LEARNING OBJECTIVES  After studying this chapter, you will be able to

1. List the advantages and disadvantages of working in teams, describe the characteristics of effective teams, and highlight four key issues of group dynamics

2. Offer guidelines for collaborative communication, identify major collaboration technologies, and explain how to give constructive feedback

3. List the key steps needed to ensure productive team meetings

4. Identify the major technologies used to enhance or replace in-person meetings

5. Identify three major modes of listening, describe the listening process, and explain the problem of selective listening

6. Explain the importance of nonverbal communication and identify six major categories of nonverbal expression

7. Explain the importance of business etiquette and identify three key areas in which good etiquette is essential

MyBcommLab Test your mastery of this chapter and its Learning Objectives. Visit www.pearsonglobaleditions.com/mybcommlab to apply what you’ve learned in Document Makeovers and interactive simulation scenarios.

COMMUNICATION CLOSE-UP AT ROSEN LAW FIRM

When communication tools function at their best, they can go beyond mere facilitation to transformation. Such was the case at Rosen Law Firm, based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Lee Rosen, the firm’s owner and chief executive, wanted to replace an expensive, complicated, and inflexible computer system that employees relied on for everything from contact lists to appointment calendars to document storage. The solution he chose was a wiki, the same technology that enables nearly 100,000 people around the world to contribute to Wikipedia.

The wiki certainly helped cut costs, and it did much more. Besides handling much of the firm’s document storage and formal communication, the wiki introduced an informal social element that is helping employees bond as a community. Many have added personal pages with information about themselves, helping employees get to know their colleagues on a more intimate level.

In implementing the wiki, Rosen faced a common challenge with new communication tools: getting people to give up familiar ways of doing things and embrace change. Knowing that the value of a company wiki depends on the level of employee contribution—and that having some of the staff switch while others cling to old ways would seriously disrupt communication—he encouraged use of the new wiki with a friendly competition. For each page an employee created during
the three-month competition, he or she was given one possible combination to the company safe, which contained a $1,000 cash prize. From time to time, Rosen also forced use of the wiki by publishing important information only on the wiki. As often happens when companies face significant changes, the move to the wiki did cause some turmoil. Two camps of employees argued over the best way to organize information and got caught up in an “edit war,” repeatedly undoing each other’s decisions. They eventually reached a compromise that resolved the disagreement and had lasting benefits for teamwork and interpersonal communication across the firm. According to Rosen, “it forced everybody to learn about each other’s job.”

Communicating Effectively in Teams

The teamwork interactions among the employees at Rosen Law Firm (profiled in the chapter-opening Communication Close-up) represent one of the most essential elements of interpersonal communication. Collaboration—working together to meet complex challenges—has become a core job responsibility for roughly half the U.S. workforce. No matter what career path you pursue, it’s a virtual guarantee that you will be expected to collaborate in at least some of your work activities. Your communication skills will pay off handsomely in these interactions, because the productivity and quality of collaborative efforts depend heavily on the communication skills of the professionals involved.

A team is a unit of two or more people who share a mission and the responsibility for working to achieve a common goal. Problem-solving teams and task forces assemble to resolve specific issues and then disband when their goals have been accomplished. Such teams are often cross-functional, pulling together people from a variety of departments who have different areas of expertise and responsibility. The diversity of opinions and experiences can lead to better decisions, but competing interests can lead to tensions that highlight the need for effective communication. Committees are formal teams that usually have a long life span and can become a permanent part of the organizational structure. Committees typically deal with regularly recurring tasks, such as an executive committee that meets monthly to plan strategies and review results.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF TEAMS

When teams are successful, they can improve productivity, creativity, employee involvement, and even job security. Teams are often at the core of participative management.
the effort to involve employees in the company’s decision making. A successful team can provide a number of advantages:

- **Increased information and knowledge.** By pooling the experience of several individuals, a team has access to more information in the decision-making process.

- **Increased diversity of views.** Team members can bring a variety of perspectives to the decision-making process—as long as these diverse viewpoints are guided by a shared goal.

- **Increased acceptance of a solution.** Those who participate in making a decision are more likely to support it and encourage others to accept it.

- **Higher performance levels.** Working in teams can unleash new levels of creativity and energy in workers who share a sense of purpose and mutual accountability. Effective teams can be better than top-performing individuals at solving complex problems.

Although teamwork has many advantages, it also has a number of potential disadvantages. At the worst, working in teams can be a frustrating waste of time. Teams need to be aware of and work to counter the following potential disadvantages:

- **Groupthink.** Like other social structures, business teams can generate tremendous pressures to conform with accepted norms of behavior. **Groupthink** occurs when peer pressures cause individual team members to withhold contrary or unpopular opinions. The result can be decisions that are worse than the choices the team members might have made individually.

- **Hidden agendas.** Some team members may have a hidden agenda—private, counterproductive motives, such as a desire to take control of the group, to undermine someone else on the team, or to pursue a business goal that runs counter to the team’s mission.

- **Cost.** Aligning schedules, arranging meetings, and coordinating individual parts of a project can eat up a lot of time and money.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMS**

The most effective teams have a clear objective and shared sense of purpose, have a strong sense of trust, communicate openly and honestly, reach decisions by consensus, think creatively, and know how to resolve conflict. Teams that have these attributes can focus their time and energy on their work, without being disrupted by destructive conflict (see page 75).

In contrast, teams that lack one or more of these attributes can get bogged down in conflict or waste time and resources pursuing unclear goals. Two of the most common reasons cited for unsuccessful teamwork are a lack of trust and poor communication. A lack of trust can result from team members being suspicious of one another’s motives or ability to contribute. Communication breakdowns are most likely to occur when teams operate across cultures, countries, or time zones.

**GROUP DYNAMICS**

The interactions and processes that take place among the members of a team are called **group dynamics.** Productive teams tend to develop clear norms, informal standards of conduct that members share and that guide member behavior. Group dynamics are influenced by several factors: the roles that team members assume, the current phase of team development, the team’s success in resolving conflict, and the team’s success in overcoming resistance.

**Assuming Team Roles**

Members of a team can play various roles, which fall into three categories (see Table 2.1 on the following page). Members who assume **self-oriented roles** are motivated mainly to fulfill personal needs, so they tend to be less productive than other members. "Dream teams" composed of multiple superstars often don’t perform as well as one might expect because high-performing individuals can have trouble putting the team’s needs ahead of their own. In addition, highly skilled and experienced people with difficult personalities might not contribute for the simple reason that other team members may avoid interacting with them.
Teams typically evolve through a variety of phases, such as orientation, conflict, brainstorming, emergence, and reinforcement.

Far more likely to contribute to team goals are members who assume team-maintenance roles to help everyone work well together and those who assume task-oriented roles to help the team reach its goals.  

**Allowing for Team Evolution**

Teams typically evolve through a number of phases on their way to becoming productive (see Figure 2.1). A variety of models have been proposed to describe the evolution toward becoming a productive team. Here is how one commonly used model identifies the phases a problem-solving team goes through as it evolves:

1. **Orientation.** Team members socialize, establish their roles, and begin to define their task or purpose. Team-building exercises and activities can help teams break down barriers and develop a sense of shared purpose. For geographically dispersed virtual teams, creating a “team operating agreement” that sets expectations for online meetings, communication processes, and decision making can help overcome the disadvantages of distance.

2. **Conflict.** Different opinions and perspectives begin to emerge. Disagreements and uncertainties are natural in this phase.

3. **Brainstorming.** Team members explore their options and evaluate alternatives. At the end of this phase, members begin to settle on a single solution to the problem. Note that while group brainstorming remains a highly popular activity in today’s companies, it may not always be the most productive way to generate new ideas. Some research indicates that having people brainstorm individually and then bring their ideas to a group meeting is more successful.

4. **Emergence.** The team reaches a consensus on the chosen decision. Consensus is reached when the team finds a solution that all members are willing to support (even if they have reservations).

5. **Reinforcement.** The team clarifies and summarizes the agreed-upon solution. Members receive their assignments for carrying out the group’s decision, and they make arrangements for following up on those assignments.

**TABLE 2.1 Team Roles—Functional and Dysfunctional**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dysfunctional: Self-Oriented Roles</th>
<th>Functional: Team-Maintenance Roles</th>
<th>Functional: Task-Facilitating Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controlling:</strong> Dominating others by exhibiting superiority or authority</td>
<td><strong>Encouraging:</strong> Drawing out other members by showing verbal and nonverbal support, praise, or agreement</td>
<td><strong>Initiating:</strong> Getting the team started on a line of inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Withdrawing:</strong> Retiring from the team either by becoming silent or by refusing to deal with a particular aspect of the team’s work</td>
<td><strong>Harmonizing:</strong> Reconciling differences among team members through mediation or by using humor to relieve tension</td>
<td><strong>Information giving or seeking:</strong> Offering (or seeking) information relevant to questions facing the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attention seeking:</strong> Calling attention to oneself and demanding recognition from others</td>
<td><strong>Compromising:</strong> Offering to yield on a point in the interest of reaching a mutually acceptable decision</td>
<td><strong>Collaborating:</strong> Working closely with others to achieve a mutual goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diverting:</strong> Focusing the team’s discussion on topics of interest to the individual rather than on those relevant to the task</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Coordinating:</strong> Showing relationships among ideas, clarifying issues, summarizing what the team has done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Procedure setting:</strong> Suggesting decision-making procedures that will move the team toward a goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.1 Phases of Group Development**

Groups generally progress through several stages on their way to becoming productive and reaching their objectives.
You may also hear the process defined as *forming, storming, norming, performing,* and *adjourning,* the phases identified by researcher Bruce Tuckman when he proposed one of the earliest models of group development. Regardless of the model you consider, these stages are a general framework for team development. Some teams may move forward and backward through several stages before they become productive, and other teams may be productive right away, even while some or all members are in a state of conflict.

**Resolving Conflict**

Conflict in team activities can arise for a number of reasons: competition for resources, disagreement over goals or responsibilities, poor communication, power struggles, or fundamental differences in values, attitudes, and personalities. Although the term *conflict* sounds negative, conflict isn’t necessarily bad. Conflict can be *constructive* if it forces important issues into the open, increases the involvement of team members, and generates creative ideas for solving a problem. Teamwork isn’t necessarily about happiness and harmony; even teams that have some interpersonal friction can excel with effective leadership and team players committed to strong results. As teamwork experts Andy Boynton and Bill Fischer put it, “Virtuoso teams are not about getting polite results.”

In contrast, conflict is *destructive* if it diverts energy from more important issues, destroys the morale of teams or individual team members, or polarizes or divides the team. Destructive conflict can lead to *win-lose* or *lose-lose* outcomes, in which one or both sides lose, to the detriment of the entire team. If you approach conflict with the idea that both sides can satisfy their goals to at least some extent (a *win-win* strategy), you can minimize losses for everyone. For a win-win strategy to work, everybody must believe that (1) it’s possible to find a solution that both parties can accept, (2) cooperation is better for the organization than competition, (3) the other party can be trusted, and (4) greater power or status doesn’t entitle one party to impose a solution.

The following seven measures can help team members successfully resolve conflict:

- **Proactive behavior.** Deal with minor conflict before it becomes major conflict.
- **Communication.** Get those directly involved in a conflict to participate in resolving it.
- **Openness.** Get feelings out in the open before dealing with the main issues.
- **Research.** Seek factual reasons for a problem before seeking solutions.
- **Flexibility.** Don’t let anyone lock into a position before considering other solutions.
- **Fair play.** Insist on fair outcomes and don’t let anyone avoid a fair solution by hiding behind the rules.
- **Alliance.** Get opponents to fight together against an “outside force” instead of against each other.

**Overcoming Resistance**

One particular type of conflict that can affect team progress is resistance to change. Sometimes this resistance is clearly irrational, such as when people resist any kind of change, whether it makes sense or not. Sometimes, however, resistance is perfectly logical. A change may require someone to relinquish authority or give up comfortable ways of doing things. If someone is resisting change, you can be persuasive with calm, reasonable communication:

- **Express understanding.** You might say, “I understand that this change might be difficult, and if I were in your position, I might be reluctant myself.” Help the other person relax and talk about his or her anxiety so that you have a chance to offer reassurance.
- **Bring resistance out into the open.** When people are noncommittal and silent, they may be tuning you out without even knowing why. Continuing with your argument is futile. Deal directly with the resistance, without accusing. You might say, “You seem to have reservations about this idea. Have I made some faulty assumptions?” Such questions force people to face and define their resistance.
- **Evaluate others’ objections fairly.** Use active listening to focus on what the other person is expressing, both the words and the feelings. Get the person to open up so that you can understand the basis for the resistance. Others’ objections may raise legitimate
Hold your arguments until the other person is ready for them. Getting your point across depends as much on the other person’s frame of mind as it does on your arguments. You can’t assume that a strong argument will speak for itself. By becoming more audience centered, you will learn to address the other person’s emotional needs first.

**Collaborating on Communication Efforts**

You should expect to collaborate on a wide variety of research, writing, design, and presentation projects in your career. When teams collaborate, the collective energy and expertise of the various members can lead to results that transcend what each individual could do otherwise. However, collaborating on team messages requires special effort; the following section offers a number of helpful guidelines.

**GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATIVE WRITING**

In any collaborative effort, team members coming from different backgrounds may have different work habits or priorities: A technical expert may focus on accuracy and scientific standards, an editor may be more concerned about organization and coherence, and a manager may focus on schedules, cost, and corporate goals. In addition, team members differ in writing styles, work habits, and personality traits.

To collaborate effectively, everyone involved must be flexible and open to other opinions, focusing on team objectives rather than on individual priorities. Successful writers know that most ideas can be expressed in many ways, so they avoid the “my way is best” attitude. The following guidelines will help you collaborate more successfully:

- **Select collaborators carefully.** Whenever possible, choose a combination of people who together have the experience, information, and talent needed for each project.
- **Agree on project goals before you start.** Starting without a clear idea of what the team hopes to accomplish inevitably leads to frustration and wasted time.
- **Give your team time to bond before diving in.** If people haven’t had the opportunity to work together before, make sure they can get to know each other before being asked to collaborate.
- **Clarify individual responsibilities.** Because members will be depending on each other, make sure individual responsibilities are clear.
- **Establish clear processes.** Make sure everyone knows how the work will be managed from start to finish.
- **Avoid composing as a group.** The actual composition is the only part of developing team messages that usually does not benefit from group participation. Brainstorming the wording of short pieces of text, particularly headlines, slogans, and other high-visibility elements, can be an effective way to stimulate creative word choices. However, for longer projects, you will usually find it more efficient to plan, research, and outline together but assign the task of writing to one person or divide larger projects among multiple writers. If you divide the writing, try to have one person do a final revision pass to ensure a consistent style.
- **Make sure tools and techniques are ready and compatible across the team.** Even minor details such as different versions of software can delay projects.
- **Check to see how things are going along the way.** Don’t assume that everything is working just because you don’t hear anything negative.

**TECHNOLOGIES FOR COLLABORATIVE WRITING**

A variety of collaboration tools exist to help teams write together. Among the simpler tools are group review and editing features in word processing software and the Adobe Acrobat electronic document system (PDF files) and web-based document systems such as Google
Design Services. More complex solutions include content management systems that organize and control the content for many websites (particularly larger corporate sites). A wiki, from the Hawaiian word for quick, is a website that allows anyone with access to add new material and edit existing material (see Figure 2.2). Chapter 14 offers guidelines for effective wiki collaboration.

The key benefits of wikis include simple operation—writers don’t need to know any of the techniques normally required to create web content—and the freedom to post new or revised material without prior approval. This approach is quite different from a content management system, in which both the organization of the website and the workflow (the rules for creating, editing, reviewing, and approving content) are tightly controlled. A content management system is a great tool for maintaining consistent presentation on a company’s primary public website, whereas a wiki allows a team to collaborate with speed and flexibility.

Enterprise wiki systems extend the wiki concept with additional features for business use that ensure information quality and confidentiality and also provide the speed and flexibility of a wiki. For instance, access control lets a team leader identify who is allowed to read and modify a wiki. Change monitoring alerts team members when significant changes or additions are made. And rollback allows a team to “travel back in time” to see all previous versions of pages.

Groupware is a general term for computer-based systems that let people communicate, share files, review previous message threads, work on documents simultaneously, and connect using social networking tools. These systems help companies capture and share knowledge from multiple experts, bringing greater insights to bear on tough challenges.

Shared workspaces are online “virtual offices” that give everyone on a team access to the same set of resources and information: databases, calendars, project plans, pertinent messaging and exchanges, reference materials, and team-created documents (see Figure 2.3 on the following page). You may see some of these workspaces referred to as intranets (restricted-access websites that are open to employees only) or extranets (restricted sites that are available to employees and to outside parties by invitation only).

In the coming years, keep an eye out for emerging technologies that can help teams collaborate in new ways. For example, cloud computing, a somewhat vague term for

**Figure 2.2 Collaboration Technologies**
Collaboration technologies such as SAP’s StreamWork system help team members work together in real time, with documents, decisions, messages, and other vital project elements accessible to everyone.
“on-demand” software capabilities delivered over the Internet, promises to expand the ways in which geographically dispersed teams can collaborate quickly and inexpensively.³²

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

Chapter 1 explains how social media and the Web 2.0 approach are redefining business communication. Within that context, social networking technologies are redefining teamwork and team communication by helping erase the constraints of geographic and organization boundaries. In addition to enabling and enhancing teamwork, social networks have numerous other business applications and benefits; see Table 7.1 on page 222 for more information.

The two fundamental elements of any social networking technology are profiles (the information stored about each member of the network) and connections (mechanisms for finding and communicating with other members).³³ If you’re familiar with Facebook, you have a basic idea of how social networks function. Thousands of companies now use Facebook, but you may also encounter networks created specifically for business use, the most significant being LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). Others include Ryze (www.ryze.com), Spoke (www.spoke.com), and Xing (www.xing.com).

Some companies use social networking technologies to form virtual communities or communities of practice that link employees with similar professional interests throughout the company and sometimes with customers and suppliers as well. The huge advantage that social networking brings to these team efforts is in identifying the best people to collaborate on each problem or project, no matter where they are around the world or what their official roles are in the organization.³⁴

Social networking can also help a company maintain a sense of community even as it grows beyond the size that normally permits a lot of daily interaction. At the online retailer Zappos, fostering a supportive work environment is the company’s top priority. To encourage the sense of community among its expanding workforce, Zappos uses social networking tools to track employee connections and encourage workers to reach out and build relationships.³⁵

A community of practice links professionals with similar job interests; a key benefit is accumulating long-term organizational knowledge.

Figure 2.3 Shared Workspaces
Zig Marketing uses the WizeHive platform to create shared online workspaces for its employees, business partners, and clients.

Each project and program gets its own workspace, which can be shared with designated users inside or outside the company.

Within each workspace, the system organizes tasks, links, messages, project assignments, message archives, and all the other resources a team needs.

The system tracks all recent activity on a project, creating a searchable record of messages, task assignments, and other important details.

A community of practice links professionals with similar job interests; a key benefit is accumulating long-term organizational knowledge.

REAL-TIME UPDATES

Learn More by Reading This PDF

See several intriguing new examples of social networks designed exclusively for members of certain professions or industries. Go to http://real-timeupdates.com/bct11 and click on “Learn More.” If you are using MyBcommLab, you can access Real-Time Updates within each chapter or under Student Study Tools.
CHAPTER 2  Mastering Team Skills and Interpersonal Communication

DESIGN SERVICES OF

GIVING—AND RESPONDING TO—CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Aside from processes and tools, collaborative communication often involves giving and receiving feedback about writing efforts. **Constructive feedback**, sometimes called **constructive criticism**, focuses on the process and outcomes of communication, not on the people involved (see Table 2.2). In contrast, **destructive feedback** delivers criticism with no guidance to stimulate improvement. For example, “This proposal is a confusing mess, and you failed to convince me of anything” is destructive feedback. Your goal is to be more constructive: “Your proposal could be more effective with a clearer description of the manufacturing process and a well-organized explanation of why the positives outweigh the negatives.” When giving feedback, avoid personal attacks and give the person clear guidelines for improvement.

When you receive constructive feedback, resist the understandable urge to defend your work or deny the validity of the feedback. Remaining open to criticism isn’t easy when you’ve poured your heart and soul into a project, but good feedback provides a valuable opportunity to learn and to improve the quality of your work.

Making Your Meetings More Productive

Much of your workplace communication will occur during in-person or online meetings, so to a large degree, your ability to contribute to the company—and to be recognized for your contributions—will depend on your meeting skills. Well-run meetings can help companies solve problems, develop ideas, and identify opportunities. Meetings can also be a great way to promote team building through the experience of social interaction. As useful as meetings can be, though, they can be a waste of time if they aren’t planned and managed well. You can help ensure productive meetings by preparing carefully, conducting meetings efficiently, and using meeting technologies wisely.

**PREPARING FOR MEETINGS**

The first step in preparing for a meeting is to make sure the meeting is really necessary. Meetings can consume hundreds or thousands of dollars of productive time while taking people away from other work, so don’t hold a meeting if some other form of communication

**TABLE 2.2** Giving Constructive Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to Be Constructive</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think through your suggested changes carefully.</td>
<td>Many business documents must illustrate complex relationships between ideas and other information, so isolated and superficial edits can do more harm than good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss improvements rather than flaws.</td>
<td>Instead of saying “this is confusing,” for instance, explain how the writing can be improved to make it clearer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on controllable behavior.</td>
<td>The writer may not have control over every variable that affected the quality of the message, so focus on those aspects the writer can control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be specific.</td>
<td>Comments such as “I don’t get this” or “Make this clearer” don’t give the writer much direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep feedback impersonal.</td>
<td>Focus comments on the message, not on the person who created it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verify understanding.</td>
<td>If in doubt, ask for confirmation from the recipient to make sure that the person understood your feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time your feedback carefully.</td>
<td>Respond in a timely fashion so that the writer will have sufficient time to implement the changes you suggest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight any limitations your feedback may have.</td>
<td>If you didn’t have time to give the document a thorough edit, or if you’re not an expert in some aspect of the content, let the writer know so that he or she can handle your comments appropriately.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you give writing feedback, make it constructive by focusing on how the material can be improved.

When you receive constructive feedback on your writing, keep your emotions in check and view it as an opportunity to improve.

3 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

List the key steps needed to ensure productive team meetings.

Much of the communication you’ll participate in will take place in meetings.

To ensure a successful meeting, decide on your purpose ahead of time, select the right participants, choose the venue and time, and set a clear agenda.
Design services of (such as a blog post) can serve the purpose as effectively. If a meeting is truly necessary, proceed with these four planning tasks:

- **Identify your purpose.** Meetings can focus on exchanging information, reaching decisions, or collaborating to solve problems or identify opportunities. Whatever your purpose, identify what the best possible result of the meeting would be (such as “we carefully evaluated all three product ideas and decided which one to invest in”). Use this hoped-for result to shape the direction and content of the meeting.

- **Select participants for the meeting.** The rule here is simple: Invite everyone who really needs to be involved, and don’t invite anyone who doesn’t. For decision-making meetings, for example, invite only those people who are in a direct position to help the meeting reach its objective. The more people you have, the longer it will take to reach consensus. Meetings with more than 10 or 12 people can become unmanageable if everyone is expected to participate in the discussion and decision making.

- **Choose the venue and the time.** Online meetings (see page 81) are often the best way and sometimes the only way to connect people in multiple locations or to reach large audiences. For onsite meetings, review the facility and the seating arrangements. Are rows of chairs suitable, or do you need a conference table or some other arrangement? Pay attention to room temperature, lighting, ventilation, acoustics, and refreshments; these details can make or break a meeting. If you have control over the timing, morning meetings are often more productive because people are generally more alert and not yet engaged with the work of the day.

- **Set the agenda.** The success of a meeting depends on the preparation of the participants. Distribute a carefully written agenda to participants, giving them enough time to prepare as needed (see Figure 2.4). A productive agenda answers three key questions: (1) What do we need to do in this meeting to accomplish our goals? (2) What issues will be of greatest importance to all participants? (3) What information must be available in order to discuss these issues?

**Figure 2.4 Typical Meeting Agenda**

Agenda formats vary widely, depending on the complexity of the meeting and the presentation technologies that will be used. For an online meeting, for instance, a good approach is to first send a detailed planning agenda in advance of the meeting so that presenters know what they need to prepare, then create a simpler display agenda such as this to guide the progress of the meeting.
CONDUCTING AND CONTRIBUTING TO EFFICIENT MEETINGS

Everyone in a meeting shares the responsibility for making the meeting productive. If you’re the designated leader of a meeting, however, you have an extra degree of responsibility and accountability. The following guidelines will help leaders and participants contribute to more effective meetings:

- **Keep the discussion on track.** A good meeting leader draws out the best ideas the group has to offer and resolves differences of opinion while maintaining progress toward achieving the meeting’s purpose and staying on schedule.

- **Follow agreed-upon rules.** The larger the meeting, the more formal you need to be to maintain order. Formal meetings use **parliamentary procedure**, a time-tested method for planning and running effective meetings. The best-known guide to this procedure is *Robert’s Rules of Order* ([www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com)).

- **Encourage participation.** On occasion, some participants will be too quiet and others too talkative. The quiet participants may be shy, they may be expressing disagreement or resistance, or they may be working on unrelated tasks. Draw them out by asking for their input on issues that pertain to them.

- **Participate actively.** If you’re a meeting participant, look for opportunities to contribute to both the subject of the meeting and the smooth interaction of the group. Speak up if you have something useful to say but don’t monopolize the discussion or talk simply to bring attention to yourself.

- **Close effectively.** At the conclusion of the meeting, verify that the objectives have been met or arrange for follow-up work, if needed. Either summarize the general conclusion of the discussion or the actions to be taken. Make sure all participants have a chance to clear up any misunderstandings.

To review the tasks that contribute to productive meetings, refer to “Checklist: Improving Meeting Productivity.”

For formal meetings, it’s good practice to appoint one person to record the **minutes**, a summary of the important information presented and the decisions made during a meeting. In smaller or informal meetings, attendees often make their own notes on their copies of the agenda. In either case, a clear record of the decisions made and the people responsible for follow-up action is essential. If your company doesn’t have a specific format for minutes, follow the generic format shown in Figure 2.5 on the following page.

Using Meeting Technologies

A growing array of technologies enables professionals to enhance or even replace traditional meetings. Replacing in-person meetings with long-distance, virtual interaction can dramatically reduce costs and resource usage, reduce wear and tear on employees, and give teams access to a wider pool of expertise. For example, by meeting customers and business partners online instead of in person, during a recent 18-month period Cisco Systems cut its travel-related costs by $100 million, reduced its carbon footprint by millions of tons, and improved employee productivity and satisfaction.41

Meeting-replacement technologies have helped spur the emergence of **virtual teams**, whose members work in different locations and interact electronically through **virtual meetings**. Instant messaging (IM) and teleconferencing are the simplest forms of virtual meetings.

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**Checklist**  
**Improving Meeting Productivity**

A. Prepare carefully.
- Make sure the meeting is necessary.
- Decide on your purpose.
- Select participants carefully.
- Choose the venue and the time.
- Establish and distribute a clear agenda.

B. Lead effectively and participate fully.
- Keep the meeting on track.
- Follow agreed-upon rules.
- Encourage participation.
- Participate actively.
- Close effectively.
Videoconferencing lets participants see and hear each other, demonstrate products, and transmit other visual information. Telepresence technologies (see Figure 2.6) enable realistic conferences in which participants thousands of miles apart almost seem to be in the same room. The ability to convey nonverbal subtleties such as facial expressions and hand gestures makes these systems particularly good for negotiations, collaborative problem solving, and other complex discussions.

The most sophisticated web-based meeting systems combine the best of real-time communication, shared workspaces, and videoconferencing with other tools, such as virtual whiteboards, that let teams collaborate in real time. Such systems are used for everything from spontaneous discussions among small groups to carefully planned, formal events such as customer training seminars or press conferences.

Figure 2.5 Typical Minutes of a Meeting
Intranet and blog postings are a common way to distribute meeting minutes. The specific format of the minutes is less important than making sure you record all the key information, particularly regarding responsibilities that were assigned during the meeting. Key elements include a list of those present and a list of those who were invited but didn’t attend, followed by the times the meeting started and ended, all major decisions reached at the meeting, all assignments of tasks to meeting participants, and all subjects that were deferred to a later meeting. In addition, the minutes objectively summarize important discussions, noting the names of those who contributed major points. Outlines, subheadings, and lists help organize the minutes; additional documentation (such as tables or charts submitted by meeting participants) is noted in the minutes and attached. Many companies now post meeting minutes on internal websites for easy reference.

Apply Figure 2.5’s key concepts by revising a new document. Go to Chapter 2 in www.pearsonglobaleditions.com/mybcommlab and select Document Makeovers.
Technology continues to create intriguing opportunities for online interaction. For instance, one of the newest virtual tools is online brainstorming, in which a company can conduct "idea campaigns" to generate new ideas from people across the organization. These range from small team meetings to huge events such as IBM’s giant InnovationJam, in which 100,000 IBM employees, family members, and customers from 160 countries were invited to brainstorm online for three days.\(^{45}\) Companies are also beginning to experiment with virtual meetings and other communication activities in virtual worlds that range from realistic-looking environments that represent offices and conference rooms (see Figure 2.7) to the otherworldly environment of Second Life (www.secondlife.com). In Second Life, professionals can create online avatars to represent themselves in meetings, training sessions, sales presentations, and even casual conversations with customers they happen to bump into (see page 56 for an example of business communication in Second Life).

Conducting successful meetings over the phone or online requires extra planning before the meeting and more diligence during the meeting. Because virtual meetings offer less visual contact and nonverbal communication than in-person meetings, leaders need to make sure everyone stays engaged and has the opportunity to contribute. Paying attention during online meetings takes greater effort as well. Participants need to stay committed to the meeting and resist the temptation to work on unrelated tasks.\(^{46}\)

For the latest information on meeting technologies, visit http://real-timeupdates.com/bct11 and click on Chapter 2.

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**Figure 2.6 Telepresence**

How many people are in this conference room in Chicago? Only the two people in the foreground are in the conference room; the other six are in Atlanta and London. Virtual meeting technologies such as this telepresence system connect people spread across the country or around the world.

**Figure 2.7 Virtual Meetings**

Virtual meeting technologies offer a variety of ways to interact online. The Team Space system from Sococo mimics the layout of an office building, allowing users to click into offices, conference rooms, and other spaces to initiate virtual meetings and presentations.
Improving Your Listening Skills

Your long-term career prospects are closely tied to your ability and willingness to listen. Effective listening strengthens organizational relationships, alerts an organization to opportunities for innovation, and allows an organization to manage diversity both in the workforce and in the customers it serves. Companies whose employees and managers listen effectively stay in touch, up to date, and out of trouble. Some 80 percent of top executives say that listening is the most important skill needed to get things done in the workplace. Plus, today’s younger employees place a high premium on being heard, so listening is becoming even more vital for managers. In fact, many of the leading business schools in the United States have begun retooling their curricula in recent years to put more emphasis on “soft skills” such as listening.

RECOGNIZING VARIOUS TYPES OF LISTENING

Effective listeners adapt their listening approaches to different situations. The primary goal of content listening is to understand and retain the information in the speaker’s message. Because you’re not evaluating the information at this point, it doesn’t matter whether you agree or disagree, approve or disapprove—only that you understand. Try to overlook the speaker’s style and any limitations in the presentation; just focus on the information.

The goal of critical listening is to understand and evaluate the meaning of the speaker’s message on several levels: the logic of the argument, the strength of the evidence, the validity of the conclusions, the implications of the message, the speaker’s intentions and motives, and the omission of any important or relevant points. If you’re skeptical, ask questions to explore the speaker’s point of view and credibility, be on the lookout for bias that could color the way the information is presented and be careful to separate opinions from facts.

The goal of empathic listening is to understand the speaker’s feelings, needs, and wants so that you can appreciate his or her point of view, regardless of whether you share that perspective. By listening with empathy, you help the individual vent the emotions that prevent a calm, clear-headed approach to the subject. Avoid the temptation to jump in with advice unless the person specifically asks for it. Also, don’t judge the speaker’s feelings and don’t try to tell people they shouldn’t feel this or that emotion. Instead, let the speaker know that you appreciate his or her feelings and understand the situation. After you establish that connection, you can help the speaker move on to search for a solution.

No matter what mode they are using at any given time, effective listeners try to engage in active listening, making a conscious effort to turn off their own filters and biases to truly hear and understand what the other party is saying. They ask questions to verify key points and encourage the speaker through positive body language.

UNDERSTANDING THE LISTENING PROCESS

Listening is a far more complex process than most people think—and most of us aren’t very good at it. People typically listen at no better than a 25 percent efficiency rate, remember only about half of what’s said during a 10-minute conversation, and forget half of that within 48 hours. Furthermore, when questioned about material they’ve just heard, they are likely to get the facts mixed up.

Listening follows the same sequence as the general communication process model described in Chapter 1, with the added challenge that it happens in real time. To listen effectively, you need to successfully complete five separate steps:

1. Receiving. You start by physically hearing the message and acknowledging it. Physical reception can be blocked by noise, impaired hearing, or inattention. Some experts also include nonverbal messages as part of this stage because these factors influence the listening process as well.

2. Decoding. Your next step is to assign meaning to sounds, which you do according to your own values, beliefs, ideas, expectations, roles, needs, and personal history.
3. **Remembering.** Before you can act on the information, you need to store it for future processing. As you learned in Chapter 1, incoming messages must first be captured in short-term memory before being transferred to long-term memory for more permanent storage.

4. **Evaluating.** Your next step is to evaluate the message by applying critical thinking skills to separate fact from opinion and evaluate the quality of the evidence.

5. **Responding.** After you’ve evaluated the speaker’s message, you react. If you’re communicating one-on-one or in a small group, the initial response generally takes the form of verbal feedback. If you’re one of many in an audience, your initial response may take the form of applause, laughter, or silence. Later on, you may act on what you have heard.

If any one of these steps breaks down, the listening process becomes less effective or even fails entirely. As both a sender and a receiver, you can reduce the failure rate by recognizing and overcoming a variety of physical and mental barriers to effective listening.

### OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Good listeners look for ways to overcome potential barriers throughout the listening process (see Table 2.3). Some factors you may not be able to control, such as conference room acoustics or poor phone reception. However, you can control other factors, such as not interrupting speakers and not creating distractions that make it difficult for others to pay attention. And don’t think that you’re not interrupting just because you’re not talking. Such actions as texting or checking your watch can interrupt a speaker and lead to communication breakdowns.

**Selective listening** is one of the most common barriers to effective listening. If your mind wanders, you may stay tuned out until you hear a word or phrase that gets your attention again. But by that time, you’re unable to recall what the speaker actually said; instead, you remember what you think the speaker probably said.58

One reason listeners’ minds tend to wander is that people think faster than they speak. Most people speak at about 120 to 150 words per minute, but listeners can process audio information at up to 500 words per minute or more.59 Consequently, your brain has a lot of free time whenever you’re listening, and if left unsupervised, it will find a thousand other things to think about.

**TABLE 2.3 What Makes an Effective Listener?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Listeners</th>
<th>Ineffective Listeners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen actively.</td>
<td>Listen passively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take careful and complete notes, when applicable.</td>
<td>Take no notes or ineffective notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make frequent eye contact with the speaker (depends on culture to some extent).</td>
<td>Make little or no eye contact—or inappropriate eye contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay focused on the speaker and the content.</td>
<td>Allow their minds to wander, are easily distracted, work on unrelated tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentally paraphrase key points to maintain attention level and ensure comprehension.</td>
<td>Fail to paraphrase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjust listening style to the situation.</td>
<td>Listen with the same style, regardless of the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give the speaker nonverbal cues (such as nodding to show agreement or raising eyebrows to show surprise or skepticism).</td>
<td>Fail to give the speaker nonverbal feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save questions or points of disagreement until an appropriate time.</td>
<td>Interrupt whenever they disagree or don’t understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlook stylistic differences and focus on the speaker’s message.</td>
<td>Are distracted by or unduly influenced by stylistic differences; are judgmental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make distinctions between main points and supporting details.</td>
<td>Unable to distinguish main points from details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for opportunities to learn.</td>
<td>Assume they already know everything that’s important to know.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you a good listener?

Most of us believe we are good listeners, but the constant communication breakdowns in business and personal settings is evidence that we could all improve. Go to http://real-timeupdates.com/bct11 and click on “Learn More.” If you are using MyBcommLab, you can access Real-Time Updates within each chapter or under Student Study Tools.

REAL-TIME UPDATES

Learn More by Watching This Video

Your mind can process information much faster than most speakers talk, so you need to focus to listen effectively.
Overcoming interpretation barriers can be difficult because you may not even be aware of them. As Chapter 1 notes, selective perception leads listeners to mold messages to fit their own conceptual frameworks. Listeners sometimes make up their minds before fully hearing the speaker's message, or they engage in defensive listening—protecting their egos by tuning out anything that doesn't confirm their beliefs or their view of themselves.

Even when your intentions are good, you can still misinterpret incoming messages if you and the speaker don't share enough language or experience. When listening to a speaker whose native language or life experience is different from yours, try to paraphrase that person's ideas. Give the speaker a chance to confirm what you think you heard or to correct any misinterpretation.

If the information you hear will be important to use later, write it down or otherwise record it. Don't rely on your memory. If you do need to memorize, you can hold information in short-term memory by repeating it silently or organizing a long list of items into several shorter lists. To store information in long-term memory, four techniques can help: (1) Associate new information with something closely related (such as the restaurant in which you met a new client), (2) categorize the new information into logical groups (such as alphabetizing a list of names), (3) visualize words and ideas as pictures, and (4) create mnemonics such as acronyms or rhymes.

For a reminder of the steps you can take to overcome listening barriers, see “Checklist: Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening.”

Improving Your Nonverbal Communication Skills

Nonverbal communication is the interpersonal process of sending and receiving information, both intentionally and unintentionally, without using written or spoken language. Nonverbal signals play a vital role in communication because they can strengthen a verbal message (when the nonverbal signals match the spoken words), weaken a verbal message (when nonverbal signals don’t match the words), or replace words entirely. For example, you might tell a client that a project is coming along nicely, but your forced smile and nervous glances will send an entirely different message.

RECOGNIZING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Paying special attention to nonverbal signals in the workplace will enhance your ability to communicate successfully. The range and variety of nonverbal signals are almost endless, but you can grasp the basics by studying six general categories:

- **Facial expression.** Your face is the primary vehicle for expressing your emotions; it reveals both the type and the intensity of your feelings. Your eyes are especially effective for indicating attention and interest, influencing others, regulating interaction, and establishing dominance.

- **Gesture and posture.** The way you position and move your body expresses both specific and general messages, some voluntary and some involuntary. Many gestures—a wave of the hand, for example—have specific and intentional meanings. Other types of body movement are unintentional and express more general messages. Slouching, leaning forward,
fidgeting, and walking briskly are all unconscious signals that can reveal whether you feel confident or nervous, friendly or hostile, assertive or passive, powerful or powerless.

- **Vocal characteristics.** Voice carries both intentional and unintentional messages. A speaker can intentionally control pitch, pace, and stress to convey a specific message. For instance, compare “What are you doing?” and “What are you doing?” Unintentional vocal characteristics can convey happiness, surprise, fear, and other emotions (for example, fear often increases the pitch and the pace of your speaking voice).

- **Personal appearance.** Although an individual's body type and facial features impose limitations, you can control grooming, clothing, accessories, piercings, tattoos, and hairstyle. To make a good impression, adopt the style of the people you want to impress.

- **Touch.** Touch is governed by cultural customs that establish who can touch whom and how in various circumstances. In the United States and Great Britain, for instance, people usually touch less frequently than people in France or Costa Rica do. Even within each culture’s norms, however, individual attitudes toward touch vary widely. A manager might be comfortable using hugs to express support or congratulations, but his or her subordinates could interpret those hugs as a show of dominance or sexual interest. Touch is a complex subject. The best advice: When in doubt, don’t touch.

- **Time and space.** Like touch, time and space can be used to assert authority, imply intimacy, and send other nonverbal messages. For instance, some people try to demonstrate their own importance or disregard for others by making other people wait; others show respect by being on time. Similarly, taking care not to invade private space, such as standing too close when talking, is a way to show respect for others. Keep in mind that expectations regarding both time and space vary by culture.

### USING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVELY

Paying attention to nonverbal cues will make you both a better speaker and a better listener. When you’re talking, be more conscious of the nonverbal cues you could be sending. Are they effective without being manipulative? Consider a situation in which an employee has come to you to talk about a raise. This situation is stressful for the employee, so don’t say you’re interested in what she has to tell you and then spend your time glancing at your computer or checking your watch. Conversely, if you already know you won’t be able to give her the raise, be honest in your expression of emotions. Don’t overcompensate for your own stress by smiling too broadly or shaking her hand too vigorously. Both nonverbal signals would raise her hopes without justification. In either case, match your nonverbal cues to the tone of the situation.

Also consider the nonverbal signals you send when you’re not talking—the clothes you wear, the way you sit, the way you walk. Are you talking like a serious business professional but dressing like you belong in a dance club or a frat house? (Appropriate clothing for work situations is discussed in the next section, on business etiquette.)

When you listen, be sure to pay attention to the speaker’s nonverbal cues. Do they amplify the spoken words or contradict them? Is the speaker intentionally using nonverbal signals to send you a message that he or she can’t put into words? Be observant but don’t assume that you can “read someone like a book.” Nonverbal signals are powerful, but they aren’t infallible, particularly if you don’t know a person’s normal behavioral patterns. For example, contrary to popular belief, avoiding eye contact and covering one’s face while

### Checklist: Improving Nonverbal Communication Skills

- Understand the roles that nonverbal signals play in communication, complementing verbal language by strengthening, weakening, or replacing words.
- Note that facial expressions (especially eye contact) reveal the type and intensity of a speaker’s feelings.
- Watch for cues from gestures and posture.
- Listen for vocal characteristics that can signal the emotions underlying the speaker’s words.
- Recognize that listeners are influenced by physical appearance.
- Be careful with physical contact; touch can convey positive attributes but can also be interpreted as dominance or sexual interest.
- Pay attention to the use of time and space.
talking are not reliable clues that someone is lying. Even when telling the truth, most people don’t make uninterrupted eye contact with the listeners, and various gestures such as touching one’s face might be normal behavior for particular people. Moreover, these and other behaviors may be influenced by culture (in some cultures, sustained eye contact can be interpreted as a sign of disrespect) or might just be ways of coping with stressful situations.

If something doesn’t feel right, ask the speaker an honest and respectful question; doing so may clear everything up, or it may uncover issues you need to explore further. See “Checklist: Improving Nonverbal Communication Skills” for a summary of key ideas regarding nonverbal skills.

Developing Your Business Etiquette

You may have noticed a common thread running through the topics of successful teamwork, productive meetings, effective listening, and nonverbal communication: All these activities depend on mutual respect and consideration among all participants. As Chapter 1 notes, etiquette is now considered an essential business skill. Nobody wants to work with someone who is rude to colleagues or an embarrassment to the company. Moreover, shabby treatment of others in the workplace can be a huge drain on morale and productivity. Poor etiquette can drive away customers, investors, and other critical audiences—and it can limit your career potential.

This section addresses some key etiquette points to remember when you’re in the workplace, out in public, and online. Long lists of etiquette rules can be difficult to remember, but you can get by in most every situation by being aware of your effect on others, treating everyone with respect, and keeping in mind that the impressions you leave behind can have a lasting effect on you and your company—so make sure to leave positive impressions wherever you go.

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN THE WORKPLACE

Workplace etiquette includes a variety of behaviors, habits, and aspects of nonverbal communication. Although it isn’t always thought of as an element of etiquette, your personal appearance in the workplace sends a strong signal to managers, colleagues, and customers. Pay attention to your personal appearance; it can have considerable impact on your success in business.

Visitors to Singapore quickly realize that Singaporeans tend to walk fast. In fact, one researcher claimed that Singaporeans are the world’s fastest walkers. One reason might be that life in Singapore is stressful and competitive. Singapore is known for its Kiasu (fear of losing) culture, in which the main goal is for a person to do better than other people and to improve their standing in society. The effect of Kiasu mentality is so embedded in Singaporeans’ lives that it has become critical to their survival. People are competing in pursuit of the 5 Cs—cash, condominium, car, credit card, and country club.

The education of the next generation is also a main concern of parents. Parents desire that their children excel in their studies. In pursuit of winning entrance to the desired school, parents commit themselves to the school’s volunteer program. At a very young age, children attend tuition classes after school. In addition to cognitive skills, children are asked to learn skills such as dancing, playing musical instruments, and self-defense techniques. This Kiasu trend among parents in Singapore has spilled over to its neighboring country, Malaysia, especially to those living in the city. The competitive Kiasu culture is reflected in one of the highest grossing movies in Singapore, I Not Stupid. Though Singapore is not rich in natural resources to boost its economy, it has emerged as one of the Asia’s “four little dragons”—the most industrialized countries in East Asia. Singapore is known as a clean, safe, and efficient society. Its infrastructure facilities, urban planning, and transportation system are organized and well planned. Although Singapore is geographically the smallest country in Asia, it is voted as one of the highest quality-of-life places to live.

CAREER APPLICATIONS

1. Discuss the pros and cons of Kiasu culture.
2. Explain how watching a movie from another country could help you to interpret and understand its culture.
TABLE 2.4  Assembling a Business Wardrobe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smooth and Finished (Start With This)</th>
<th>Elegant and Refined (To Column 1, Add This)</th>
<th>Crisp and Starchy (To Column 2, Add This)</th>
<th>Up-to-the-Minute Trendy (To Column 3, Add This)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Choose well-tailored clothing that fits well; it doesn’t have to be expensive, but it does have to fit and be appropriate for business.</td>
<td>1. Choose form-fitting (but not skin-tight) clothing—not swinging or flowing fabrics, frills, or fussy trimmings.</td>
<td>1. Wear blouses or shirts that are or appear starched.</td>
<td>1. Supplement your foundation with pieces that reflect the latest styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Keep buttons, zippers, and hemlines in good repair.</td>
<td>2. Choose muted tones and soft colors or classics, such as a dark blue suit or a basic black dress.</td>
<td>2. Choose closed top-button shirts or button-down shirt collars, higher-neckline blouses, or long sleeves with French cuffs and cuff links.</td>
<td>2. Add a few pieces in bold colors but wear them sparingly to avoid a garish appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Select shoes that are comfortable enough for long days but neither too casual nor too dressy for the office; keep shoes clean and in good condition.</td>
<td>3. If possible, select a few classic pieces of jewelry (such as a string of pearls or diamond cuff links) for formal occasions.</td>
<td>3. Wear creased trousers or a longer skirt hemline.</td>
<td>3. Embellish your look with the latest jewelry and hairstyles but keep the overall effect looking professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Make sure the fabrics you wear are clean, are carefully pressed, and do not wrinkle easily.</td>
<td>4. Wear jackets that complement an outfit and lend an air of formality to your appearance. Avoid jackets with more than two tones; one color should dominate.</td>
<td>5. Choose colors that flatter your height, weight, skin tone, and style; sales advisors in good clothing stores can help you choose.</td>
<td>6. Wear jackets that complement an outfit and lend an air of formality to your appearance. Avoid jackets with more than two tones; one color should dominate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Choose colors that flatter your height, weight, skin tone, and style; sales advisors in good clothing stores can help you choose.</td>
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<td>7. Embellish your look with the latest jewelry and hairstyles but keep the overall effect looking professional.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grooming is as important as attire. Pay close attention to cleanliness and avoid using products with powerful scents, such as perfumed soaps, colognes, shampoos, and after-shave lotions (many people are bothered by these products, and some are allergic to them). Shampoo your hair frequently, keep your hands and nails neatly manicured, use mouthwash and deodorant, and make regular trips to a barber or hair stylist. 67

If you work in an office setting, you’ll spend as much time with your officemates as you do with family and friends. Personal demeanor is therefore a vital element of workplace harmony. No one expects (or wants) you to be artificially upbeat and bubbly every second of the day, but a single negative personality can make an entire office miserable. Rude behavior is more than an etiquette issue, too; it can have serious financial costs through lower productivity and lost business opportunities. 68 Every person in the company has a responsibility to contribute to a positive, energetic work environment.

Given the telephone’s central role in business communication, phone skills are essential in most professions. Because phone calls lack the visual richness of face-to-face conversations, you have to rely on your attitude and tone of voice to convey confidence and professionalism. Table 2.5 on the next page summarizes helpful tips for placing and receiving phone calls in a confident, professional manner.

Mobile phones are a contentious point of etiquette in today’s workplace. They can boost productivity if used mindfully, but they can be a productivity- and morale-draining disruption when used carelessly. Be aware that attitudes about mobile phones vary widely, and don’t be surprised if you encounter policies restricting their use in offices or meeting rooms. Nearly half of U.S. companies already have such policies. 69
TABLE 2.5 Quick Tips for Improving Your Phone Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Tips</th>
<th>Placing Calls</th>
<th>Receiving Calls</th>
<th>Using Voice Mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use frequent verbal responses that show you’re listening (“Oh yes,” “I see,” “That’s right”).</td>
<td>Answer promptly and with a smile so that you sound friendly and positive.</td>
<td>When recording your own outgoing message, make it brief and professional.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase your volume just slightly to convey your confidence.</td>
<td>Identify yourself and your company (some companies have specific instructions for what to say when you answer).</td>
<td>If you can, record temporary greetings on days when you are unavailable all day so that callers will know you’re gone for the day.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t speak in a monotone; vary your pitch and inflections so people know you’re interested.</td>
<td>Establish the needs of your caller by asking, “How may I help you?” If you know the caller’s name, use it.</td>
<td>Check your voice-mail messages regularly and return all necessary calls within 24 hours.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow down when conversing with people whose native language isn’t the same as yours.</td>
<td>If you can, answer questions promptly and efficiently; if you can’t help, tell them what you can do for them.</td>
<td>Leave simple, clear messages with your name, number (don’t assume the recipient has caller ID), purpose for calling, and times when you can be reached.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay focused on the call throughout; others can easily tell when you’re not paying attention.</td>
<td>If you must forward a call or put someone on hold, explain what you are doing first.</td>
<td>State your name and telephone number slowly so that the other person can easily write them down; repeat both if the other person doesn’t know you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like every other aspect of communication, your phone habits say a lot about how much respect you have for the people around you. Selecting obnoxious ring tones, talking loudly in open offices or public places, using your phone right next to someone else, making excessive or unnecessary personal calls during work hours, invading someone’s privacy by using your camera phone without permission, taking or making calls in restrooms and other inappropriate places, texting while someone is talking to you, allowing incoming calls to interrupt meetings or discussions—all are disrespectful choices that will reflect negatively on you.  

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN SOCIAL SETTINGS

From business lunches to industry conferences, you may represent your company when you’re out in public. Make sure your appearance and actions are appropriate to the situation. Get to know the customs of the culture when you meet new people. For example, in North America, a firm handshake is expected when two people meet, whereas a respectful bow of the head is more appropriate in Japan. If you are expected to shake hands, be aware that the passive “dead fish” handshake creates an extremely negative impression. If you are physically able, always stand when shaking someone’s hand.

When introducing yourself, include a brief description of your role in the company. When introducing two other people, speak their first and last names clearly and then try to offer some information (perhaps a shared professional interest) to help the two people ease into a conversation. Generally speaking, the lower-ranking person is
introduced to the senior-ranking person, without regard to gender.iii  

Business is often conducted over meals, and knowing the basics of dining etiquette will make you more effective in these situations.ii  Start by choosing foods that are easy to eat. Avoid alcoholic beverages in most instances, but if drinking one is appropriate, save it for the end of the meal. Leave business documents under your chair until entrée plates have been removed; the business aspect of the meal doesn’t usually begin until then.

Just as in the office, when you use your mobile phone around other people in public, you send the message that people around you aren’t as important as your call and that you don’t respect your caller’s privacy.iii If it’s not a matter of life and death, or at least an urgent request from your boss or a customer, wait until you’re back in the office.

Finally, always remember that business meals are a forum for business, period. Don’t get on your soapbox about politics, religion, or any other topic that’s likely to stir up emotions. Don’t complain about work, don’t ask deeply personal questions, avoid profanity, and be careful with humor—a joke that entertains some people could easily offend others.

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE ONLINE

Electronic media seem to be a breeding ground for poor etiquette. Learn the basics of professional online behavior to avoid mistakes that could hurt your company or your career. Here are some guidelines to follow whenever you are representing your company while using electronic media:iv

- **Avoid personal attacks.** The anonymous and instantaneous nature of online communication can cause even level-headed people to strike out in blog postings, social networks, and other media.
- **Stay focused on the original topic.** If you want to change the subject of an email exchange, a forum discussion, or a blog comment thread, start a new message.
- **Don’t present opinions as facts, and support facts with evidence.** This guideline applies to all communication, of course, but online venues in particular seem to tempt people into presenting their beliefs and opinions as unassailable truths.
- **Follow basic expectations of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.** Sending careless, acronym-filled messages that look like you’re texting your high school buddies makes you look like an amateur.
- **Use virus protection and keep it up to date.** Sending or posting a file that contains a computer virus is rude.
- **Ask if this is a good time for an IM chat.** Don’t assume that just because a person is showing as “available” on your IM system that he or she wants to chat with you right this instant.
- **Watch your language and keep your emotions under control.** A moment of indiscretion could haunt you forever.
- **Avoid multitasking while using IM and other tools.** You might think you’re saving time by doing a dozen things at once, but you’re probably making the other person wait while you bounce back and forth between IM and your other tasks.
- **Never assume privacy.** Assume that anything you type will be stored forever, could be forwarded to other people, and might be read by your boss or the company’s security staff.
- **Don’t use “reply all” in email unless everyone can benefit from your reply.** If one or more recipients of an email message don’t need the information in your reply, remove their addresses before you send.
- **Don’t waste others’ time with sloppy, confusing, or incomplete messages.** Doing so is disrespectful.
- **Respect boundaries of time and virtual space.** For instance, don’t start using an employee’s personal Facebook page for business messages unless you’ve discussed it beforehand, and don’t assume people are available to discuss work matters around the clock, even if you do find them online in the middle of the night.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. List the advantages and disadvantages of working in teams, describe the characteristics of effective teams, and highlight four key issues of group dynamics. Teams can achieve a higher level of performance than individuals because of the combined intelligence and energy of the group. Motivation and creativity can flourish in team settings. Moreover, individuals tend to perform better because they achieve a sense of purpose by belonging to a group. Teams also bring more input and a greater diversity of views, which tends to result in better decisions. And because team members participate in the decision process, they are more committed to seeing the team succeed. Teams are not without disadvantages, however. Poorly managed teams can be a waste of everyone’s time. For example, if members are pressured to conform, they may develop groupthink, which can lead to poor-quality decisions and ill-advised actions. Some members may let their private motives get in the way.

Four important aspects of group dynamics are assuming team roles, allowing for team evolution, resolving conflict, and overcoming resistance.

2. Offer guidelines for collaborative communication, identify major collaboration technologies, and explain how to give constructive feedback. Key guidelines for collaborative writing include (1) selecting collaborators carefully, (2) agreeing on project goals before starting, (3) giving the team time to bond before starting the work, (4) clarifying individual responsibilities, (5) establishing clear processes, (6) avoiding composing as a group, (7) making sure tools and techniques are ready and compatible, and (8) checking to see how things are going along the way.

Major collaboration technologies include web content management systems, wikis, groupware, and shared workspaces. To give constructive feedback, focus on the work and how it can be improved, rather than on the person and the mistakes.

3. List the key steps needed to ensure productive team meetings. The most important step in planning a meeting is to make sure that a meeting is necessary and is the best way to accomplish the given objective. If it is, proceed by identifying the purpose of the meeting, selecting the right mix of participants to accomplish the goal, choosing the venue and time carefully, and setting a clear agenda.

Once the meeting is underway, work to keep the discussion on track, follow agreed-upon rules, encourage participation, participate actively yourself, and close the meeting effectively to make sure all decisions and action items are clearly understood.

4. Identify the major technologies used to enhance or replace in-person meetings. Meeting enhancement and replacement technologies range from simple audio teleconferencing and IM chat sessions to videoconferences, telepresence systems, web-based meetings, and virtual worlds that range from realistic-looking conference rooms to the otherworldly environment of Second Life.

5. Identify three major modes of listening, describe the listening process, and explain the problem of selective listening. Content listening is listening to understand and retain the information in the speaker’s message. Critical listening is listening to understand and evaluate the meaning of the speaker’s message on several levels, including the logic of the argument and the strength of the speaker’s evidence. Empathic listening is listening to understand the speaker’s feelings, needs, and wants. Regardless of the mode used, effective listeners try to engage in active listening, making a conscious effort to turn off their own filters and biases to truly hear and understand what the other party is saying.

The listening process involves five activities: (1) receiving (physically hearing the message), (2) decoding (assigning meaning to what you hear), (3) remembering (storing the message for future reference), (4) evaluating (thinking about the message), and (5) responding (reacting to the message, taking action, or giving feedback).

Listening can be hampered by a variety of barriers, one of the most common of which is selective listening. When people listen selectively, they hear only parts of the speaker’s message, either because they allow their minds to wander or engage in defensive listening by tuning out information that threatens their beliefs or egos.

6. Explain the importance of nonverbal communication, and identify six major categories of nonverbal expression. Nonverbal communication is important because nonverbal signals can strengthen, weaken, or even replace verbal messages. The major categories of nonverbal signals are facial expression, gestures and posture, vocal characteristics, personal appearance, touch, and the use of time and space.

7. Explain the importance of business etiquette, and identify three key areas in which good etiquette is essential. Attention to etiquette is essential to success in every form of
business communication—so much so that etiquette is considered an important business skill. Poor etiquette can hinder team efforts, drain morale and productivity, drive away customers and investors, and limit your career potential. Three key areas in which good etiquette is essential are the workplace, social settings in which you represent your employer, and online interactions in which you represent your employer.

**KEY TERMS**

**active listening** Making a conscious effort to turn off filters and biases to truly hear and understand what someone is saying

**collaboration** Working together to meet complex challenges

**committees** Formal teams that usually have a long life span and can become a permanent part of the organizational structure

**constructive feedback** Focuses on the process and outcomes of communication, not on the people involved

**content listening** Listening to understand and retain the speaker's message

**content management systems** Computer systems that organize and control the content for websites

**critical listening** Listening to understand and evaluate the meaning of the speaker's message

**destructive feedback** Delivers criticism with no guidance to stimulate improvement

**empathic listening** Listening to understand the speaker’s feelings, needs, and wants so that you can appreciate his or her point of view

**group dynamics** The interactions and processes that take place among the members of a team

**groupthink** Situation in which peer pressure causes individual team members to withhold contrary or unpopular opinions

**groupware** Computer-based systems that let people communicate, share files, present materials, and work on documents simultaneously

**hidden agenda** Private, counterproductive motives, such as a desire to take control of the group

**minutes** Written summary of the important information presented and the decisions made during a meeting

**nonverbal communication** Sending and receiving information, both intentionally and unintentionally, without using written or spoken language

**norms** Informal standards of conduct that members share and that guide member behavior

**parliamentary procedure** A time-tested method for planning and running effective meetings; the best-known guide to this procedure is Robert's Rules of Order

**participative management** The effort to involve employees in the company's decision making

**problem-solving teams** Teams that assemble to resolve specific issues and then disband when their goals have been accomplished

**selective listening** Listening to only part of what a speaker is saying; ignoring the parts one doesn’t agree with or find interesting

**self-oriented roles** Unproductive team roles in which people are motivated mainly to fulfill personal needs

**shared workspaces** Online "virtual offices" that give everyone on a team access to the same set of resources and information

**social networking technologies** Online technologies such as LinkedIn and Facebook that help erase the constraints of geographic and organization boundaries

**task forces** Another form of problem-solving teams, often with members from more than one organization

**task-oriented roles** Productive team roles directed toward helping the team reach its goals

**team** A unit of two or more people who share a mission and the responsibility for working to achieve a common goal

**team-maintenance roles** Productive team roles directed toward helping everyone work well together

**virtual meetings** Meetings that take place online rather than in person

**virtual teams** Teams whose members work in different locations and interact electronically

**wiki** Special type of website that allows anyone with access to add new material and edit existing material

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**Checklist**

**Improving Meeting Productivity**

**A. Prepare carefully.**
- Make sure the meeting is necessary.
- Decide on your purpose.
- Select participants carefully.
- Choose the venue and the time.
- Establish and distribute a clear agenda.

**B. Lead effectively and participate fully.**
- Keep the meeting on track.
- Follow agreed-upon rules.
- Encourage participation.
- Participate actively.
- Close effectively.

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**Checklist**

**Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening**

- Lower barriers to physical reception whenever you can (such as avoiding interrupting speakers by asking questions or by exhibiting disruptive nonverbal behaviors).
- Avoid selective listening by focusing on the speaker and carefully analyzing what you hear.
- Keep an open mind by avoiding any prejudgment and by not listening defensively.
- Don’t count on your memory; write down or record important information.
- Improve your short-term memory by repeating information or breaking it into shorter lists.
- Improve your long-term memory by using association, categorization, visualization, and mnemonics.

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**Checklist**

**Improving Nonverbal Communication Skills**

- Understand the roles that nonverbal signals play in communication, complementing verbal language by strengthening, weakening, or replacing words.
- Note that facial expressions (especially eye contact) reveal the type and intensity of a speaker’s feelings.
- Watch for cues from gestures and posture.
- Listen for vocal characteristics that can signal the emotions underlying the speaker’s words.
- Recognize that listeners are influenced by physical appearance.
- Be careful with physical contact; touch can convey positive attributes but can also be interpreted as dominance or sexual interest.
- Pay attention to the use of time and space.

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COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AT ROSEN LAW FIRM

You recently joined Rosen Law Firm and quickly became an enthusiastic user of the company’s internal wiki. In your brief time being involved with the wiki, you have observed some behavior that runs counter to the spirit of collaborative writing. Study these two scenarios and decide how to respond.

INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE:

One particular employee keeps editing your pages on the wiki, often making changes that appear to add no value, as far as you can see. She doesn’t seem to be editing other employees’ pages nearly so often, so you are beginning to wonder if she has a personal grudge against you. You want to address this uncomfortable situation without dragging your boss into it. First, decide how to approach your contentious colleague. Should you drop by her office unannounced, call her on the phone, send her an email message, or perhaps insert a sarcastic comment about excessive editing on one of her wiki pages? Second, whichever mode of communication you’ve chosen, outline the message you think you should share with her.

TEAM CHALLENGE:

A common dilemma in every form of collaborative writing is deciding how soon to share early drafts with your colleagues in order to get their feedback and contributions. Should you send out an unpolished rough draft for the team’s input before investing a lot of time in polishing and formatting, or should you do a second or third draft to enhance readability—knowing that the team might delete entire sections that you’ve worked hard to polish? On the Rosen wiki, some contributors seem to go into “grammar attack mode” whenever a rough draft appears. They seem to ignore the message and content altogether and instead focus on punctuation, grammar, and formatting concerns. With a small team of fellow students, draft some brief guidelines for wiki contributors, conveying these three points: (1) Punctuation, grammar, and formatting are definitely important, but worrying about them too early in the writing process can hamper the free exploration of ideas and information; (2) when reviewing early drafts, wiki users need to make a conscious effort to look past the presentation and focus on the information; and (3) contributors who post rough drafts seeking input should make the pages at least minimally readable so that reviewers can focus on the content and ideas. (To learn more about editing and working with wikis, you can peek ahead to page 185 in Chapter 6 and page 451 in Chapter 14.)

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

To review chapter content related to each question, refer to the indicated Learning Objective.

1. How can organizations and employees benefit from successful teamwork? [LO-1]
2. What is groupthink, and how can it affect an organization? [LO-1]
3. How can employees and companies take advantage of social networking technologies to promote teamwork? [LO-2]
4. Why would a company use a wiki to support team collaboration rather than a content management system? [LO-2]
5. As a team or department leader, what steps can you take to ensure that your meetings are successful and efficient? [LO-3]
6. What are the advantages of virtual meetings? [LO-4]
7. What are the main activities that make up the listening process? [LO-5]
8. How does content listening differ from critical listening and empathetic listening? [LO-5]
9. What are the six major categories of nonverbal communication? [LO-6]
10. Why is etiquette an important business skill? [LO-7]

APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

To review chapter content related to each question, refer to the indicated Learning Objective.

1. You head up the interdepartmental design review team for a manufacturer of high-performance motorcycles, and things are not going well at the moment. The design engineers and marketing strategists keep arguing about which should be a higher priority, performance or aesthetics, and the accountants say both groups are driving the cost of the new model through the roof by adding too many new features. Everyone has valid points to make, but the team is bogging down in conflict. Explain how you could go about resolving the stalemate. [LO-1]

2. You and another manager in your company disagree about whether employees should be encouraged to create online profiles on LinkedIn and other business-oriented social networking websites. You say these connections can be valuable to employees by helping them meet their peers throughout the industry and valuable to the company by identifying potential sales leads and business partners. The other manager says that encouraging employees to become better known...
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in the industry will only make it easier for competitors to lure them away with enticing job offers. Write a brief email message that outlines your argument. (Make up any information you need about the company and its industry.) [LO-2]

3. How can nonverbal communication help you run a meeting? How can it help you call a meeting to order, emphasize important topics, show approval, express reservations, regulate the flow of conversation, and invite a colleague to continue with a comment? [LO-3], [LO-6]

4. Considering what you’ve learned about nonverbal communication, what are some of the ways in which communication might break down during an online meeting in which the participants can see video images of only the person presenting at any given time—and then only his or her head? [LO-6]

5. Why do you think people are more likely to engage in rude behaviors during online communication than during in-person communication? [LO-7]

PRACTICE YOUR SKILLS

Message for Analysis: Planning Meetings [LO-3]

You are the president of a student unit and have made the following notes for your meeting. Prepare a formal agenda by putting the following items in the logical order and rewriting, where necessary, to make the phrases more consistent:

- Student unit meeting, 3:00 p.m., Monday, October 19, 2011.
- Future meetings: The student unit will assemble after every four weeks.
- Student unit will guide the freshmen joining the university.
- I will call the meeting to order.
- Student unit secretary will be nominated from the elected members.
- Meeting will take place in Conference Room 1.
- Meeting will be telecasted on the university television network.
- Duties of the members will be approved.

Agenda points:

- How to guide the junior and senior students in taking courses.
- Accommodation problems.
- Nomination of secretary.
- How to advise the freshmen.
- Distribution of student unit bylaws to members.

Exercises

Active links for all websites in this chapter can be found on MyBcommLab; see your User Guide for instructions on accessing the content for this chapter. Each activity is labeled according to the primary skill or skills you will need to use. To review relevant chapter content, you can refer to the indicated Learning Objective. In some instances, supporting information will be found in another chapter, as indicated.

1. Collaboration: Working in Teams [LO-1], [LO-2] In teams assigned by your instructor, prepare a 10-minute presentation on the potential disadvantages of using social media for business communication. When the presentation is ready, discuss how effective the team was using the criteria of (1) having a clear objective and a shared sense of purpose, (2) communicating openly and honestly, (3) reaching decisions by consensus, (4) thinking creatively, and (5) knowing how to resolve conflict. Be prepared to discuss your findings with the rest of the class.

2. Collaboration: Working in Teams [LO-1] In teams of four or five classmates, role play a scenario in which the team is to decide which department at your college will receive a $1 million gift from an anonymous donor. The catch: Each member of the team will advocate for a different department (decide among yourselves who represents which departments), which means that all but one member will “lose” in the final decision. Working as a team, decide which department will receive the donation and discuss the results to help everyone on the team support the decision. Be prepared to present your choice and your justification for it to the rest of the class.

3. Negotiation and Conflict Resolution: Resolving Conflicts; Communication Ethics: Providing Ethical Leadership [LO-1], Chapter 1 During team meetings, one member constantly calls for votes or decisions before all the members have voiced their views. As the leader, you asked this member privately about his behavior. He replied that he was trying to move the team toward its goals, but you are concerned that he is really trying to take control. How can you deal with this situation without removing the member from the group?

4. Collaboration: Collaborating on Writing Projects; Media Skills: Blogging [LO-2] In this project, you will conduct research on your own and then merge your results with those of the rest of your team. Search Twitter for messages on the subject of workplace safety. (You can use Twitter’s advanced search page at http://search.twitter.com/advanced or use the “site: twitter.com” qualifier on a regular search engine.) Compile at least five general safety tips that apply to any office setting, and then meet with your team to select the five best tips from all those the team has collected. Collaborate on a blog post that lists the team’s top five tips.

5. Communication Etiquette: Etiquette in the Workplace, Participating in Meetings [LO-3], [LO-7] In group meetings, some of your colleagues have a habit of interrupting and arguing with the speaker, taking credit for ideas that aren’t theirs, and shooting down ideas they don’t agree with. You’re the newest person in the group and not sure if this is accepted behavior in this company, but it concerns you both personally and professionally. Should you go with the flow and adopt their behavior or stick with your own communication style, even though you might get lost in the noise? In a two-paragraph email message or post for your class blog, explain the pros and cons of both approaches.
6. **Collaboration: Participating in Meetings [LO-3]** With a classmate, attend a local community or campus meeting where you can observe a group discussion, vote, or take other group action. During the meeting, take notes individually and, afterward, work together to answer the following questions.
   a. What is your evaluation of this meeting? In your answer, consider (1) the leader’s ability to articulate the meeting’s goals clearly, (2) the leader’s ability to engage members in a meaningful discussion, (3) the group’s dynamics, and (4) the group’s listening skills.
   b. How did group members make decisions? Did they vote? Did they reach decisions by consensus? Did those with dissenting opinions get an opportunity to voice their objections?
   c. How well did the individual participants listen? How could you tell?
   d. Did any participants change their expressed views or their votes during the meeting? Why might that have happened?
   e. Did you observe any of the communication barriers discussed in Chapter 1? Identify them.
   f. Compare the notes you took during the meeting with those of your classmate. What differences do you notice? How do you account for these differences?

7. **Collaboration: Leading Meetings [LO-3], Chapter 3** Every month, each employee in your department is expected to give a brief oral presentation on the status of his or her project. However, your department has recently hired an employee who has a severe speech impediment that prevents people from understanding most of what he has to say. As department manager, how will you resolve this dilemma? Please explain.

8. **Collaboration: Using Collaboration Technologies [LO-4]** In a team assigned by your instructor, use Zoho (www.zoho.com; free for personal use), Google Docs (http://docs.google.com), or a comparable system to collaborate on a set of directions that out-of-town visitors could use to reach a specific point on your campus, such as a stadium or dorm. The team should choose the location and the mode(s) of transportation involved. Be creative—brainstorm the best ways to guide first-time visitors to the selected location using all the media at your disposal.

9. **Interpersonal Communication: Listening Actively [LO-5]** For the next several days, take notes on your listening performance during at least a half-dozen situations in class, during social activities, and at work, if applicable. Referring to the traits of effective listeners in Table 2.3 (page 85), rate yourself using always, frequently, occasionally, or never on these positive listening habits. In a report no longer than one page, summarize your analysis and identify specific areas in which you can improve your listening skills.

10. **Interpersonal Communication: Listening to Empathize [LO-5]** Think back over conversations you have had with friends, family members, coworkers, or classmates in the past week. Select a conversation in which the other person wanted to talk about something that was troubling him or her—a bad situation at work, a scary exam on the horizon, difficulties with a professor, a health problem, financial concerns, or the like. As you replay this conversation in your mind, think about how well you did in terms of empathic listening (see page 84). For example, did you find yourself being critical when the person really just needed someone to listen? Did you let the person know, by your words or actions, that you cared about his or her dilemma, even if you were not able to help in any other way? Analyze your listening performance in a brief email message to your instructor. Note: Do not disclose any private information in your message; you can change the names of the people involved or the circumstances as needed to maintain privacy.

11. **Nonverbal Communication: Analyzing Nonverbal Signals [LO-6]** Select a business letter and envelope that you have received at work or home. Analyze their appearance. What nonverbal messages do they send? Are these messages consistent with the content of the letter? If not, what could the sender have done to make the nonverbal communication consistent with the verbal communication? Summarize your findings in a post on your class blog or in an email message to your instructor.

12. **Nonverbal Communication: Analyzing Nonverbal Signals [LO-6]** Describe what the following body movements suggest when someone exhibits them during a conversation. How do such movements influence your interpretation of spoken words? Summarize your findings in a post on your class blog or in an email message to your instructor.
   a. Shifting one’s body continuously while seated
   b. Twirling and playing with one’s hair
   c. Sitting in a sprawled position
   d. Rolling one’s eyes
   e. Extending a weak handshake

13. **Communication Etiquette: Telephone Skills [LO-7]** Late on a Friday afternoon, you learn that the facilities department is going to move you—and your computer, your desk, and all your files—to another office first thing Monday morning. However, you have an important client meeting scheduled in your office for Monday afternoon, and you need to finalize some contract details on Monday morning. You simply can’t lose access to your office at this point, and you’re more than a little annoyed that your boss didn’t ask you before approving the move. He has already left for the day, but you know he usually checks his voice mail over the weekend, so you decide to leave a message, asking him to cancel the move or at least call you at home as soon as possible. Using the voice-mail guidelines listed in Table 2.5 (page 90), plan your message (use an imaginary phone number as your contact number and make up any other details you need for the call). As directed by your instructor, submit either a written script of the message or a podcast recording of the actual message.

14. **Communication Etiquette: Etiquette in the Workplace [LO-7]** As the local manager of an international accounting firm, you place high priority on professional etiquette. Not only does it communicate respect to your clients, it also instills confidence in your firm by showing that you and your staff are aware of and able to meet the expectations of
almost any audience. Earlier today, you took four recently hired college graduates to lunch with an important client. You’ve done this for years, and it’s usually an upbeat experience for everyone, but today’s lunch was a disaster. One of the new employees made not one, not two, but three calls on his mobile phone during lunch. Another interrupted the client several times and even got into a mild argument. The third employee kept making sarcastic jokes about politics, making everyone at the table uncomfortable. And the fourth showed up dressed like she was expecting to bale hay or work in a coal mine, not have a business lunch in a posh restaurant. You’ve already called the client to apologize, but now you need to coach these employees on proper business etiquette. Draft a brief memo to these employees, explaining why etiquette is so important to the company’s success—and to their individual careers.

**EXPAND YOUR SKILLS**

**Critique the Professionals**

Celebrities can learn from successful businesses when it comes to managing their careers, but businesses can learn from successful celebrities, too—particularly when it comes to building communities online using social media. For instance, social media guru Dan Schawbel cites Vin Diesel, Ashton Kutcher, Lady Gaga, Lenny Kravitz, and Michael Phelps as celebrities who have used Facebook to build their personal brands. Locate three celebrities (musicians, actors, authors, or athletes) who have sizable fan bases on Facebook and analyze how they use the social network. Using whatever medium your instructor requests, write a brief analysis (no more than one page) of the lessons, positive or negative, that a business could learn from these celebrities. Be sure to cite specific elements from the Facebook pages you’ve chosen, and if you think any of the celebrities have made mistakes in their use of Facebook, describe those as well.

**Sharpening Your Career Skills Online**

Bovée and Thill’s Business Communication Web Search, at http://businesscommunicationblog.com/websearch, is a unique research tool designed specifically for business communication research. Use the Web Search function to find an online video, a podcast, or a PowerPoint presentation that offers advice on improving your active listening skills in business situations. Write a brief email message to your instructor, describing the item that you found and summarizing the career skills information you learned from it.