

Communication and TECHNOLOGY

Changing the Way We Communicate

Technology has changed the way we communicate with one another. An explosion of technological advances has made communication cheap, easy, and immediate. Mobile phones, for example, have become an integral part of our daily lives. These statistics tell the story.

- Six billion people use mobile phones in the world today (MobiThinking, 2012).
- 73 percent of American cell phone users send and receive about 40 text messages daily, according to the Pew Research Center (2011). Teens exchange more than 60 messages per day.
- The number of Americans with smartphones grows each year. In 2012, over 46 percent of all mobile phones in the United States had access to the Internet (Smith, 2012). Even

teens have smartphones, with 31 percent of 14- to 17-year-olds using one.

The advent of these technological advances has made communicating easier, but it has also created new communication problems. Nomophobia is the fear of being out of mobile phone contact, and in 2012 about 66 percent of the general public, up from 53 percent in 2008, had this fear (Netburn, 2012). Women are more fearful of losing their phones, but men tend to have two phones. People 18–24 are the most nomophobic (Netburn, 2012). Our main reason for using mobile communication devices is to stay in touch with family and friends. Are we afraid of being alone?

We can enhance our relationships and overall communication with the use of technology. We just need to be careful about how and when we decide to use our mobile phones.

because they lead to greater understanding and thus more effective communication. As we learned earlier in the chapter, our frame of reference is made up of many different variables, including our age, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, family roles, work experience, geographic location, sexual orientation, learning style, and socioeconomic status. Our frame of reference is unique and thus makes us different from others. We may look different, sound different, and think and feel differently. The variables that create our frame of reference affect the communication process. For example, when we see someone who looks or sounds different from us, we may become defensive and close ourselves off from any interaction with this person. But if we instead value the differences and strive to understand this person, then we can have a greater understanding and more effective communication. Specifically:

During the first week, students in a communication class are placed in study groups. Noelle, an 18-year-old first-year student who is African American, is grouped with Mo (short for Mohamed), also 18 years old and in his first year. Katie, who is 25, is close to graduation, white, and is a working single mother. Cathy, who is 55, is a junior, Hispanic, and a returning student who works full-time. Cathy's youngest son just left home and so she is an "empty nester." Noelle thinks to herself, "How am I going to be able to work and study with this group? I don't have

anything in common with them.” When the group begins to work together, Noelle discovers that she and Katie live in the same town, that Mo knows Cathy’s son, and that they are all nervous about doing presentations in front of the class.

At first Noelle saw only the differences between herself and her group members. But after taking the time to get to know them, Noelle found they all had much in common.

The first part of this chapter discussed the nature and components of the communication process. Building on this foundation, future chapters will explore the numerous aspects of both interpersonal and public communication, including our perceptions of ourselves and others, listening, nonverbal communication, improving the communication climate, selecting speech topics, analyzing the audience, and organizing speeches.

Each chapter presents an explanation of the topic and then suggests specific skills that can be used to improve your effectiveness as a communicator. By embracing our differences, your confidence, and ultimately your effectiveness, will be enhanced. For example, after reading Chapter 7 on improving the communication climate, you will be better acquainted with the subject of supportive climates; as a result, you will be better able to see how you can play an active role in creating this type of climate. At the same time, you will be able to recognize when you and others act defensively.

In each chapter both the discussion of the topic and the suggested skills will help you to become an active participant in the communication process. Your involvement in a particular activity (Embracing Difference, Global Connections, Skill Building, or Serving Your Community), whether it is gathering evidence for a persuasive speech or observing nonverbal behavior of an interviewer, has the potential to strengthen your confidence because it forces you to practice what you have learned. We hope this text will help you to enhance your ability to interpret, adjust, and respond to others in a variety of communication situations with people who are just like you and, more importantly, with people who are different from you.

SUMMARY

Communication is the interdependent process of sending, receiving, and understanding messages. Although it is an ongoing, dynamic process that changes from one communication setting to the next, there are certain components that are always present: people, a message, encoding, decoding, the channel, feedback, the context, and noise.

Communication functions in several ways. It can create our sense of self, help us to form relationships and communities, be used to persuade, and convey and create information.

Communication can take place when we interact with one other person, when we interact with a small group, and when we speak to an audience. In all these situations, intrapersonal communication (communication with ourselves) can be expected. Interpersonal communication is the informal exchange that occurs between two or more people; the interaction between two people is called dyadic communication, whereas an interaction involving three to eight people is called small-group communication. A final