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INTRODUCING COMMUNICATION

Reagan and Peri work together in an organization that manufactures and distributes paper products. Peri says “hi” to Reagan on her way down the hall and receives no response. Later that day, they are at a departmental meeting. Peri does not sit near or talk to Reagan and does not make eye contact through the whole meeting. Usually, the two of them are rolling their eyes at each other when the manager makes a comment they do not agree with or writing notes back and forth to stay awake. Even though she does not know what it is, Reagan concludes that something is bothering Peri. After receiving an email about a new policy regarding replacing trash cans with recycling bins to encourage employees to minimize their waste, Peri and Reagan are in the break room, refilling their caffeine containers. Peri says with a roll of her eyes, “Did you see the new tiny trash policy?” Reagan responds by rubbing her fingers together to indicate that “it is all about the money” and says, “If only I thought they cared about the environment.”

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain the communication models.
2. Compare and contrast face-to-face and technology-mediated communication.
3. Define the three components of communication.

DEFINING COMMUNICATION

At this point in your life, you may be wondering why you are taking a communication course. If the authors had a quarter for each person we have heard say “I have been doing this my whole life—why do I need a communication class,” we would both be traveling the world. Even though we have been doing it forever, we do not always do it well. Take a look at the previous example of Peri and Reagan. The issues at the department meeting could have been avoided if Peri had realized Reagan was wearing AirPods under her long hair and did not hear Peri’s greeting earlier in the day—Reagan was not ignoring Peri!

Communication is the process of exchanging meaning between two or more people. While we can certainly debate about whether animals communicate, communicating with animals is not likely to happen in your business and professional lives. If you come back and take a class like this in 5 or 10 years, we will probably be modifying this definition to address human–computer communication and artificial

Pro Tip 1.1

Pay attention to the boldface terms because they are the key terms. They are only defined the first time they are used in the book.

intelligence (AI). In the opening scenario, communication does not occur the first time Peri and Reagan meet in the hallway because there is no exchange of meaning. Peri draws a conclusion without any active participation from Reagan. During the meeting when Reagan concludes something is bothering Peri, communication has also not occurred. It is not until the third interaction when the two people have a conversation about the new policy that meaning is exchanged through both what is said and the way in which it is said.

Let's take a quick trip back to ancient times where *communicare* eventually became what we call communication today. The Latin word means to share or make common and has sometimes been translated as “gifts and services” (two things we share with others). The ancient roots indicate that communication is voluntary and a conscious decision. The process of sharing requires at least two people—the one who shares and the one with whom something is shared. These two perspectives lead to what came to be known as sender and receiver models of communication.

A **sender-oriented model of communication** focuses on the person who is creating and conveying the message. We often think about public speaking as a sender-oriented activity because the speaker is responsible for crafting a message that is delivered to an audience of receivers who play a much smaller role in the process as listeners. Sometimes this has been referred to as the **hypodermic needle model of communication**, where a sender shoots the receiver with a needle in much the same way you would go to the doctor to get a vaccine or flu shot (Lasswell, 1922/1938).



A hypodermic needle was how media attempted to influence people by “shooting” them with the messages they wanted the public to think about.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/syringe-healthcare-needle-medicine-417786/>

If focusing on the sender is not working, then maybe we should focus on the receiver. A **receiver-oriented model of communication** shifts the attention away from the sender and focuses on the audience. Effectiveness is determined based upon whether the audience interprets the message in the way the sender intended—everyone involved has to attach the same meaning to the message for communication to occur. How often do we hear people say “That’s not what I meant . . .”?

One of the biggest problems with both models of communication is they assume all people receive the same message, perceiving the words in the same way. What we know about people is that they are different and process messages differently because of their backgrounds and experiences. Each student in your class will be exposed to the same message from the instructor, but if we ask each of you to summarize that message at the end of class, we will get many different answers. This is part of what makes living in our country and interacting with different people fun and interesting.

So how do we fix these problems? Along comes a **transactional model of communication**, where everyone involved is sending and receiving messages (Barnlund, 1970), making everyone responsible for effectiveness. As you will see when we talk about listening, perception, intercultural communication, working in groups, being a leader or follower, engaging in healthy conflict, and even speaking in public, everyone involved has an active role to play.

The Role of Context

All communication occurs within a given context. **Contexts** are the environments where communication occurs and include who is present, the relationship you have with them, the physical surroundings, and your background experiences. Let's talk a little more about these because they are an important component of communication, starting with the people involved. When you meet up with people from high school or where you grew up, do you talk to them the same way you converse with your current classmates? Do you talk to those who reared you the same way you talk to your friends at school? The answer is probably "no" because your relationship with them is different.

Second, the physical surroundings matter when we are interacting with others. Typically, interactions at a medical facility or house of worship tend to be formal in nature. A medical facility tends to be very bland, with subdued neutral colors on the walls, an examination area, and a place to sit. The surroundings are designed to be calming so that the patient does not become distracted and miss important information. Similarly, workplace managers are often encouraged to limit the number of personal pictures and potentially distracting items (e.g., a small putting green or mini basketball net) in their offices to keep people focused on the work aspects of their jobs. What changes about your communication when you are in a physical classroom versus an online environment: Do you dress the same, use the same language, or pay the same amount of attention? Do you think you would give a presentation in the same way in clothes you would wear to a celebration, such as a wedding, as you would in your pajamas? Do you think you would communicate in the same way lying across your bed as standing in front of a classroom or sitting in a circle with a group of friends? The answers are probably "no" because physical spaces matter.



Environment: How we dress and where we interact matter in terms of how we communicate with others.

<https://pixabay.com/illustrations/company-personal-silhouettes-975967/>

iStock.com/AndreyPopov

Finally, one of the greatest influences on our communication is our background. Each of us has a set of experiences that influences how we create and interpret messages. Our attitudes, beliefs, values, and ways of treating others have been shaped by our interactions throughout life. Sometimes we accept a culture's social norms, and other times we choose not to adopt those norms. If you have ever been attacked, ridiculed, or put down because of an aspect of your identity, that is likely to impact how you interact with others. If you have always lived as a member of the majority or dominant group, you may notice the influence of your identity less when interacting with others.

Pro Tip 1.2

Graphic organizers are used to help you see the relationships among concepts.

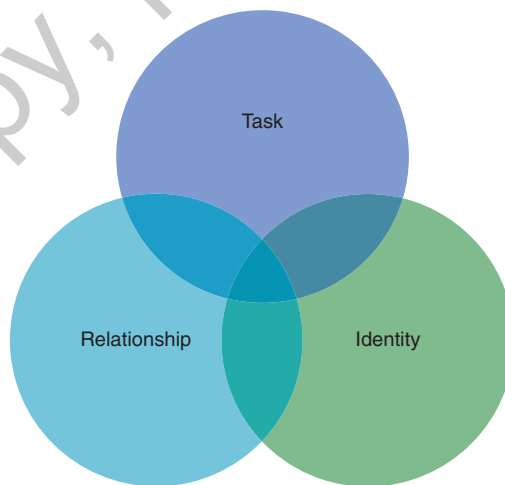
Communication Goals

We said that communication is voluntary—we choose to do it. We also engage in communication to help us fulfill a combination of goals (Clark & Delia, 1979). According to Clark and Delia, we interact with others to meet instrumental, relational, and/or identity goals (see Figure 1.1). **Instrumental goals** include messages designed to complete a particular task. For example, when your boss tells you to make sure that everything on the closing checklist has been completed, the message is designed primarily to meet instrumental goals of getting the work done.

If you have ever asked a parent or guardian for money to pay a bill or be able to buy something you want, you were primarily interested in the instrumental goal of getting your hands on some cash. Often, we see students involved in group projects focused only on instrumental communication goals, especially if they have procrastinated and put off most of the work until the night before the project is due.

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Communication Goals

When we interact with other people, we do so to meet some combination of task, relationship, and identity goals.



Because we are not robots, using communication exclusively to meet instrumental goals can have detrimental effects on our relationships. Humans are social beings—we like to interact with others. When we do this, we are meeting our **relational communication goals**, which are the ways we use messages to build, maintain, change, and end our connections to other people. On the first day of class, many instructors use an icebreaker to help students get to know each other. What we share about ourselves helps us build relationships with the instructor and other

students. When you apply or interview for a job, you use communication to build relationships with a potential supervisor, other employees, and possibly even upper management. Even though we do not talk about them as much, we also use communication to change the type of relationship we have with someone—becoming friends with our coworkers, becoming a caregiver for someone elderly, or deciding to be friends instead of romantically involved.

Lastly, we use communication to meet our **identity goals**—that is, we use messages to make sure that others see us in the way we want to be seen. Sometimes you will hear this referred to as impression management (Goffman, 1959, 1967), making sure that what we show to others is what we want them to see. During those first-day icebreakers, there may have been people who struggled with what to share because they were concerned about others judging them for what they said. On social media, you will see posts that essentially dare you to share messages by asking if you have the courage to admit to a particular aspect of identity and reveal it to others publicly. This is especially true for posts advocating a particular religious or political position. As social media sites have evolved, people's boundaries between what is public and private have narrowed. Whether you call it TMI (too much information) or oversharing, people are more willing to share or post messages electronically that they would never say face-to-face. All of this sharing can come back to haunt you when you are looking for a job, seeking a promotion, or making a case for a cause your organization should support. For example, social media accounts typically have an age restriction of 13. Would you want a potential employer looking at what you posted or shared during those teenage years when making a decision about whether to hire you? Just because you delete something from social media does not mean it cannot be accessed by people who know what they are doing.

MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

What would happen if there was no Wi-Fi or cellular access for a week? Okay, how about for 2 days? One day? A few hours? We have become so dependent upon technology connecting us to the world around us that some students cannot sit through an entire class period without needing to be connected. And it is not just students; employers are finding the same things happening in the workplace. Email, texting, searching the web, posting on and reading social media, or checking our homes on our smart devices have all become as habitual as getting up and brushing our teeth.

Many of you reading this book do not know a world where landline and rotary phones existed or a time when people ate at restaurants without being interrupted by a dinging phone. While some would argue that mediated communication can be traced back to hieroglyphics on the walls of caves, we are only going to talk about **technology-mediated communication (TMC)**. TMC is any interaction in which two or more people use two or more electronic devices to exchange meaning. Both requirements (devices and exchanging meaning) must be met for it to be considered TMC.

Just as there were issues in the face-to-face interactions that began this chapter, the same types of things can happen when we are using TMC. Have you ever sent a text that was not received? Assumed people were mad at you because they did not respond to a text in the “required or appropriate amount of time”? Wondered why the person who received the text did not follow your directions? In each case, meaning was not exchanged because the other person did not receive the message, assumed silence was a negative response, or believed everyone would interpret the message in the same way.

Pro Tip 1.3

These boxes contain specific advice or ways to apply the material covered in the chapter.

Social Presence Theory

For a long time, people believed that TMC was inferior to face-to-face interactions rather than seeing the two as different ways of accomplishing communication goals (Walther, 1995). Both face-to-face and TMC have benefits and limitations. Prior to a pandemic such as COVID-19, few salespeople would have ever thought of calling on customers using video chat; few faculty members would have ever thought about teaching in an online environment; and few people had ever had a doctor's appointment using videoconferencing software. Just because those had to occur when people were under stay-at-home orders does not mean they were the best way to accomplish people's communication goals. Almost 50 years ago, Short et al. (1976) introduced social presence theory to indicate people understand that different channels have different limitations and choose the best channel for accomplishing their communication goals.

Over time, **social presence** has evolved, and we now talk about it as the ability to create a level of closeness among the people involved in a communication interaction. People create a social presence in three areas (Garrison et al., 2000). **Affective messages** are used to share emotions and personal information beyond one's name and obvious characteristics, but not so deep that the information is typically reserved for close friends and family. **Cohesive messages** help everyone involved feel as if they are part of the group; they create a welcoming and inclusive environment. **Interactive messages** encourage people to participate in the conversation.

There are different tips and tricks people use to meet their relational and identity goals of being perceived as connected to another when using TMC (see Table 1.1; Christen & Violanti, 2015). For example, during a videoconference a manager may call people by their proper names to show they are being treated as individual people and not just a group of employees (cohesive). Similarly, an email may make reference to a previous conversation between the individuals (interactive). Finally, a text may make use of emoticons to convey emotion (affective). Each of these strategies can be perceived as bringing people closer together even though they are using technology to interact with each other.


Propinquity

Propinquity is a fancy word for a state of being close to someone or something. **Electronic propinquity** is the closeness someone feels when communicating over TMC (Korzenny, 1978). How then, you may be wondering, is electronic propinquity different from social presence? While social presence is the extent to which TMC feels like face-to-face communication, electronic propinquity is the extent to which TMC feels as consistent, reliable, and clear as face-to-face communication.

Think back to the last group project you did. How did you communicate with your group members? Did you use a group chat function like GroupMe? Did you also use your course management system (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, Canvas)? Did you email one another as well? Did you use a shared working file, such as a Google Doc? If you said yes to more than one of those channels, you probably had low electronic propinquity despite the fact that you were engaged in a lot of TMC.

If we use multiple channels when communicating with the same people (or person) for the same project, we create opportunities for confusion. Think again about your last group project. During this group project, were there times that you could not remember which platform a particular message or document was shared through? Did you lose time looking for

TABLE 1.1 ■ Social Presence Strategies

Type of Social Presence Cues	Strategy	Example
Affective	Sharing personal information	"Let's meet at the coffee house. I am <i>addicted</i> to chai tea latte."
	Sharing emotions	"Sorry to hear you did not get the new client. I know you worked really hard on the presentation."
	Using emojis to convey emotion	
	Sharing observations of the world around them	"It's a beautiful, sunny day here. I hope you're having similar weather."
Cohesive	Using first-person pronouns	"We are all in this together."
	Using first names	"Enam, I was persuaded by your argument."
	Engaging in small talk	"How are you doing?"
Interactive	Asking questions	"What do you think about these changes to the plan?"
	Building trust and showing respect	"I read your report and appreciate the level of detail. I have a few lingering questions that I would appreciate your assistance with."
	Referencing past conversations	"When we talked last time, you were still working on the budget."
	Inviting further communication	"Let me know if you have any questions!"

that work? Were there times in which someone jumped into a conversation in a confused or frustrated manner because they were communicating without having seen an exchange from another platform? Were there times that you were frustrated because you were waiting for someone to share information, only to find that they had shared it earlier somewhere you were not expecting?

To show electronic propinquity, one needs to pick a single mediated platform for engaging with people until communicating within that platform is mastered, meaning no confusion or frustration arises from the process of communicating through it (Goke & Kelly, 2019). Once you have worked with others to a point in which your communication and teamwork are as flawless as they would be if you were working together face-to-face every time you complete a new task, you may consider adding an additional platform.

COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION

Three central components of communication appear throughout this textbook. We introduce them here so you are familiar with them. These components include verbal and nonverbal messages, diversity and inclusion, and the virtual world of work. You will not find a separate chapter for each of these because they are critical aspects of almost all business and professional communication. You will also not always find a heading for each of them within a chapter because they are embedded within the examples and content. It is simply impossible to talk about any aspect of business communication without incorporating these facets of communication.

Verbal and Nonverbal Messages

Too often, people assume that verbal messages are spoken and nonverbal messages are not spoken, as if they are opposites. In reality, verbal messages can be seen or heard just as nonverbal messages can be seen or heard. So what then, really, is the difference between the two? **Verbal messages** use a language's shared symbols to exchange our thoughts and feelings with others. Sometimes those messages are spoken (e.g., a speech), sometimes those messages are read (e.g., a book or text message), and sometimes those messages are both seen and heard (e.g., a speech accompanied by sign language or a video/podcast with captioning so that those with visual or hearing impairments can also benefit from the message). **Nonverbal messages** are the cues to which we attach meaning during an interaction. Sometimes those cues are seen (e.g., the way we frown to show we are upset), and sometimes they are heard (e.g., the pace at which we talk). Because nonverbal messages may not have a shared meaning the way language does, they can often be misinterpreted and lead to miscommunication; they are also more difficult to fake than verbal messages, which is why many people pay closer attention to *how* something is said than to the words themselves. Have you ever tried to tell someone you love them with a frown on your face or smile when you are telling someone bad news?

Diversity and Inclusion

If you were taking a class such as this a generation ago, there would have been very little mention of diversity and inclusion. Things change and so does the content to which we expose students. **Diversity and inclusion** is a phrase currently used to indicate that there are differences between and among people that make a difference in how they communicate with each other, and it is socially just to make every effort possible to recognize those differences while simultaneously creating a communication environment in which everyone feels as if they belong. Whew—that was a very long definition. A quick shorthand might be something you heard growing up: Do to others as you would like to have them do to you. If you want to be treated with respect, then treat others with respect.

You are not going to learn everything there is to know about diversity and inclusion in one semester of one communication course. Instead, we have two goals: (1) to make sure you see and feel as if you are represented in this book, regardless of your background and identity; and (2) to illustrate the role those differences can play in our everyday business and professional communication. Because of this, you will often see diversity and inclusion in the examples we use. You will not always see a specific heading that screams diversity and inclusion because communicating with others is complex, and we see our job as getting you to think about all aspects of the people with whom you are interacting when deciding what your message will be. We have done our best to model diverse and inclusive language. Realize that no one is perfect, and you may find places in the book where you thought we could have represented diversity better or been more inclusive. Learn as much from those examples as you do from the ones we provide.

The Virtual World of Work

Prior to a 2020 health pandemic that closed many organizations and pushed people to use mediated channels for their business and professional communication, the virtual world of work was already on the rise. Organizations with locations around the world found it was less expensive and as effective to use videoconferencing for their meetings. When there is little or no difference between the virtual and face-to-face worlds, we talk about communication and use examples from either context. For example, if you are presenting a slide deck face-to-face or using videoconferencing software, the slide deck itself is the same, so we just talk about it as a visual aid. When there are distinct differences between the two contexts, we draw your attention to those. For example, there are differences between slide decks you are going to present to a specific audience and those you are going to post online; we highlight those differences for you in the visual aids chapter (Chapter 15).

Pro Tip 1.4

Insider Insights tell the stories of how people who have graduated in the last 10 years have found communication relevant to their work lives.

INSIDER INSIGHTS

S. GREG DOWELL

The Great Resignation

I just put in my 2-weeks' notice at the office. In December, I let my bosses know I was going to start looking to leave. I knew my upcoming trip to Africa was going to be a hallmark moment in my life. When I came back, I realized COVID was dwindling, the workforce was kicking back up, and my network had jobs for the picking. I climbed Kilimanjaro and realized I am not happy doing what I am doing. Since I was 16, I have been chasing jobs that I might be good at, but I do not feel fulfilled. I wanted to take a beat and reflect on me: What do I want to do as a career?

Here is a tour of my professional life. In my first job as a camp counselor, it was very important to get down on the kids' level—physically, nonverbally. I'm 6'4" and an intimidating man, so I got down to 4-year-old size to talk to them about their favorite color and used communication that was below my level to offer an olive branch. It created a channel of connectivity by talking about something they could relate to.

Bartending was an exciting time, an interesting playground for communication. You have people with opinions and people who want to pontificate about their greatness. Moving fluidly among different communication styles is critical—yak about the latest pop-culture reference, talk about Aristotle, or wax politics. Having flexibility and understanding to create likability hopefully leads to getting tipped well.

Congress brought lots of opinions. It was a microcosm of opinions/goals, limited time, high stress, and lots of caffeine. There were quick, subject-line-only emails to tell me "review this" or "meet me here." Understanding your relationship with others can help you realize they're not mad; they just do not have time because they are on the phone and juggling five flaming chainsaws. Some members of Congress want a dissertation on why to vote for a bill, and others want three bullet points. One person could want a dissertation on Tuesday and bullet points on Friday. Learn to adjust.

In the nonprofit world, you are issue-based, usually advocating for that issue or group. Persuasion is a vital skill, but you can't just build a pretty story—lean into your pathos, ethos,



logos and weave it in. You are going to talk to people across the nation and even around the world, so you need lots of messages. To advocate for your issues, be able to use social media or email blasts (dissertation or bullet points, depending on the audience). You may also be dealing with high-value assets (people) who care about an issue and think differently than you do. Handle their expectations to allow them to accomplish their goals while helping your organization thrive.

In any profession, public speaking may be the number-one fear, but you're going to need to get over it. My friends and I talk about putting our professional tools in our toolbelts. My hammer is my calm, public speaking is my screwdriver, and mathematics is my wrench. You are only as good as your weakest professional tool. If you can't humble yourself enough to self-evaluate or take the evaluation and criticism of someone else, you're not going to be able to grow. Listen to the people who are trying to help you be better.

FINAL THOUGHTS

When we talk about communication, it is not everything that happens around us; it is a very specific type of interaction between two or more people in which meaning is exchanged. Too often, we blame things that happen on communication problems when, in fact, communication has not even occurred—Peri and Reagan were a perfect example of this. When you are unsure of what others meant or whether they understood your message, take that extra step and ask for clarification or check in to see if they understood your message. Less than 10 seconds can be the difference between a satisfying communication interaction and complete frustration!

KEYWORDS

- Affective messages (p. 6)
- Cohesive messages (p. 6)
- Communication (p. 1)
- Contexts (p. 3)
- Diversity and inclusion (p. 8)
- Electronic propinquity (p. 6)
- Hypodermic needle model of communication (p. 2)
- Identity goals (p. 5)
- Instrumental goals (p. 4)
- Interactive messages (p. 6)
- Nonverbal messages (p. 8)
- Propinquity (p. 6)
- Receiver-oriented model of communication (p. 2)
- Relational communication goals (p. 4)
- Sender-oriented model of communication (p. 2)
- Social presence (p. 6)
- Technology-mediated communication (TMC) (p. 5)
- Transactional model of communication (p. 3)
- Verbal messages (p. 8)

ACTIVITIES

1. Keep a log of your communication interactions over the next 12 hours (not including the time you are sleeping). Assess your own communication—determine what communication goals are most important, what role context plays in your interactions, how you create a social presence, and so on.

Sample Log

Date	Time	Length	Context (Person, Environment)	Topic

2. Choose an organization for which you would like to work; if the company you want to work for does not have an online presence, use the school you currently attend. Choose one of their TMC channels (e.g., a social media platform, online news releases, letters to the shareholders if it is a public company). Look through their messages and write a short paper that (a) lists the social presence strategies they use; (b) gives a specific example of those strategies; and (c) evaluates how effectively the company is at making you feel closer to them.
3. Choose an electronic platform on which you communicate frequently with others to achieve instrumental (task) goals (e.g., completing a project, interacting about class, holding meetings, getting the word out about your organization). What would you have to do to achieve electronic propinquity? Make one of those changes this week and continue making one per week until you are confident you have achieved electronic propinquity.