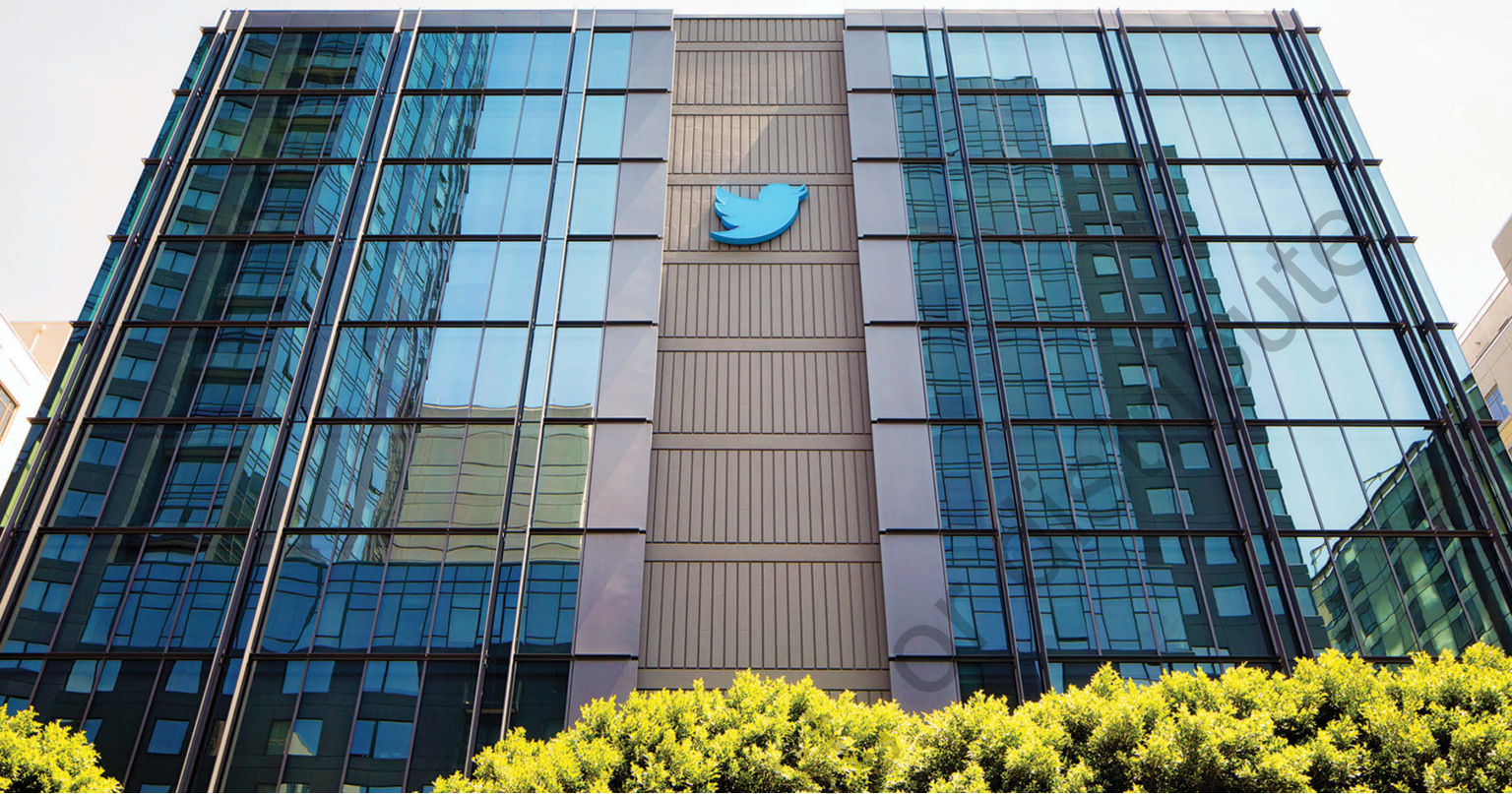


BEGINNING COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

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BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

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CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- 1.1 Identify key areas of human communication within business and professional contexts
- 1.2 Explain the components of the communication model
- 1.3 Identify the types and causes of communication apprehension
- 1.4 Discuss communication and professional excellence from an ethical perspective
- 1.5 Identify the four KEYS to communication in the workplace

Communication has increasingly become a cornerstone of professional excellence in the workplace. As an employer, Twitter embodies both communication and **professional excellence**; its entire platform relies on the drive for communication while requiring a level of professionalism to make the company profitable. Below we take a look at how Twitter incorporates these two ideals:

- *What it does:* Twitter is a global online information network that allows users to share content and conversations in real time. The company has more than 217 million monthly active users who create approximately 500 million tweets every day (Aslam, 2022). This amount of traffic requires an effective and motivated team of employees to manage.
- *Challenges:* An anonymous survey conducted by Great Rated! indicated that 87% of employees reported that the company often or almost always provided training, fair promotions, and personally challenging work; and 88% of employees felt that Twitter offered more than just a job, but also the opportunity to develop a worldwide forum of communication that creates special meaning.
- *Atmosphere:* The majority of Twitter employees report enjoying their colleagues and find the workplace to be cooperative and fun. Professional excellence requires employees to work fluidly with one another, thus minimizing miscommunication and conflict.
- *Rewards:* 85% of employees reported that Twitter supports their work–life balance and compensates them fairly. Feeling essential to company success is a great motivator to encourage employees to strive for professional excellence.

Reading about employee feedback concerning Twitter may have you motivated to find a career devoted to such positive professional excellence. However, successfully applying to and being accepted at such an organization is no easy feat. You may ask yourself, “Will I be able to get an interview? Will I be considered for a promotion at work? Will I fit in at my new job? What’s the best way to run a meeting? What are the qualities of a professional presentation? How should I respond to negative coworkers?” The preceding questions are commonly asked by people entering the workplace for the first time, as well as by people changing job titles, duties, or careers. It seems that regardless of the position or the industry in which you desire to work, there is one thing that will make or break the experience: communication. So welcome to the world of

business and professional communication. As you study business and professional communication over the course of this semester, we encourage you, regardless of your major, to take these principles and objectives to heart. After all, communication is the key to professional excellence, and professional excellence is the key to success.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL CONTEXTS

As you begin your study, it's important to define what communication means. Communication has been defined in many ways, but here's the definition we prefer: **Human communication** is the process of understanding our experiences and the experiences of others through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages (Edwards et al., 2019; Ivy & Wahl, 2019; Regenbogen et al., 2012). People come to understand that communication in everyday experiences is the essential process and skill that helps them make sense of things in both personal and professional contexts.

Even if you have some reservations about your communication skills, you probably consider yourself to be a good communicator and good listener. Most people do. After all, it's difficult to admit being bad at something you do all day, every day, for your entire life. Because communication is so much a part of our everyday lives, we think of communication as a simple process. Communicating comes so naturally to us that we rarely feel the need to give communication a second thought. When was the last time you really stopped and examined your communication skills? Do you stop and examine your communication regularly? Most people don't.

In some cases, people who fail to reflect on their communication skills trudge through life thinking they are great communicators when they are, in actuality, dreadful communicators. They exemplify a behavior called **communication bravado**—perceiving their communication as effective, while those around them perceive it as ineffective (Quintanilla & Mallard, 2008). Ineffective communicators view communication as simply talking—but truly effective communicators know it is far more complicated than that.

Do you take your communication skills for granted? Are you suffering from communication bravado? Let us assure you that you do indeed have some weaknesses in your communication and listening, simply because everyone does. However, understanding why communication is important and how the communication process works is the first step in overcoming those weaknesses and starting on the road to professional excellence (see Table 1.1).

In addition, there are several important ways in which the key areas of human communication as a whole influence and are essential for effective communication in the workplace.

Role-Taking

The critical functions of human communication (sending and receiving messages, offering feedback, identifying the “role” of different communicators) must also be applied to the context of business communication. For example, car salespeople must basically give sales “presentations” to any potential buyers who visit their car lot. Much of their success is determined by how well they can tailor their message depending on the individual needs of many different customers. If customers give verbal or nonverbal cues expressing concern about the fuel efficiency of their prospective vehicle, the salesperson must modify the message to emphasize each car's gas mileage as a major selling point. This dynamic aspect of role-taking and feedback keeps the transaction flowing.

Previous Communication Experiences

The way people respond initially to new business transactions depends greatly on their previous communication experiences in similar situations. Using the previous example, have you experienced buying a new vehicle or making another major purchase (house, major appliance, business)? Depending on whether that experience was positive or negative, it helps form the basis for how you communicate in similar transactions in the future. Therefore, from a business standpoint, your initial communication impression is of critical importance.

Communication Channels

Depending on your physical location, your communication approach can alter significantly (Ivy & Wahl, 2019). For example, your communication with a classmate will likely be much more informal than your communication with a professor. Similarly, the channel of communication can also affect communication. Many people feel comfortable taking a more aggressive or assertive tone when using email than when engaging in face-to-face communication.

TABLE 1.1 ■ Action Items Communication Excellence in the Workplace

Skill	Strategy	Application
Sales	Allow online shopping for customers.	Retail outlet Target allows customers to order in-store items from home for added convenience. More and more retailers are also offering curbside pickup options for customers who order items online.
Customer service	Use social media to reach out directly to consumers.	Electronics retailer Best Buy responds directly to customer concerns and complaints via its Facebook and Twitter pages.
Public relations	Use nontraditional media platforms to reach the target audience.	After a TikTok creator jokingly made low-quality redesigns of major company logos, various companies—such as Nascar, Tinder, and Tampax—changed their TikTok profile photos to the creator's redesigns (Press-Reynolds, 2021).

Cultural Influences

The way we communicate, with whom we communicate, and what we communicate are almost always influenced by culture (Wahl & Simmons, 2018). Culture is an ongoing social institution that has its own set of behavioral rules. For our discussion, *organizational culture* influences how we (as members of a business or professional organization) frame our communication with others both within and outside that organization. For example, the communication that takes place in a board meeting of lawyers will feature a different set of decorum, rules, and *norms* when compared with a brainstorming session among creative writers for a small company. To be a competent communicator in your organization, you must be dynamic in adhering to the rules and norms of different communication situations.

Communication Relationships

The perceived social hierarchy between communicators, whether they be strangers or intimates, significantly influences the nature of the communication interaction. The way you communicate with a customer would differ from the way you communicate with a coworker, which would also differ from how you communicate with your supervisor. Organizational structures require that you be fluid in switching your communication strategies depending on your relationship with the other communicator(s). This includes not only your initial communication, but also the type of feedback you give and the amount of appropriate self-disclosure the sender and receiver provide one another.

Regardless of your major or the career path you eventually follow, effective communication will be essential to your success in the workplace (Gray, 2010). For instance, effective communication has been shown to affect employee engagement and workplace relationships (Karanges et al., 2015). Employers understand the value and importance of communication in their employees; in Monster's (2021) *The Future of Work* report, they found teamwork and collaboration to be the second-most important skill employers look for in potential employees. Further support for the importance of communication in your professional careers comes from business and industry focus groups. You'll notice that all the competencies listed in the "Tools for Professional Excellence" box are connected to your study of business and professional communication in this course.

STEP BACK AND REFLECT ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout this text, you will be given opportunities to step back and reflect on other people's communication interactions. But in this first exercise, we would like you to step back and reflect on your own communication. Read the questions below. When it comes to both your written and your verbal communication, can you always answer yes to these questions? Can you think of examples for which you could not answer yes?

Lying: Are you telling the truth?

Secrets: Are you respecting the boundary placed around information by avoiding disclosure to others?

Integrity: Are you discerning right from wrong and explaining your reasoning for your decision? In other words, are you vocal about the ethics driving your decision (e.g., care and love, financial, respect for individual rights, equal for all)?

Aggressive communication: Are you communicating with others without aggression and abuse of power? Are you communicating with others in a dignified and respectful manner? Are you communicating with mutual respect and open dialogue?

Plagiarism (cheating): Are you communicating information that is authentic and not plagiarized? Is the source of information being credited appropriately?

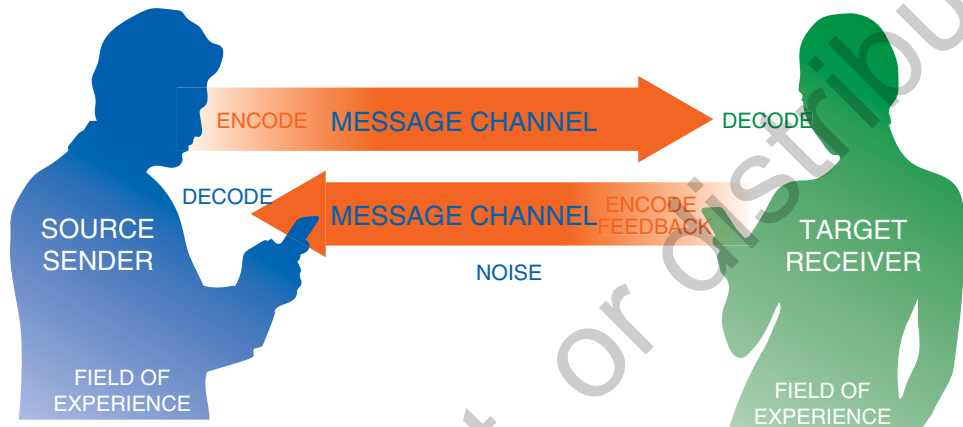
Step Back and Reflect

1. Have you ever taken part in any of these communication behaviors?
2. If so, did you consider them unethical? Why or why not?
3. Did you consider them unprofessional? Why or why not?

COMMUNICATION: A COMPLEX PROCESS

Communication is a complex process that consists of a number of elements, all of which are in play every time you communicate (see Figure 1.1). Those who demonstrate professional excellence consider these elements every time they communicate. By the end of this course, so will you. Let's examine each of these elements in more detail.

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Interaction Model of Communication



Sender and Receiver

We stated earlier that, speaking practically, communication involves sending and receiving messages. So it should be no surprise that you take on the roles of sender and receiver when you communicate. When you are acting as the sender, you **encode** your messages with verbal and nonverbal cues to help others understand what you mean. When the receivers of your messages respond or **decode** your message, you find out if your message was successfully transferred. In one sense, this exchange of message and response is a cocreation of meaning, in that both parties play a role in cocreating a meaningful exchange. Although the person initiating the exchange (the **sender**) can't control how the listener (or **receiver**) interprets the message, the goal is for the listener to understand the meaning of the message as the sender intended it.

The respective roles of sender and receiver in communication seem fairly clear-cut, but in truth, communication is experienced in a more holistic manner—not as senders and receivers but as communicators. Consider an example: You run into a friend, Pat, while walking to class. Pat says, “Hey, how’s it going?” You return the greeting and begin to tell Pat about your plans for the weekend (you are attending a cousin’s wedding). At some point during the story you are telling (how your cousin met her fiancé), you notice Pat checking their wristwatch. You cut off your story and say goodbye, and each of you walks to class. In one view of this example, you and Pat switch off as senders and receivers: Pat sends you a greeting, which you receive; you send Pat an explanation of your weekend plans and a story, which Pat receives; then Pat sends you a nonverbal cue that time is short, which you receive by ending the encounter. In another view of this example, you and Pat are both communicators, as you simultaneously send and receive messages (see Table 1.2).

TABLE 1.2 ■ **Tools for Professional Excellence** Skills You Need for Your Career

When thinking about your future career path, consider these eight behavioral skills often needed in the workplace:

Type of skill	What that skill looks like in the workplace
Technical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining technical skills • Maintaining these technical skills • Developing these technical skills relevant to your work
Critical thinking skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic thinking • Analytical skills • Quantitative analysis • Problem-solving skills
Persuasive communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking • Listening • Writing • Fluency in digital communications • Presenting • Personal branding • Body language (i.e., nonverbal communication) • Emotional intelligence
Personal organization skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management • Prioritization and organization • Multitasking
Manageability skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking direction • Listening • Implementation
Teamwork skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working for the good of the team to support team goals
Leadership skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading by example • Being a power for good • Working toward desirable outcomes
Creativity skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the above skills are developed and practiced, creativity is likely to occur and come together into a successful action plan

Source: Yate, M. (2020, September 22). 8 behavioral skills for increased job security. *Society of Human Resources Management*. Retrieved from <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/career-advice/pages/8-behavioral-skills-for-increased-job-security.aspx>

Message and Feedback

Implicit in the preceding discussion of senders and receivers is that a **message** is communicated. One principle from the field of communication suggests that you cannot *not* communicate.

To say that you cannot *not* communicate is *not* to say that everything is communication. Rather, it means that messages have both a verbal and a nonverbal component. In the previous example, Pat did not say anything verbally, but he did send a message nonverbally when he checked his watch. What was his message? That is not clear. He may have been giving a nonverbal cue that your wedding story was too long. He may have had an appointment and needed to be on his way. Only Pat knows for sure. The point is, regardless of whether or not Pat intended to provide a message, he did, and you responded in accordance with the meaning you took from that message.

Also included in the communication model is **feedback**. In the model, you will see that feedback is sent from the receiver to the sender. However, since the distinction between sender and receiver is in many ways arbitrary, feedback is the same as the message. The notion of feedback reminds us, as communicators, to look for cues from the other person or persons with whom we are communicating.



With instant messaging tools such as Slack and Microsoft Teams increasingly becoming the norm in workplaces, feedback often takes the nonverbal form of a thumbs up or an emoji reaction.

iStockphoto/Umnat Seebuaphan

Channel

The **channel** is simply the method by which you send your message. With all the technology available today, deciding which channel to use can be a daunting task. When you advance in your career and move into a leadership position, you'll have to evaluate the merits of various communication channels daily. Given the message, should you meet with members of your team one on one or call a meeting? Is it better to send an instant message or an email? Should you call, or should you text? Each communication channel brings with it a variety of strengths and weaknesses that will be discussed in a later chapter.

Context

Always and everywhere, communication is contextual. **Context** refers to the location, time, and occasion where communication occurs. Developing **professional excellence** means beginning to assess your communication context and use that information when developing your message. For instance, consider the context of the business and professional communication course. Virtually everyone in the course is there because they have to be. As a result, if you give a speech in this course, your audience may not be interested in or knowledgeable about the topic you select; you might need to educate them and take conscious steps to capture their interest. However, if you are giving a speech to a group of employees about their cost-of-living and merit raises, they will be hanging on your every word.

Noise

Noise is part of the communication context. **Noise** can be either external or internal. **External noise** includes distractions such as audible talking during a meeting, ruffling of papers, or a Zoom call taking place in the next cubicle. For our purposes, the definition of external noise is extended to include any external factor that could interfere with a communicator's ability to focus on the message. In a meeting, external noise might also include a team member sending text messages with the sound on or whispering while your boss is talking.

Internal noise encompasses any internal condition or state that interferes with the communicator's ability to focus on the message. If your meeting starts at 11:00 a.m., your team members may be looking forward to lunch; if you hold an emergency meeting at 6:00 a.m., your team may be tired. Being hungry or tired creates internal noise. Developing professional excellence includes learning to consider things such as context and noise when making decisions about your communication interactions. Remember that both internal and external noise are doing more than just preventing you from focusing on the message. That is, both types of noise can interfere with your understanding of the message. You can be focused on a message and still not understand.

YOUR COMMUNICATION INTERACTION

ANNOYING COWORKERS

As you read the passage below, consider what would be a more effective communication strategy in this situation.

Nina just began a new job at a software company. She loves her new workplace, except for a few obnoxious coworkers. These particular coworkers continually leave food and trash lying around, play loud music in the middle of the workday, and tell inappropriate jokes in front of the other employees, all to the point that Nina's ability to get work done has deteriorated. Nina has tried asking the employees to quiet down, to no avail, and is now considering bringing her concerns to the head of the company, who is rarely in the office. Nina decides to send the head of the company an email in which she lets out all of her frustration.

Questions to Consider

1. Was sending an email the best way for Nina to express her feelings about her coworkers, or could she have used a different communication channel?
2. What are some things Nina should keep in mind the next time she communicates in the workplace using email?
3. What are some situations where email is the ideal form of communication?

COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

Effective communication skills are essential if you want to excel in leadership. Put simply, to move up the ladder of success, you must develop your communication skills. Unfortunately, communication apprehension is a very real problem that stops many talented individuals from achieving professional excellence. What is communication apprehension?

Types of Communication Apprehension

According to James C. McCroskey (1982), one of the leading researchers in the communication discipline, **communication apprehension** is “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (p. 137). You can understand your own communication apprehension by thinking about your communication in particular situations. What types of communication situations increase your apprehension? According to McCroskey (1984), there are at least four types of communication apprehension:

- **Trait communication apprehension** means that one possesses a “shy trait.” In general, shy people tend not to raise their hands in class a lot, avoid certain social situations, and feel extremely anxious about giving a professional presentation.
- **Context-based communication apprehension** describes a fear of communicating in certain contexts. A fear of public speaking is a great example of context communication apprehension. For example, a student may not be nervous about meeting new people or participating in small groups, but presenting a speech in front of the class promotes a high degree of apprehension.
- **Audience-based communication apprehension** explains a person’s fear of speaking to certain people or groups. For example, a person may feel comfortable speaking in front of friends in their social circle, but speaking in front of colleagues at work makes them extremely nervous.
- **Situational communication apprehension** refers to apprehension to communicate in specific sets of circumstances; everyone at some point in their lives is going to feel apprehensive about communicating something. Think of a person you might want to impress, such as a boss or an interviewer. In general, you are an outgoing person and don’t mind presenting in front of people, but someone you want to impress may promote an uneasy or anxious feeling.

Causes of Communication Apprehension

Now that we’ve reviewed the different types of communication apprehension, let’s take a look at some of the causes. Communication scholar Michael Beatty (1988) lists eight causes of communication apprehension. Review the list that follows to see if any of the causes resonate with you personally:

- *Novelty*: If the type of communication situation, such as giving a speech or running a meeting, is not something you do every day, it can create apprehension until you become familiar with this task or situation.
- *Formality*: Preparing and organizing something to be in the spotlight can promote the feeling of formality that makes you nervous or apprehensive.

- *Subordinate status*: If someone in charge of you, such as a manager at work, is evaluating your presentation, their higher status and evaluation can cause anxiety.
- *Peer evaluation*: “How are my coworkers going to respond to me?” This question addresses concerns you may have about your peers evaluating you. These concerns can in turn cause apprehension.
- *Dissimilarity*: Sometimes you may feel different from the audience. Having nothing in common with the audience causes anxiety.
- *Conspicuousness*: Feeling as though you are in the spotlight and all eyes are on you can certainly cause anxiety.
- *Lack of attention*: When you feel as though a listener or the audience is bored and uninterested in your message or presentation, you may begin to feel apprehension.
- *Prior history*: Many people have had a bad experience during a communication interaction, such as an interview, a presentation, or a meeting. This negative experience can create anxiety the next time you find yourself in a similar situation.

As you can see, there are many different types and causes of communication apprehension. Identifying the types and causes of your communication apprehension is important, but not nearly as important as learning the skills that will reduce those fears.

Know Yourself

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

As you read the index below and answer the questions, think about how this knowledge can help you be a better communicator.

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)

The PRCA-24 is the instrument most widely used to measure communication apprehension. The measure permits one to obtain subscores on the contexts of public speaking, dyadic interaction, small groups, and large groups.

This instrument is composed of 24 statements concerning feelings about communicating with others. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you *strongly disagree* = 1; *disagree* = 2; *are neutral* = 3; *agree* = 4; or *strongly agree* = 5.

- ___ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
- ___ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
- ___ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
- ___ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
- ___ 5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
- ___ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
- ___ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
- ___ 8. Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.
- ___ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called on to express an opinion at a meeting.
- ___ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
- ___ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.

- _____ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
- _____ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
- _____ 14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
- _____ 15. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
- _____ 16. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
- _____ 17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
- _____ 18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
- _____ 19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
- _____ 20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
- _____ 21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
- _____ 22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
- _____ 23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
- _____ 24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

Scoring

- Group discussion: 18 – (scores for Items 2, 4, and 6) + (scores for Items 1, 3, and 5)
 Meetings: 18 – (scores for Items 8, 9, and 12) + (scores for Items 7, 10, and 11)
 Interpersonal: 18 – (scores for Items 14, 16, and 17) + (scores for Items 13, 15, and 18)
 Public speaking: 18 – (scores for Items 19, 21, and 23) + (scores for Items 20, 22, and 24)

Group discussion score: _____

Meetings score: _____

Interpersonal score: _____

Public speaking score: _____

To obtain your total score for the PRCA, simply add your subscores together: _____

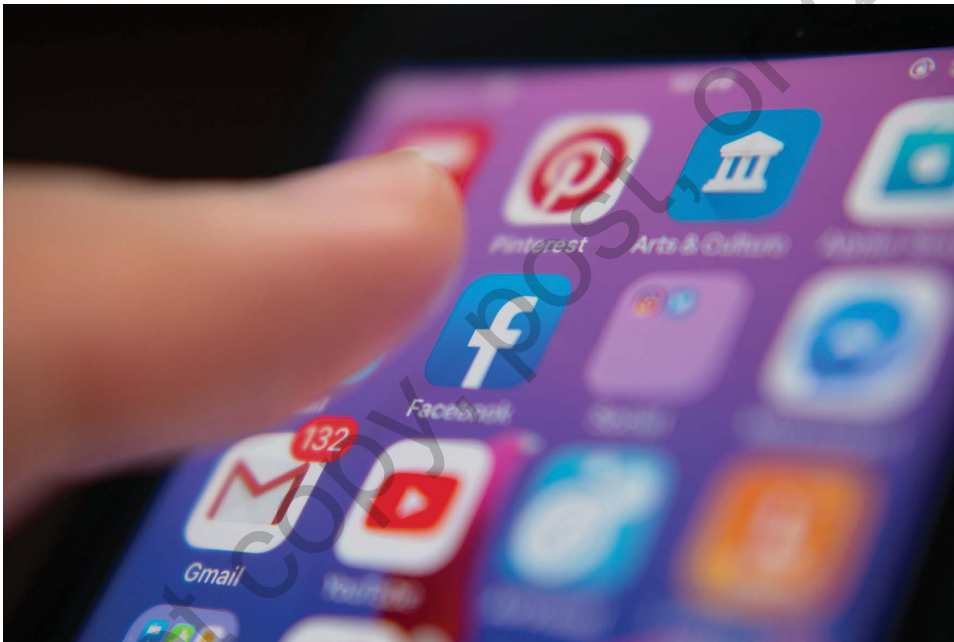
Scores can range from 24 to 120. Scores below 51 represent people who have very low communication apprehension. Scores between 51 and 80 represent people with average communication apprehension. Scores above 80 represent people who have high levels of trait communication apprehension.

COMMUNICATION ETHICS

With professional excellence as our goal, we believe that ethical behavior must serve as a foundation for people to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. Central to professional excellence is communication ethics. **Ethics** is the general term for the discussion, determination, and deliberation processes that attempt to decide what is right or wrong, what others should or should not do, and what is considered appropriate in our individual, communal, and professional lives (By et al., 2012; Japp et al., 2005; Johannesen et al., 2008). What considerations or factors help shape our ethical decisions as professionals? **Ethical considerations** are the variety of factors important for us to consider in any scenario in which we're making a decision, conducting an evaluation, or making a selection (Bok, 1989, 1999; Carter, 1996; Japp et al., 2005; Mathenge, 2011; Tannen, 1998). Ethical considerations vary from person to person, and it is not always as simple as the black-and-white world of right and wrong. For example, you may experience **ethical dilemmas**, situations that do not seem to present clear choices between right and wrong or good and evil.

If you are asked to do something illegal, then it may be easy to make a decision. “No, I will not do something illegal.” But what if it is not illegal? What if everyone else does it? What if it is just bending the rules a little bit? The questions in the “Step Back and Reflect” box are ones that ethical communicators must always consider.

Many ethical considerations are connected to our values and virtues. **Values** are moral principles or rules that determine ethical behaviors. Values are often articulated in *should* or *should-not* statements. Sometimes values are presented as statements of what a group believes or as lists of rules people intend to honor. Many readers of this text will take jobs in industries that ask all employees to support **organizational values**, specific principles or guidelines such as safety, teamwork, integrity, or ownership that are typically outlined in support of any given organizational mission or goal. For example, some health care systems and private education institutions ask employees to support certain religious values. Regardless of industry, organizational values address both the experience of the people working for the company and the experience of customers with service and product quality. To minimize ethical dilemmas in your professional career, seek employment with organizations that share your values.



In 2021, Facebook employee Frances Haugen shared internal documents with Congress and with the press that she claimed show how Facebook made unethical decisions to incentivize profits over its users' well-being. Her actions, while risky, received bipartisan support from members of Congress and renewed calls for social media regulation (Zakrzewski & Albergotti, 2021).

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Once you've been promoted or elected into a particular position of leadership, you may think, “That's it—job over; I've arrived.” We emphasize that leadership is a skill, one that needs to be developed and maintained throughout life. Think about the qualities of excellent leaders. Ethics should be among those qualities. And like all other leadership skills, your ethics must be developed and continually maintained. Although not every reader of this book is currently in a leadership position, has the goal of becoming a CEO, or even wants to become a leader, the KEYS process with communication ethics at the foundation drives excellence in professional situations.

KEYS FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

We opened this chapter with attention to how Twitter embodies communication and professional excellence by considering employees' feedback about their experiences at work. We defined human communication and provided a practical communication model. We defined professional excellence: being recognized for your skills as a communicator, serving as a role model to those around you, recognizing your strengths and developing your weaknesses, being audience centered, understanding the context, and possessing the ability to adapt and continually improve.

Next, we situated our topic of study within the workplace as a communication context and discussed communication apprehension as a common obstacle for professionals. We introduced the KEYS process as a way for professionals to develop their communication. *Know yourself* means actively assessing your skills as a communicator and then developing strategies to utilize your strengths and develop your weaknesses. *Evaluate the professional context* entails proactively addressing the needs of your audience and understanding the constraints of the communication situation, as well as developing your skills for communicating with a variety of audiences and situations. *Your communication interaction* requires you to monitor your own verbal and nonverbal cues, in addition to the cues from the audience within each communication interaction. *Step back and reflect* encourages you to examine the effectiveness of verbal and nonverbal messages you convey to others and the overall success of various communication interactions and then take what you've learned and start the process again, developing the ability to adapt and improve continually.

ETHICAL CONNECTION

TOM'S LACK OF COMMUNICATION

As you read this passage and answer the questions, consider how the way you communicate has an ethical dimension.

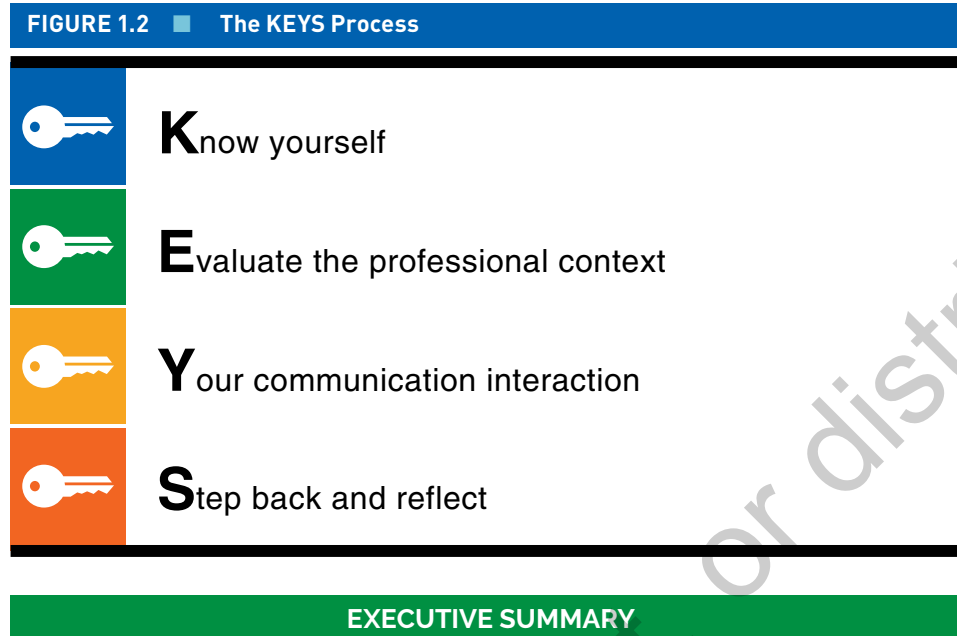
Tom is a recent college graduate who landed a job as an information technology manager at a computer manufacturing plant. Tom never really enjoyed talking to new people, so he made sure his degree involved working with computers so he could minimize his interactions with coworkers. However, once he began his new job, it became obvious that a great deal of his work involved interacting with other people. Because Tom disliked communicating with his coworkers, they often perceived Tom as grumpy and unfriendly. Management made several attempts to coach Tom on his communication skills, but he refused to make any effort to work well with others. His lack of communication led to technical problems going unaddressed and sabotaged the company's team-based working environment. Tom was eventually fired from his position and attempted to find another job that did not require him to interact with other employees.

Questions to Consider

1. What is the ethical issue with Tom refusing to communicate with his coworkers?
2. Is Tom wrong to assume that there are many jobs out there that do not require communication skills?
3. What could Tom have done differently to save his job at that particular company?
4. How could Tom use the KEYS process to train himself to be a better communicator?

This introductory chapter has provided you with an understanding of some of the basic terminology and the importance of communication excellence. In the second chapter, we explore

some of the most important verbal and nonverbal skills needed to enter the workplace or, put simply, how to put the KEYS process into action (see Figure 1.2).



Now that you have finished reading this chapter, you should be able to

Discuss the importance of human communication in business and professional contexts:

- Role-taking and feedback are critical to the success of business and professional communication.
- Communicators are affected by their previous communication experiences.
- Physical surroundings and communication channels influence communicators.
- Communication is altered by cultural influences.
- Communicators are influenced by the perceived relationship between them.

Explain the components of the communication model:

- The person initiating the exchange is the sender, while the person listening to the exchange is the receiver.
- Generally speaking, the process of sending and receiving communication is that a message is communicated.
- When you are acting as the sender, you encode your messages with verbal and nonverbal cues to help others understand what you mean.
- When the receiver of your message responds or decodes your message, you find out if your message was successfully transferred.
- Feedback is communication sent from the receiver back to the sender.
- The channel is the method by which you send your message (e.g., voice, phone, email).

- Context refers to the location, time, and occasion where communication occurs.
- Noise can be either external or internal. External noise includes distractions such as audible talking during a meeting, ruffling of papers, or a cell phone going off in the next cubicle. Internal noise encompasses any internal condition or state that interferes with the communicator's ability to focus on the message.

Identify the types and causes of communication apprehension:

- Trait communication apprehension means that one possesses a “shy trait.” In general, shy people tend not to raise their hands in class a lot, avoid certain social situations, and feel extremely anxious about giving a professional presentation.
- Context-based communication apprehension describes a fear of communicating in certain contexts.
- Audience-based communication apprehension explains a person's fear of speaking to certain people or groups.
- Situational communication apprehension refers to apprehension to communicate in specific sets of circumstances; everyone at some point in their lives is going to feel apprehensive about communicating something.
- Causes of communication apprehension include novelty (when the type of communication is not something you do every day), formality (when a communication is being prepared that will be in the spotlight), peer evaluation (when concerns arise about how coworkers will respond), and prior history (when a prior bad experience in a communication interaction causes anxiety in similar situations), among others.

Discuss communication and professional excellence from an ethical perspective:

- *Ethics* is the general term for the discussion, determination, and deliberation processes that attempt to decide what is right or wrong, what others should or should not do, and what is considered appropriate in our individual, communal, and professional lives.
- Ethical considerations are the variety of factors important for us to consider in any scenario in which we're making a decision, conducting an evaluation, or making a selection.
- Ethical dilemmas are situations that do not seem to present clear choices between right and wrong or good and evil.

Identify the four KEYS to communication in the workplace:

- *Know yourself*: challenging people to assess their skills as communicators actively and then develop strategies to utilize their strengths and develop their weaknesses.
- *Evaluate the professional context*: teaching people to address the needs of their audience proactively and understand the constraints of the professional communication context, as well as developing their skills for communicating with a variety of audiences and contexts.
- *Your communication interaction*: asking people to monitor their own verbal and nonverbal cues in addition to the cues of the audience within each communication interaction.
- *Step back and reflect*: examining the effectiveness of verbal and nonverbal messages we convey to others and the overall success of various communication interactions and then taking what we've learned and starting the process again; developing the ability to adapt and improve continually.

EXPLORE

1. Visit any of the websites for major social media companies (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.). Under the “About Us” section, read the company mission statement and goals for the organization. Do you believe the company communicates professional excellence to its audience? Write a brief statement either agreeing or disagreeing with this question.
2. Break into small groups and create a bulleted list of what your team believes embodies professional excellence in communication. Compare your list with those of other groups in the class. Are there any practices that are universal across all groups?
3. Select any company or organization, and write a brief summary of its best communication practices. How can you apply these practices to your study of communication and to your professional career?

REVIEW

1. Define *human communication*.
2. Perceiving your communication as effective while those around you perceive it as ineffective is known as _____.
3. Identify the four steps of the KEYS process.
4. The _____ is the method by which you send your message.
5. _____ refers to the location, time, and occasion where communication occurs.
6. Define *communication apprehension*.
7. _____ is the general term for the discussion, determination, and deliberation processes that attempt to decide what is right or wrong, what others should or should not do, and what is considered appropriate in our individual, communal, and professional lives.
8. _____ are principles or guidelines that support an organizational mission or goal.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the contexts for business and professional excellence?
2. Why is it important to study communication?
3. Why must a speaker consider all the elements in the communication model for communication with excellence?
4. Discuss the KEYS process introduced in this chapter. What are the four KEYS features?
5. Work through a personal example—something you either encountered in the past or are presently experiencing—to help you make sense of the KEYS process. Does it help you get more familiar with the situation? Are there changes you need to make considering this particular situation?

TERMS TO REMEMBER

audience-based communication apprehension (p. 12)	feedback (p. 10)
channel (p. 10)	human communication (p. 5)
communication apprehension (p. 12)	internal noise (p. 11)
communication bravado (p. 5)	message (p. 10)
context (p. 11)	noise (p. 11)
context-based communication apprehension (p. 12)	organizational values (p. 15)
decode (p. 8)	professional excellence (p. 4)
encode (p. 8)	receiver (p. 8)
ethical considerations (p. 14)	sender (p. 8)
ethical dilemmas (p. 15)	situational communication apprehension (p. 12)
ethics (p. 14)	trait communication apprehension (p. 12)
external noise (p. 11)	values (p. 15)

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