error has been made before he or she has ascertained the facts of the situation. It's hard to repair the supervisor-employee relationship when this occurs because it signifies a lack of trust and respect for the employee and an unwillingness to give employees the benefit of the doubt. The Communication Climate Inventory you filled out as part of the class preparation measures the behaviors that create defensive and nondefensive climates.

Lack of Feedback and Clarification. Because the communication process is fraught with potential for distortion, the feedback aspect of communication is crucial. In this case, feedback refers to Person B's attempts to ensure that the message he or she decoded is what the sender really meant to convey. Asking for clarification and paraphrasing the sender's words ("Let me see if I have understood you correctly. Do you mean ...?") are feedback methods. Senders also can check to see if their message got across. Managers often ask employees to paraphrase instructions to see if they are clear. The purpose of communication is mutual understanding. Unless we check with people, we may mistakenly assume that communication occurred when it did not.

Poor Listening Skills. The normal result of an attempt to communicate is a partial misunderstanding because of the uniqueness of senders and receivers and the absence of a shared field of understanding. Clarifying the message and active listening are ways to avoid communication failures. When communication does break down, people often waste time and energy trying to determine who is at fault, which provokes a defensive reaction that further inhibits mutual understanding. However, if we accept misunderstandings as a basic reality of communication, we can stop looking for blame and start seeking better ways to communicate. A more effective response to breakdowns is, "How can we arrive at a level of mutual understanding that will allow us to accomplish our objectives?" and "How can we prevent a breakdown like this from happening again?"

RESPONDING STYLES

Our responses to communications set the stage for subsequent communication and impact our relationship with the speaker. Most of our response styles (80 percent, according to some experts) fall into five categories:

1. **Evaluative** "What a great report!" "That idea will never work." An evaluative response indicates that the listener has made a judgment of the relative goodness, appropriateness, effectiveness, or rightness of the speaker's statement or problem. Such responses reflect either a positive or negative assessment. With this type of response, the listener implies what the sender should do.
2. **Interpretive** "You're just saying that because you lost the account." The interpretive response indicates that the listener's intent is to teach, to tell the sender what his or her statement or problem really means, and how the sender really feels about the situation. With this type of response, the listener implies what the sender should think.
3. **Supportive** "Don't worry, it'll work out." A supportive response indicates that the listener's intent is to reassure, to pacify, and to reduce the sender's intensity of feeling. The listener in some way implies that the sender need not feel as he or she does.
4. **Probing** "Why do you think you're going to be fired?" A probing response is a response that indicates that the listener's intent is to seek further information, provoke further discussion along a certain line, and question the sender. With this response, a listener implies that the sender needs to develop or discuss a point further.
5. **Understanding** "So, you think your job's on the line and you're pretty upset about it?" An understanding response indicates that the listener's intent is only to ask the sender whether the listener correctly understands what the sender is saying, how the sender feels about the problem, and how the sender sees the problem. With this response, the listener implies nothing but concern that the sender's message is accurately received.

Our natural tendency as listeners is to evaluate and judge what others say to us. The most common responses are evaluative, even though they are not always the most effective type of response to employ. Groups seeking creative solutions or resolution to a conflict are two examples of situations in which evaluative responses are clearly counterproductive.

These response styles communicate not only words but a message about the relationship between the two communicators. With the first four response styles, the responders put themselves in a one-up position in relation to the speaker. When we evaluate others, we assume the one-up position of a judge. The same is true when we interpret what others have said (as if we know best) or try to pacify them (as if they were children who shouldn't feel as they do), and even to some degree when we probe (as if they have not thought everything through). In contrast, the understanding response communicates that listeners have positioned themselves on the same level as the speaker, an egalitarian approach. This is the type of response that is used in active listening, which is explained later in the chapter. None of the responses described are appropriate for all situations. No response style can be said to be innately good or bad, but there are times when a certain type of response would be more appropriate or effective than another. A good communicator is aware of the type of response that is called for in each situation.

ASSERTIVENESS

Communication that is perceived as overly aggressive can provoke a defensive reaction. An assertive style, neither too aggressive nor too passive, is most likely to produce the desired results when we need to stand up for ourselves, express honest feelings, or exercise our rights. Assertiveness is the ability to communicate clearly and directly what you need or want from another person in a way that does not deny or infringe upon the other's rights. New supervisors often have difficulty finding the right balance in the nonassertive-assertive-aggressive continuum. Exhibit 2 provides a helpful description of the differences among these three styles. One characteristic of an assertive style is the use of I-statements, which are described in the following paragraph.

An I-statement is a feedback format designed to produce dialogue rather than defensiveness. I-statements have three components: (1) a specific and nonblaming description of the behavior exhibited by the other person, (2) the concrete effects of that behavior, and (3) the speaker's feelings about the behavior. Note that in the following examples of I-statements, they begin with "When you ..."

Behavior	Effects	Feelings
When you come late to our project meetings,	we have to use valuable time bringing you up-to-date, and others end up doing your share of the work,	and I resent that.
When you interrupt me,	I lose my train of thought and don't get to make my point,	and that makes me angry.

I-statements differ from you-statements, such as "You are lazy and irresponsible," "You never pull your weight around here," or "You're rude and inconsiderate." More often than not, you-statements provoke a defensive response and an argument. I-statements are more likely to encourage an open dialogue because they are descriptive rather than evaluative, and they focus on communicating the speaker's feelings and needs to the other person. In some cases, simply becoming aware of the effects of one's behavior and the feelings it provokes is enough to make people change negative behaviors.

	Nonassertive (No Influence)	Assertive (Positive Influence)	Aggressive (Negative Influence)
Verbal	Apologetic words. Veiled meanings. Hedging; failure to come to the point. Rambling; disconnected. At a loss for words. Failure to say what you really mean. Qualifying statements with "I mean," "you know."	Statement of wants. Honest statement of feelings. Objective words. Direct statements, which say what you mean. "I-statements."	"Loaded" words. Accusations. Descriptive, subjective terms. Imperious, superior words. "You" statements that blame or label.
Nonverbal General demeanor	Actions instead of words, hoping someone will guess what you want. Looking as if you don't mean what you say.	Attentive listening behavior. Generally assured manner, communicating caring and strength.	Exaggerated show of strength. Flippant, sarcastic style. Air of superiority.
Voice	Weak, hesitant, soft, sometimes wavering.	Firm, warm, well modulated, relaxed.	Tensed, shrill, loud, shaky; cold, "deadly quiet," demanding; superior, authoritarian.
Eyes	Averted, downcast, teary, pleading.	Open, frank, direct. Eye contact, but not staring.	Expressionless, narrowed, cold, staring; not really "seeing" others.
Stance and posture	Leaning for support, stooped, excessive head nodding.	Well balanced, straight on, erect, relaxed.	Hands on hips, feet apart. Stiff, rigid. Rude, imperious.
Hands	Fidgety, fluttery, clammy.	Relaxed motions.	Clenched. Abrupt gestures, fingerpointing, fist pounding.

EXHIBIT 2 A Comparison of Nonassertive, Assertive, and Aggressive Communication

Source: *Mastering Assertiveness Skills: Power and Influence at Work*, © 1983 Elaine Zuker. Published by AMACOM, a division of the American Management Association. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

Each culture has specific, learned communication patterns that must be deciphered for real understanding to occur. Unfortunately, we often make incorrect interpretations and negative attributions about cultural differences in communication. Although there are country differences in communication within Latin America, the following list summarizes the general characteristics of Latin American and Latino patterns of communication.²⁸

- Emphasis on politeness and warm interpersonal relationships
- Use of indirect language in most countries to maintain harmonious social relations
- Use of affective style (process oriented and receiver focused), which avoids putting people in uncomfortable situations and relies more on nonverbal and intuitive meaning
- Use of the elaborate style, which involves a relatively high quantity of talk, great detail, repetition, and colorful language
- Value given to eloquence and expressive use of language
- Communication is high context, which means people convey more meaning through gestures, nonverbal communication, and reading between the lines and are less explicit than North Americans and Northern Europeans
- Frequent use of gestures
- Close proximity between people in face-to-face encounters
- Frequent touching, which is done in specific ways for specific occasions and relationships

- Preference given to personal, face-to-face communication over impersonal methods
- Respect may be shown to teachers by breaking eye contact and lowering the eyes

Based on this list, it is easy to see why people from this region may perceive the speech patterns of North Americans as too direct, too blunt, and too plain.

COMMUNICATION VIA ELECTRONIC MEDIA

More and more work communication takes place, not face-to-face, but via e-mail, teleconferencing, conference calls, and computer-mediated communication. The average U.S. employee devotes more than 1 3/4 hours to e-mail daily.²⁹ Over half of the 1,200 managers in another study spent at least two hours on e-mail at work; plus 30 percent of them spent yet another hour on work-related e-mail at home.³⁰ Some individuals and firms have learned the hard way that anything written on e-mail can come back to haunt to them; e-mail does not disappear when it is deleted and can be subpoenaed in lawsuits. In an ethics and e-mail scandal, Merrill Lynch was fined \$100 million when its analysts belittled stocks in e-mails that they were publicly promoting to customers.³¹

Communication channels are described as either rich or lean. *Rich communication, such as face-to-face communication, involves multiple channels—verbal, visual, nonverbal, and emotional. Lean communication involves limited channels—language alone, with the possible addition of “emoticons”.* For this reason, e-mail messages are more likely to be misinterpreted because there are fewer cues to observe. Intended or unintended insults in e-mails, called flaming, are more likely when people feel less constrained about being rude online than they would face-to-face.³²

Certain channels are more appropriate for some work processes than others. For example, studies of student project teams found that e-mail was effective in generating ideas, brainstorming, planning, and scheduling.³³ It was less effective when teams had to make decisions and choices, resolve conflicts and motivation problems, and execute at a high level of performance. Although experienced employees are more skilled at working virtually, some situations still require rich channels. Face-to-face meetings are better than e-mail for establishing relationships and trust. Once people have formed relationships, e-mail is an effective channel for maintaining them, but it is not appropriate for situations that require active listening.

ACTIVE LISTENING

When executives are asked to rank the communication skills they find most critical to their success on the job, they consistently place listening at the top of the list.³⁴ Executives spend 45 to 65 percent of their day listening, and this skill is related to higher performance, increased job satisfaction, and improved interpersonal relationships.³⁵ There are several filters that affect listening such as attitudes, biases, values, previous experiences, organizational roles (e.g., paying closer attention to what superiors say than to subordinates), poor listening skills, and lack of fluency in another language. These filters are minimized in active listening because people do not sit quietly like a bump on a log simply waiting for the other person to finish speaking. Instead, the listener takes personal responsibility to ensure that the messages sent are accurately received. If any distortions are uncovered, they are clarified before proceeding with the conversation.

Humans have a physiological excuse for being less than excellent listeners. The rate of speech is 100 to 150 words per minute, whereas our brains are capable of thinking at a rate of 400 to 500 words per minute. People often use this slack time to daydream, to judge what the sender is saying, or to prepare what they want to say next. In contrast, active listeners use this slack time to concentrate fully on the sender's message. Active listening involves a greater level of attending to the speaker.

The skills of active listening are demanding, but they can be learned using the guidelines in the paragraphs that follow.³⁶ Some of the behaviors suggested may seem awkward and forced at first, but with practice they will feel more natural. It is difficult to respond with patience, understanding, and empathy when the other person is expressing ideas that strike you as illogical, self-deceiving, or even morally wrong. However, the behaviors suggested will, if practiced faithfully,

generate attitudes of tolerance and understanding that will make empathy and nonevaluative acceptance of the other person come more easily.

Being Nonevaluative

Active listening includes a variety of verbal and nonverbal behaviors that communicate to the speaker that he or she is heard and understood, that the feelings that underlie the words are appreciated and accepted, that regardless of what the individual says or thinks or feels, he or she is accepted as a person by the listener. The object is to communicate that whatever the qualities of the ideas, events, attitudes, and values of the person who is talking, the listener does not evaluate the person or his or her ideas or feelings. The listener accepts the person for what he or she is without making judgments of right or wrong, good or bad, logical or illogical.

Paraphrasing the Content

When we paraphrase the content, we put what the speaker has said in our own words and repeat it to the speaker to test whether we have understood correctly. The content includes both the thoughts and feelings manifested by the speaker. These phrases are used in paraphrasing.

As I understand it, what you're saying is ...

Do you mean that ... ?

So your feeling is that ...

If I try to summarize what you've said ...

The key to paraphrasing is listening intently to what the other party is saying. If we spend the time when the other is talking thinking of what we are going to say next, or making mental evaluations and critical comments, we are likely not to hear enough of it to paraphrase it accurately.

The emphasis at this level is comprehending the stated or manifest content, that which is explicitly communicated verbally and/or nonverbally. The more indirect the content, the more important are the next two active listening skills.

Reflecting the Implications

This requires going a bit beyond the manifest content of what the other is saying and indicating to the speaker your appreciation of where the content is leading. It may take the form of building on or extending the ideas of the speaker, using such phrases as

I guess if you did that, you'd then be in a position to ...

So that might lead to a situation in which ...

Would that mean that ... ?

Are you suggesting that we might ... ?

Would that help with the problem of ... ?

It is important in reflecting the implications to leave the speaker in control of the discussion. When this technique is used to change the direction of the speaker's thinking or to show how much more clever the listener is by suggesting ideas the speaker has not thought of, it ceases to build trust and becomes a kind of skillful one-upmanship. When, however, this technique is genuinely used to help the speaker, it communicates very strongly that the listener has really heard and understood the drift of his or her thinking.

Reflecting Underlying Feelings

This technique goes still farther beyond the overt feelings content of what is said and brings into the open some of the underlying feelings, attitudes, beliefs, or values that may be influencing the speaker to talk in this way. One tries to empathize, to put oneself in the place of the speaker, to

experience how it must feel to be in his or her situation. Then the listener tentatively expresses the feelings, using such phrases as

How does that make you feel?

If that happened to me, I'd be upset. Are you?

Times when I've been in that sort of situation, I've really felt I could use some help.

It sounds like you're proud of achieving that. Is that right?

It looks like you feel very strongly about this.

In reflecting the underlying feelings, delicacy is required so as not to overexpose the speaker or press him to admit to more than he would like to reveal. It is also important to avoid suggesting to the speaker that the feeling you reflect back is what she ought to feel in such a situation. This would tend to make the speaker feel evaluated, when what you are trying to do is to communicate acceptance of the underlying feelings. Often acceptance is communicated more by the manner and tone of the listener than by the words used.

Inviting Further Contributions

When listeners haven't heard or understood enough yet to follow up with indications of understanding, empathy, and acceptance, they can communicate interest in hearing more. Phrases such as the following are useful.

Tell me a bit more about that.

Help me understand ...

What happened then?

This differs from the probing response style described earlier because these questions are motivated solely by a desire to clearly understand what the speaker is trying to communicate. Specific requests for information may constitute a unilateral demand for openness on the part of the speaker. To maintain balance, questions should not be used exclusively but should be followed after a bit by rephrasing or reflecting. Generally, open-ended questions create a more supportive, trusting climate than do pointed questions fired in machine gun-like fashion.

Using Nonverbal Listening Responses

Active listening is often communicated as much by one's posture and nonverbal movements as it is by what one says. Nonverbal listening responses may vary from one culture to another. In the United States, these responses communicate interest and understanding: consistent eye contact, open body posture, leaning toward the speaker, head nodding, and receptive signals such as "um-hum." African Americans use less eye contact than whites.³⁷ In some cultures, lower status individuals make less eye contact.

When implemented in a climate of genuine concern and acceptance, the active listening skills described in this section help both parties understand as fully as possible the thoughts and the feelings in an interpersonal exchange. If, however, the listener is not being authentic—is not genuinely curious and caring—active listening will be perceived as just another technique to manipulate people.



CLASS ACTIVITY: ACTIVE LISTENING EXERCISE

The purpose of this exercise is to provide you with an opportunity to practice and receive feedback on your active listening skills. You will also have a chance to observe others and give them feedback on their active listening.

(Time allotted: 45 minutes)

STEP 1. Form groups of four and prepare for the role plays. In this exercise, everyone should have an opportunity to perform each role: expresser, active listener (or consultant), and observer. (5 minutes)

- An expresser gets a chance to enhance his or her ability to express thoughts and feelings in a congruent, clear manner.
- An active listener paraphrases what the expresser states and practices all the components of active listening. It is critical that active listeners resist the temptation to give advice or try to solve the problem for the expresser.
- The two observers watch the interactions silently, use the observer sheet and provide feedback afterward.

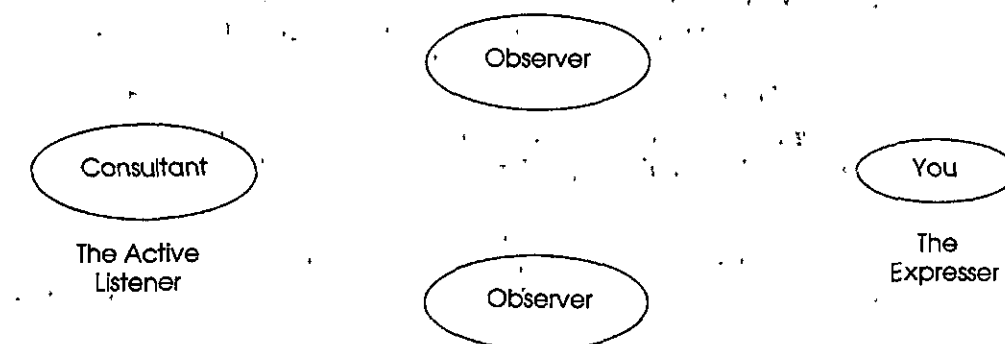
Participants can either choose a current topic that is controversial or one of the scenarios described on the following pages.

Controversial Topics. As a class, brainstorm a list of controversial topics to be written on the board. The first Expresser and Active Listener pair quickly choose a topic from the list. Expressers will give their opinion on the topic while the Active Listeners listen, without giving their own opinion or debating the issue. The interaction should last about 5 minutes until the Expresser feels the Active Listener really understands his or her position. Meanwhile, the observers watch. Then the Expresser and Active Listener switch roles, while the observers continue watching. After this second interchange, the observers give their feedback. Then the two observers quickly choose a topic and repeat the sequence described above.

Scenarios. Two people volunteer to be the first Expresser and Consultant pair, and the Expresser quickly chooses a scenario to use. For each scenario there will be (1) a stage-setting statement, (2) a scripted set of words to start the interaction, and (3) a suggested set of feeling states. The scenarios range from easy to hard as determined by the range and intensity of feelings associated with the scenario. Here's an example.

- Setting the stage** You are speaking with an outside consultant, brought in by your boss. The consultant has just delivered a copy of his or her final report.
- Script** I want to know why I wasn't consulted on that report! You were researching my territory and the decision will impact my people.
- Suggested feeling states** Bothered, insulted, left out, angry.

The roles needed in this scenario would be:



- The Expresser should pick a scenario that seems *real* to you (i.e., you have been or could imagine yourself actually being in that situation) and involves some suggested feeling states you would like to practice expressing that will stretch you but not immobilize you.
- "You" (the Expresser) would communicate the first line as scripted, for example, "I want to know why ..." In so doing, you would try to express some or all of the suggested feeling states (insulted, left out, etc.). The "Consultant" would practice

the active listening skills described in The Knowledge Base. "Observers" would watch the interaction carefully and critique it using the Observer Sheet.

- As the "Consultant" (in the scenario) actively listens, "you" would carry on and add to the conversation in a manner consistent with the thoughts and feelings reflected in the original scripted opening. Refrain from giving your opinion or gratuitous advice. Carry on the communication at least five minutes.

Although this is meant to be a play-acting situation, it is also intended to be a serious opportunity to develop your interpersonal communication skills as both expressers and active listeners.

STEP 2. Role plays (10 to 15 minutes each round) Each role play should consist of:

- a. 5 to 8 minutes conducting the role-play scenario.
- b. 8 to 10 minutes of feedback discussion initiated by the observers and then expanded by the expresser and the active listener.

During the feedback discussion, people should try to link insights gained from playing the different roles. For example, as an expresser, I may find out that I am more likely to give off mixed or confusing messages around high-intensity negative feelings than anything else. As the active listener, I may find that I am less likely to hear and pick up on high-intensity positive feelings.

Suggested Scenarios

1. **Setting the stage** You are speaking with an outside consultant, brought in by your boss. The consultant has just delivered a copy of his or her final report.
Script I want to know why I wasn't consulted on that report! You were researching my territory and the decision will impact my people.
Suggested feeling states Bothered, insulted, left out, angry.
2. **Setting the stage** You and a colleague are talking in your office. You are about to tell your colleague about an interaction you had with Ana, corporate vice president.
Script After the meeting, I was walking down the hall, and Ana stopped me and said, "You did a really great job on that account!" (smiling) I thought so, too!
Suggested feeling states Proud, happy, contented, a sense of accomplishment.
3. **Setting the stage** You are reporting to the boss on the status of your group. You know that in the boss's opinion the group just has not been pulling its weight.
Script We finally had a breakthrough in that contract. After all the hours I spent researching the market, I finally got an idea that the client liked (longish sigh). For a while, I thought that the group would lose another one.
Suggested feeling states Relieved, good, accomplished, productive, uncertain, scared.
4. **Setting the stage** You are a secretary whose boss feels that you have more promise and can utilize your talents better and move ahead. You are about to speak to your boss.
Script Last week, you mentioned that I could read those articles and compose an annotated bibliography. I know that you want to make my job more interesting. Maybe you even think that I'm bored. But, really, I just don't want to be challenged any more. I guess that I like things as they are.
Suggested feeling states Embarrassed, scared, resentful, frustrated.
5. **Setting the stage** You have just been offered a middle-management position of considerable prestige. You are talking to your boss about it.
Script Frankly, I'm just not sure whether or not to accept the promotion. I should be overjoyed with the opportunity. It's a chance to influence some policy. Most people around here don't understand why I haven't left already. But parts of the job I have are very exciting. Marketing is always a challenge. So I just don't know.

Suggested feeling states Ambivalent, uncertain, frustrated, unfulfilled, afraid of success and/or failure.

6. **Setting the stage** You are the first and only female member of your audit team. You had hoped the marked increase in travel would not be a problem because you love the work and do it very well. You are talking to your boss.
Script I know I said I would have no problem with the travel aspects of the job. I thought I would enjoy it. But I find that two to three weeks is too long. I'm not really happy when I'm traveling, and my husband and children are complaining.
Suggested feeling states Dissatisfied, concerned, uncomfortable, worried, nervous.
7. **Setting the stage** You have just had an interaction with the division head, Ms. Sanchez, who is your boss's boss. You are now telling your boss about it.
Script What was I going to say to her anyway? Ms. Sanchez—the division head!—pats me on the back and tells me how concerned she is for my image. I knew this place was pretty straight, but that's the most ridiculous thing that I ever heard—that I can't have my own painting in my office. Why does everything here have to be designer perfect?
Suggested feeling states Adamant, determined, angry, resistant, feeling pressured to fit into a mold.
8. **Setting the stage** You and your boss have a lot of trouble agreeing on how things should be done and on priorities. Here we go again!
Script No! This is not a smoke screen for something else! Look, I really don't understand why I have to analyze the reports that way. I want to do an excellent job and I will. However, I'd like a little latitude in bringing some of my ideas into action.
Suggested feeling states Annoyed, confused, frustrated, unchallenged.
9. **Setting the stage** Given the problems you and your spouse have been having, it has been amazing to you that you've been able to function at all. Your boss has just called you in and read you the riot act.
Script Don't you think that I know that my work has been poor? Holy smokes, nobody is cooperating around here. I just...look...so I haven't been too pleasant. But I'm doing the best I can under the circumstances.
Suggested feeling states Exasperated, strung out, as if the "bottom has dropped out," tense, as if you have to keep up a front.
10. **Setting the stage** Your longtime friend and colleague, Abdel, has come to chat about his future career plans and long-term growth with the company. Your own career has been very much on your mind for months, so you almost interrupt Abdel in midstream.
Script Abdel, you sound like I did about 15 years ago. I'm 50 years old. I'm one of, maybe, a hundred middle managers. I've been working my tail off to become a CEO. Nothing was more important to me than my career. Yeah, I'm good, but my wife and kids—they're strangers to me—and I'm not going to become a CEO. Look at the years I wasted working for a goal I'll never reach.
Suggested feeling states Regret, frustration, bitterness.

STEP 3. Class Discussion (15 minutes) Answer the following questions:

- a. What was it like to practice active listening?
- b. What did you learn about yourself and others by doing this exercise?
- c. When should you use active listening?
- d. When would it be a mistake to use active listening?

OBSERVER SHEET

Your role is an important one. You should silently observe the interaction and note specific examples of effective and ineffective communication as you see them. These data will be important in the feedback discussion.

Active Listening Behaviors	Examples Where It Was Effectively Used by the Active Listener	Places Where It Could Have Been Used But Wasn't and/or Was Used Ineffectively*
1. Being nonevaluative		
2. Paraphrasing the content		
3. Reflecting possible implications		
4. Reflecting the underlying feelings		
5. Inviting further contributions		
6. Using nonverbal listening responses		

* The observations you note in this column will give you the chance to provide feedback to both the listener and to the expresser: (1) thoughts and feelings you heard expressed that the listener did not hear or pick up on and (2) mixed messages you observed being expressed (incongruence between words and nonverbal communication).



LEARNING POINTS

1. Communication is a major portion of a manager's job and an essential skill for anyone working in business.
2. Communication is the process by which information is exchanged between communicators with the goal of achieving mutual understanding.
3. The transactional model of communication consists of two communicators who participate equally from their own personal context or field of experience. To communicate, they must find a shared field of experience. Over time, the nature of their communication may change as well as their fields of experience. Noise can interfere with their intended communication.
4. The arc of distortion is the difference between what the sender intended to communicate and what the receiver understood the message to be.
5. There is much potential for distortion in the communication process. Therefore, it's best to assume that any communication can also involve a partial misunderstanding. Active listening, requesting clarification, and checking meaning with feedback are ways to ensure that the message received is the intended message.
6. Potential barriers to communication include: poor relationships, lack of clarity, individual differences in encoding and decoding, gender differences, perception, culture, misinterpretation of nonverbal communication, defensiveness, lack of feedback and clarification, and poor listening skills.
7. Meaning lies in people, not in words.
8. The most effective communicators are receiver-oriented because they take the perspective of the receivers and customize messages for them.
9. Men and women communicate in different ways, primarily because of societal socialization and status.
10. Common style differences in intercultural communication are: high-context versus low-context, direct versus indirect, and self-enhancement versus self-effacement. Cultures also use and interpret silence and nonverbal gestures in different ways.
11. More meaning is taken from (1) facial expressions and posture and (2) vocal intonation and inflection than from words themselves.
12. Defensiveness is a common barrier to communication because the energy devoted to defending oneself prevents attention to the message.
13. A nondefensive climate is created when people are descriptive, egalitarian, focused on problem solving, spontaneous, empathic, and provisional.
14. Five common response styles are: evaluative, interpretive, supportive, probing, and understanding. Evaluative responses are most common. These styles also contain a message about the relationship between the two parties. Only the understanding response reflects an egalitarian stance rather than a one-up position.
15. Assertiveness is the ability to communicate clearly and directly what you need or want from another person in a way that does not deny or infringe upon the other's rights.
16. I-statements (behavior, effects, feelings) are an effective way to provide feedback to others.
17. Communication channels can be rich (multiple channels) or lean (limited channels).
18. The components of active listening are:
 - a. Being nonevaluative
 - b. Paraphrasing the content
 - c. Reflecting implications
 - d. Reflecting underlying feelings
 - e. Inviting further contributions
 - f. Using nonverbal listening responses



ACTION SCRIPTS

FOR EMPLOYEES

- Expert communicators can distinguish between their thoughts and their feelings. They manage their emotion so that feelings do not unintentionally seep into the discussion and negatively influence communication. An example of a novice communicator would be the team member whose feelings have been hurt by a thoughtless remark who then vociferously attacks the group plan—not because he really thinks it's a bad plan, but because he is experiencing an emotional hijack.
- Effective communicators pay close attention to nonverbal clues when others communicate and make sure their own nonverbal communication conveys what they intend. To be congruent and consistent, both the verbal and nonverbal signals they send accurately reflect their thoughts and/or feelings.
- They understand that self-concept serves as a filter through which we see all communication. People with low self-concepts present the greatest communication challenge because they can become defensive with little or no provocation. The specific content of the message is less important than what you are communicating to them about your relationship with them; if it's anything less than fully supportive, they become defensive.
- Expert communicators seamlessly move in and out of active listening and can quickly identify when it should be used. Conflict situations, personal problems, customer complaints, performance appraisals, instruction-giving are all situations that benefit from active listening. It's difficult to maintain anger when the listener is making a concerted effort to understand both your point and your feelings.
- They learn to decipher and acknowledge the differences when communicating with people from a different culture, region, or gender without evaluating them.
- Experts can readily adapt their own communication style to match styles from different cultures or subcultures, which is called code-switching.
- Novices are more likely to misconstrue or overinterpret ambiguous e-mail messages.³⁸
- Expert communicators use the appropriate channel for the message they need to convey. For example, they do not address sensitive issues on e-mail.
- In particular, they do not engage in arguments over e-mail. Such conflicts tend to escalate, and it is easy to misinterpret what has been written. Unlike face-to-face arguments, e-mail allows no opportunities to rephrase, soften one's statements, or change one's mind.
- Expert communicators understand that it is difficult to make amends for mistakes once words have been uttered and e-mail messages have been sent. Therefore, they think very carefully before talking and revise their e-mails repeatedly until they say exactly what they mean.
- They do not send unnecessary, unimportant e-mails that waste time, nor do they copy everyone on e-mails that only need to go to one person.

FOR MANAGERS

- Managers who are effective communicators do the following:
 - Give other people confirmation or validation by acknowledging their presence and indicating acceptance of them and their ideas.
 - Do not exclude others or resort to in-group talk.
 - Avoid talking about themselves too much, do not "monologue," and try to listen as much as they talk.
 - Avoid both excessive criticism and undeserved praise in favor of honest appraisals given in a gentle manner.
 - Use language that neither offends nor demeans other people.³⁹
- Expert managers take for granted that communication is a flawed process and try to eliminate as many pitfalls as possible. They paraphrase for employees the problems or requests that they receive (i.e., "Let me see if I've understood the problem correctly").

- To give instructions that get followed, effective leaders explain to followers their intent and do not overload them with too much detail. If leaders always use the same format, shown below, followers can more readily grasp what the leader wants and ask enough questions to figure out what they should do if the situation unexpectedly but probably inevitably changes. Karl Weick recommends using this format:⁴⁰
 - Here's what I think we face
 - Here's what I think we should do
 - Here's why
 - Here's what we should keep our eye on
 - Now, talk to me
- Before they communicate at work, experts ask themselves the following questions: What do I want to accomplish as a result of this communication? Based on my knowledge of the receiver(s), how should I word this message and how should I transmit it? Am I the best person to communicate this message or does someone else have greater credibility or a better relationship with them? Will there be any likely resistance to the message that I need to take into consideration?
- Communication is a learned behavior, which means that people usually send messages that maximize rewards and minimize punishment. Managers who are expert at communication do not "kill the messenger" no matter how unpleasant the news. They know that bad news can be crucial to the organization's survival because it represents an opportunity to change course.
- Some managers deplore the power of the grapevine, the informal communication network, but all organizations have grapevines. Expert communicators use the grapevine for their own purposes, such as floating trial balloons to see how people react. The power of the grapevine can be decreased by more open sharing of information through formal channels. In a bureaucracy, information is often synonymous with power. Providing greater access to information means that employees will devote less energy to hoarding it or ferreting it out.
- Managers who are expert communicators make a concerted effort to seek information from employees at all levels. For senior managers, it is not always enough to talk only with the layer of people immediately beneath them because this group may have a vested interest in presenting only positive information or self-serving interpretations of situations. This is why the concept of "managing by walking around" is so important.
- Expert managers communicate enough so that others feel like they are in the loop and understand what their leaders are doing.

FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ARCHITECTS

- Because communication is such an important skill, skilled organizational designers and architects use it as a selection criterion in the hiring process. This not only saves money on training but helps to cut down on miscommunication errors.
- Even though new hires may bring good communication skills with them, different forms of communication training are needed for different levels of employees. Intercultural communication training, for example, is in greater demand as a result of the increasing numbers of multinational teams and global business ventures.
- Organizational architects concerned about good communication take steps to remove filters that keep communication from spreading up or down the hierarchy or across functional boundaries. They have mechanisms by which employees can communicate freely to top management (e.g., suggestion boxes, open door policies, e-mail access to the boss, informal meetings with the boss, etc.).
- Some organizational designers set communication norms that they believe will enhance their success and develop protocols for how they want employees to communicate. For example, GE encourages its employee to be blunt and brusque, especially in superior/subordinate communications to promote questioning assumptions, critical analysis of decisions, and accurate, candid communication.⁴¹



PERSONAL APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

At the beginning of this chapter, you filled out an inventory in which you evaluated the type of communication climate your supervisor established. That question was based on Gibb's characteristics of defensive communication. This assignment is to gain insight into the type of communication climate you create. Choose one of the following ways to begin this assignment.

1. If you supervise employees, ask three of them to fill out a copy of the same questionnaire anonymously. If you're surprised at the results, discuss them and ask for clarification or examples from someone in your organization who you know will give you good, honest feedback. Take into consideration that your employees may be uncertain (or even terrified) about how you will accept feedback on your communication habits. Make sure they don't have to pay a price for their honesty.
 2. Have a discussion on a controversial topic with someone (preferably someone with strong views that are different from your own so you can test out the skills you practiced in this chapter). Try to create a supportive climate according to Gibb's framework. Afterward, evaluate the conversation. If it's possible, get the other person's evaluation of the conversation.
- After you've completed (1) or (2), write up the experience in the usual format.

A. Concrete Experience

1. Objectively describe the experience (who, what, when, where, how). (2 points)

2. Subjectively describe your feelings, perceptions, and thoughts that occurred during (not after) the experience. What did others seem to be feeling? (2 points)

B. Reflective Observation

1. Looking back at the experience, what were the perspectives of the key actors (including you)? (2 points)

2. Why did the people involved (including you) behave as they did? (2 points)

C. Abstract Conceptualization

1. Relate concepts or theories from the assigned readings or the lecture to the experience. Explain thoroughly how they apply to your experience. Please apply at least two concepts or theories and cite them correctly. (4 points)

D. Active Experimentation

1. What did you learn about communication from this experience? (1 point)

2. What did you learn about yourself? (1 point)

3. What action steps will you take to be more effective in the future? (2 points)

E. Integration, Synthesis, and Writing

1. Did you integrate and synthesize the four sections? (1 point)
2. Was the Personal Application Assignment well written and easy to understand? (1 point)
3. Was it free of spelling and grammar errors? (2 points)