AN INTRODUCTION TO GROUP COMMUNICATION



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An Introduction to Group Communication

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1: INTRODUCING GROUP COMMUNICATION

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1.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. Think of five words that express what you want to do and where you want to be five years from now. Share your five words with your classmates and listen to their responses. What patterns do you observe in the responses? Write a paragraph that addresses at least one observation.
2. With the results of our introductory exercises #1 in mind, please list what you can do and where you could be in five years without support, interaction, or collaboration with anyone other than yourself. Share and compare your results with classmates.
3. Create a list of at least 10 groups to which you belong. Family, church, friends or clubs, online groups, and even this class count! Share and compare your results with classmates.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

Getting Started

Communication is an activity, skill, and art that incorporates lessons learned across a wide spectrum of human knowledge. Perhaps the most time-honored form of communication is storytelling. We’ve told each other stories for ages to help make sense of our world, anticipate the future, and certainly to entertain ourselves. We gather around in groups and hear or see stories that say something about our world, our community, who we are. How did we learn the stories we tell each other? From each other. Groups and teams come together to create amazing movies. Artists gather together to produce songs that inspire us. People, effectively working together, can do the impossible.

Telling a story to your friends or peers draws on your understanding of yourself, your message, and how you communicate it to a group that is simultaneously communicating back to you. They respond to your story, perhaps tell a few of their own, and you feel like you are in a group. You are an individual, and a member of the group, at the same time. You are a member of many groups. Knowing how to communicate effectively as a member of a team or in a group is key to your success. You were not born knowing how to write, or even how to talk—but in the process of growing up you have probably learned something about how to tell, and how not tell, a story. When people stand around and want to know what comes next you know you have their attention. They are as much a part of the story as you are. When everyone is involved and listening or participating, it is a fun experience.

You didn’t learn to text in a day, and didn’t learn all the codes, from LOL (Laugh Out Loud) to BRB (Be Right Back), right away. In the same way, learning to communicate well requires you to read and study how others have expressed themselves, then to adapt what you have learned to your present task, whether it is texting a brief message to a friend, presenting your qualifications in a job interview, or making a sales presentation. You come to this text with skills and an understanding that will provide a valuable foundation as we explore group communication.

Effective communication, in all its many forms, takes preparation, practice, and persistence. There are many ways to learn communication skills; the school of experience, or “hard knocks,” is one of them. But in the real world, a “knock” (or lesson learned) may come at the expense of your credibility through a blown presentation to a client. The classroom environment, with a compilation of information and resources such as a text, can offer you a trial run where you get to try out new ideas and skills before you have to use them to communicate effectively to make a sale, motivate your team members, or form a new partnership. Listening to yourself, or perhaps the comments of others, may help you reflect on new ways to present or perceive, thoughts, ideas, and concepts. The net result is your growth; ultimately your ability to communicate in teams and groups will improve, opening more doors than you might anticipate.

As you learn the material in this text, each part will contribute to the whole. The degree to which you attend to each part will ultimately help give you the skills, confidence, and preparation to use communication in furthering your career.

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1.1: Why Study Group Communication?

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the importance of group communication

Communication is key to your success, in relationships, in the workplace, as a citizen of your country, and across your lifetime. Your ability to communicate comes from experience, which can be an effective teacher, but this text and the related group communication course will offer you a wealth of experiences gathered from professionals across their lifetimes. You can learn from the lessons they've learned and be a more effective team and group communicator right out of the gate. According to Ken Boughrum, Executive Vice President and Managing Director, and Tyler Durham, Vice President and Managing Consultant, Stromberg Consulting, "Great teams are distinguished from good teams by how effectively they communicate. Great team communication is more than the words that are said or written. Power is leveraged by the team's ability to actively listen, clarify, understand, and live by the principle that "everything communicates." The actions, the tone, the gestures, the infrastructure, the environment and the things that are no done or said speak and inform just as loudly as words.O'Rourke, J., and Yarbrough, B, (2008). Leading Groups and Teams. Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, p. 2. Effective teams and groups start with effective communication.

Communication Influences Your Thinking about Yourself and Others

We all share a fundamental drive to communicate. Communication can be defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning. Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding and Sharing. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. p. 6. You share meaning in what you say and how you say it, both in oral and written forms. If you could not communicate, what would life be like? A series of never-ending frustrations? Not being able to ask for what you need, or even to understand the needs of others?

Being unable to communicate might even mean losing a part of yourself, for you communicate your self-concept—your sense of self and awareness of who you are—in many ways. Do you like to write? Do you find it easy to make a phone call to a stranger, or to speak to a room full of people? Do you like to work in teams and groups? Perhaps someone told you that you don't speak clearly, or your grammar needs improvement. Does that make you more or less likely to want to communicate? For some, it may be a positive challenge, while for others it may be discouraging, but in all cases, your ability to communicate is central to your self-concept.

Take a look at your clothes. What are the brands you are wearing? What do you think they say about you? Do you feel that certain styles of shoes, jewelry, tattoos, music, or even automobiles express who you are? Part of your self-concept may be that you express yourself through texting, or through writing longer documents like essays and research papers, or through the way you speak. Those labels and brands in some ways communicate with your group or community. They are recognized, and to some degree, are associated with you. Just as your words represent you in writing, how you present yourself with symbols and images influences how others perceive you.

On the other side of the coin, your communication skills help you to understand others—not just their words, but also their tone of voice, their nonverbal gestures, or the format of their written documents provide you with clues about who they are and what their values and priorities may be. Active listening and reading are also part of being a successful communicator.

Communication Influences How You Learn

When you were an infant, you learned to talk over a period of many months. There was a group of caregivers around you that talked to each other, and sometimes you, and you caught on that you could get something when you used a word correctly. Before you knew it you were speaking in sentences, with words, in a language you learned from your family or those around you. When you got older, you didn't learn to ride a bike, drive a car, or even text a message on your cell phone in one brief moment. You need to begin the process of improving your communication skills with the frame of mind that it will require effort, persistence, and self-correction.

You learn to speak in public by first having conversations, then by answering questions and expressing your opinions in class, and finally by preparing and delivering a “stand-up” speech. Similarly, you learn to write by first learning to read, then by writing and learning to think critically. Your speaking and writing are reflections of your thoughts, experience, and education, and part of that combination is your level of experience listening to other speakers, reading documents and styles of writing, and studying formats similar to what you aim to produce. Speaking and writing are both key communication skills that you will use in teams and groups.

As you study group communication, you may receive suggestions for improvement and clarification from professionals more experienced than yourself. Take their suggestions as challenges to improve, don’t give up when your first speech or first draft does not communicate the message you intend. Stick with it until you get it right. Your success in communicating is a skill that applies to almost every field of work, and it makes a difference in your relationships with others.

Remember, luck is simply a combination of preparation and timing. You want to be prepared to communicate well when given the opportunity. Each time you do a good job, your success will bring more success.

Communication Represents You and Your Employer

You want to make a good first impression on your friends and family, on your instructors, and on your employer. They all want you to convey a positive image, as it reflects on them. In your career, you will represent your business or company in teams and groups, and your professionalism and attention to detail will reflect positively on you and set you up for success.

As an effective member of the team, you will benefit from having the ability to communicate clearly and with clarity. These are skills you will use for the rest of your life. Positive improvements in these skills will have a positive impact on your relationships, your prospects for employment, and your ability to make a difference in the world.

Communication Skills Are Desired by Business and Industry

Oral and written communication proficiencies are consistently ranked in the top ten desirable skills by employer surveys year after year. In fact, high-powered business executives sometimes hire consultants to coach them in sharpening their communication skills. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the top five personal qualities/skills potential employers seek are (NACE, 2009):

1. Communication skills (verbal and written)
2. Strong work ethic
3. Teamwork skills (works well with others, group communication)
4. Initiative
5. Analytical Skills

Knowing this, you can see that one way for you to be successful and increase your promotion potential is to increase your abilities to speak and write effectively.

Teams and groups are almost universal across all fields because no one personal has all the skills, knowledge, or ability to do everything with an equal degree of excellence. Employees work with each other in manufacturing and service industries on a daily basis. An individual with excellent communication skills is an asset to every organization. No matter what career you plan to pursue, learning to interact, contribute, and excel in groups and teams will help you get there.



Figure 1.1.1: Effective communication skills are assets that will get you there © Jupiter Images

Key Takeaway

Communication helps you understand yourself and others, learn new things, and build your career.

Exercise 1.1.1

1. Imagine that you have been hired to make “cold calls” to ask people whether they are familiar with a new restaurant that has just opened in your neighborhood. Write a script for the phone call, and focus on the climate, the environment, and the service. Ask a classmate to co-present as you deliver the script orally in class, as if you were making a phone call to the classmate. Discuss your experience with the rest of the class.
2. Imagine you have been assigned the task of creating a job description for a Social Media Manager. Search online and find at least two sample job descriptions, and create one. Make sure you pay attention to words like “effective in virtual teams” and other details that highlight the importance of communication skills. Please present the job description to the class and share what you learned on how communication skills play a role in the tasks or duties you have included.

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1.2: What Is Communication?

Learning Objectives

1. Define communication and describe communication as a process
2. Identify and describe the eight essential components of communication
3. Identify and describe two models of communication

Many theories have been proposed to describe, predict, and understand the behaviors and phenomena of which communication consists. When it comes to communicating in the workplace, we are often less interested in theory than in making sure our interactions generate the desired results. As a member of a group or team we are often collectively judged on what we produced, not what we individually contributed to the final product. Working in a team can be a challenge, but it can also produce results no individual member could have accomplished alone. Knowing what makes for a productive group starts with effective communication underscore how valuable it can be to understand what communication is and how it works.

Defining Communication

The root of the word “communication” in Latin is *communicare*, which means to share or to make common. Weekley, E. (1967). An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English (Vol. 1). New York: Dover Publications, p. 338. Communication is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning. Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding and Sharing*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, p. 6.

At the center of our study of communication is the relationship that involves interaction between participants. This definition serves us well with its emphasis on the process, which we’ll examine in depth across this text, of coming to understand and share another’s point of view effectively.

The first keyword in this definition is the word "process". A process is a dynamic activity that is hard to describe because it changes. Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding And Sharing*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. Imagine you are alone in your kitchen, thinking to yourself. Someone you know (say, your mother) enters the kitchen and you talk briefly. What has changed? Now imagine that your mother is joined by someone else, someone you haven’t met before—and that this stranger listens intently as you speak, almost as if you were giving a speech. What has changed? Your perspective might change, and you might watch your words more closely. The feedback or response from your mother and the stranger may cause you to re-evaluate what you are saying. When we interact, all of these factors and many more influence the process of communication.

The second keyword is "understanding". “To understand is to perceive, to interpret, and to relate our perception and interpretation to what we already know.” McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. If a friend tells you a story about falling off a bike, what image comes to mind? Now your friend points out the window and you see a motorcycle lying on the ground. Understanding the words and the concepts or objects they refer to is an important part of the communication process.

Next comes the word "sharing". Sharing means doing something together with one or more other people. You may share a joint activity, as when you share in compiling a report; or you may benefit jointly from a resource, as when you and several co-workers share a pizza. In communication, sharing occurs when you convey thoughts, feelings, ideas, or insights to others. You can also share with yourself—a process called intrapersonal communication—when you bring ideas to consciousness, ponder how you feel about something, or figure out the solution to a problem and have a classic “Aha!” moment where something becomes clear.

Finally, meaning is what we share through communication. The word “bike” represents both a bicycle and a short name for a motorcycle. By looking at the context the word is used in, and by asking questions, we can discover the shared meaning of the word and understand the message.

Eight Essential Components of Communication

In order to better understand the communication process and how it provides a foundation for group communication, let's break it down into eight essential components. Each component serves an integral function in the overall process.

Source

The source imagines, creates, and sends the message. In a public speaking situation, the source is the person giving the speech. He or she conveys the message by sharing new information with the audience. The speaker also conveys a message through his or her tone of voice, body language, and choice of clothing. Taking a turn as a group member can sometimes feel like a speech as all eyes are on you. The speaker begins by first determining the message—what they want to say and how they want to say it. The next step involves encoding the message by choosing just the right order or the perfect words to convey the intended meaning. The third step is to present the information, sending the information to the receiver, audience, or group members. Finally, by watching for the audience's reaction, the source perceives how well they received the message, and responds with clarification or supporting information.

Message

"The message is the stimulus or meaning produced by the source for the receiver or audience." McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 10. When you plan to give a speech or write a report, your message may seem to be only the words you choose that will convey your meaning. But that is just the beginning. The words are brought together with grammar and organization. You may choose to save your most important point for last. The message also consists of the way you say it—in a speech, with your tone of voice, your body language, and your appearance—and in a report, with your writing style, punctuation (!), and the headings and formatting you choose. In addition, part of the message may be the environment or context you present in and any noise which may make your message hard to hear or see.

Imagine, for example, that you are addressing a large audience of sales reps and are aware there is a World Series game tonight. Your sales team members might have a hard time settling down, but you may choose to open with, "I understand there is an important game tonight." In this way, by expressing verbally something that most people in your audience are aware of and interested in, you might grasp and focus their attention.

Channel

"The channel is the way in which a message or messages travel between source and receiver."McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p.10. For example, think of your television. How many channels do you have on your television? Each channel takes up some space, even in a digital world, in the cable or in the signal that brings the message of each channel to your home. Television combines an audio signal you hear with a visual signal you see. Together they convey the message to the receiver or audience. Turn off the volume on your television. Can you still understand what is happening? Many times you can, because the body language conveys part of the message of the show. Now turn up the volume but turn around so that you cannot see the television. You can still hear the dialogue and follow the storyline.

Similarly, when you speak or write, you are using a channel to convey your message. Spoken channels include face-to-face conversations, speeches, telephone conversations and voice mail messages, radio, public address systems, and voice-over-internet protocol (VOIP). Written channels include letters, memorandums, purchase orders, invoices, newspaper and magazine articles, blogs, e-mail, text messages, tweets, and so forth.

Receiver

"The receiver receives the message from the source, analyzing and interpreting the message in ways both intended and unintended by the source." McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p.10. To better understand this component, think of a receiver on a football team. The quarterback throws the message (football) to a receiver, who must see and interpret where to catch the football. The quarterback may intend for the receiver to "catch" his message in one way, but the receiver may see things differently and miss the football (the intended meaning) altogether. When the quarterback and receiver, as well as the rest of the team, fail to communicate, an interception—like a miscommunication—is bound to occur.

As a receiver you listen, see, touch, smell, and/or taste to receive a message. Your team members "size you up," much as

you might check them out long before you open your mouth. The nonverbal responses of your listeners can serve as clues on how to adjust your opening. By imagining yourself in their place, you anticipate what you would look for if you were them. Just as a quarterback plans where the receiver will be in order to place the ball correctly, you too can recognize the interaction between source and receiver in a business communication context. All of this happens at the same time, illustrating why and how communication is always changing.

Feedback

When you respond to the source, intentionally or unintentionally, you are giving feedback. Feedback is composed of messages the receiver sends back to the source. Verbal or nonverbal, all of these feedback signals allow the source to see how well, how accurately (or how poorly and inaccurately) the message was received. Feedback also provides an opportunity for the receiver or audience to ask for clarification, to agree or disagree, or to indicate that the source could make the message more interesting. As the amount of feedback increases, the accuracy of communication also increases. Leavitt, & Mueller, R. (1951). some effects of feedback on communication. *Human Relations, 4*, 401–410.

For example, suppose you are a sales manager participating in a conference call with four sales reps. As the source, you want to tell the reps to take advantage of the fact that it is World Series season to close sales on baseball-related sports gear. You state your message, but you hear no replies from your listeners. You might assume that this means they understood and agreed with you—but later in the month, you might be disappointed to find that very few sales were made. If you followed up your message with a request for feedback ("Does this make sense? Do any of you have any questions?") you might have an opportunity to clarify your message, and to find out whether any of the sales reps believed your suggestion would not work with their customers.

Environment

"The environment is the atmosphere, physical and psychological, where you send and receive messages." McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 11. The environment can include the tables, chairs, lighting, and sound equipment that are in the room. The room itself is an example of the environment. The environment can also include factors like formal dress, that may indicate whether a discussion is open and caring or more professional and formal. People may be more likely to have an intimate conversation when they are physically close to each other, and less likely when they can only see each other from across the room. In that case, they may text each other, itself an intimate form of communication. The choice to text is influenced by the environment. As a speaker, your environment will impact and play a role in your speech. It's always a good idea to go check out where you'll be speaking before the day of the actual presentation.

Context

"The context of the communication interaction involves the setting, scene, and expectations of the individuals involved." McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p.11. A professional communication context may involve business suits (environmental cues) that directly or indirectly influence expectations of language and behavior among the participants.

A meeting, presentation, or personal conversation does not take place as an isolated event. When you came to class, you came from somewhere. So did the person seated next to you, as did the instructor. The degree to which the environment is formal or informal depends on the contextual expectations for communication held by the participants. The person sitting next to you may be used to informal communication with instructors, but this particular instructor may be used to verbal and nonverbal displays of respect in the academic environment. You may be used to formal interactions with instructors as well, and find your classmate's question of "Hey Teacher, do we have homework today?" as rude and inconsiderate when they see it as normal. The nonverbal response from the instructor will certainly give you a clue about how they perceive the interaction, both the word choices and how they were said.

Context is all about what people expect from each other, and we often create those expectations out of environmental cues. Traditional gatherings like weddings or quinceaneras are often formal events. There is a time for quiet social greetings, a time for silence as the bride walks down the aisle, or the father may have the first dance with his daughter as she transforms from a girl to womanhood in the eyes of her community. In either celebration, there may come a time for rambunctious celebration and dancing. You may be called upon to give a toast, and the wedding or quinceanera context will influence your presentation, timing, and effectiveness.

In a business meeting, who speaks first? That probably has some relation to the position and role each person has outside of the

meeting. Context plays a very important role in communication, particularly across cultures.



Figure 1.2.1: Context is all about what people expect from each other © Jupiter Images

Interference

Interference, also called noise, can come from any source. “Interference is anything that blocks or changes the source’s intended meaning of the message.” McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 11. For example, if you drove a car to work or school, chances are you were surrounded by noise. Car horns, billboards, or perhaps the radio in your own car interrupted your thoughts or your conversation with a passenger.

Psychological noise is what happens when your own thoughts occupy your attention while you are hearing, or reading, a message. Imagine that it is 4:45 p.m. and your boss, who is at a meeting in another city, e-mails you asking for last month’s sales figures, an analysis of current sales projections, and the sales figures from the same month for the past five years. You may open the email, start to read, and think “Great—no problem—I have those figures and that analysis right here in my computer.” You fire off a reply with last month’s sales figures and the current projections attached. Then, at 5 o’clock, you turn off your computer and go home. The next morning, your boss calls on the phone to tell you he was inconvenienced because you neglected to include the sales figures from the previous years. What was the problem? Interference: by thinking about how you wanted to respond to your boss’s message, you prevented yourself from reading attentively enough to understand the whole message.

Interference can come from other sources, too. Perhaps you are hungry, and your attention to your own situation interferes with your ability to listen. Maybe the office is hot and stuffy. If you were a member of an audience listening to an executive speech, how could this impact your ability to listen and participate?

Noise interferes with normal encoding and decoding of the message carried by the channel between source and receiver. Not all noise is bad, but noise interferes with the communication process. For example, your cellphone ringtone may be a welcome noise to you, but it may interrupt the communication process in class and bother your classmates.

Two Models of Communication

Researchers have observed that when communication takes place, the source and the receiver may send messages at the same time, often overlapping. You, as the speaker, will often play both roles, as source and receiver. You’ll focus on the communication and the reception of your messages to the audience. The audience will respond in the form of feedback that will give you important clues. While there are many models of communication, here we will focus on two that offer perspectives and lessons for effective communicators.

Rather than looking at the source sending a message and someone receiving it as two distinct acts, researchers often view communication as a transactional process (Figure 1.2.2 "The Transactional Model of Communication"), with actions often happening at the same time. The distinction between source and receiver is blurred in conversational turn-taking, for example, where both participants play both roles simultaneously.

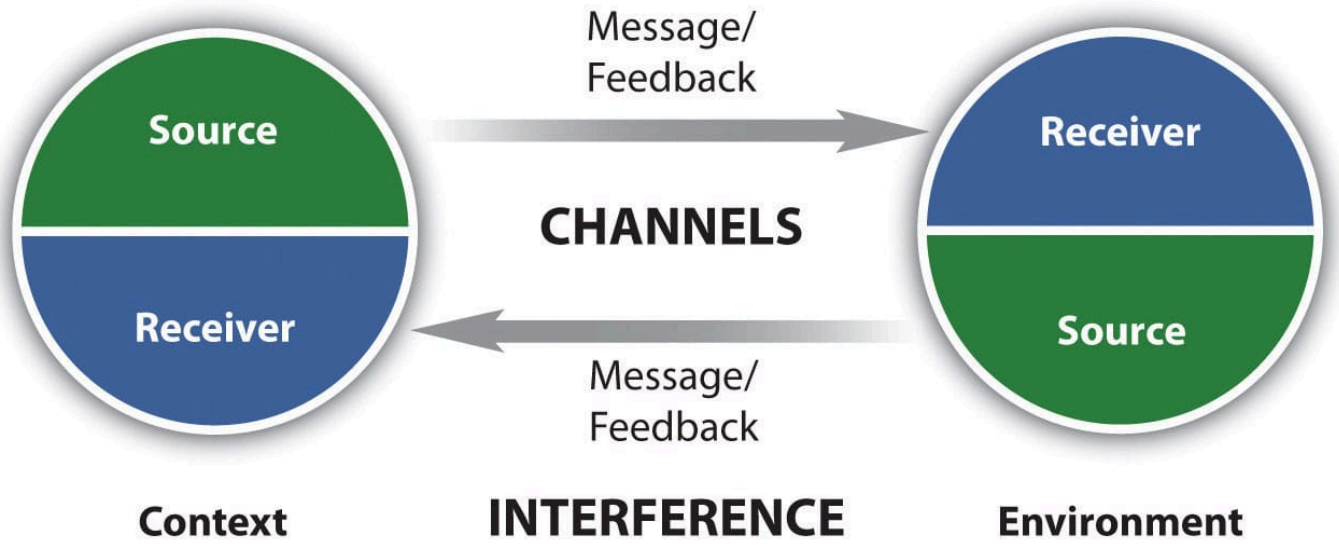


Figure 1.2.2: The Transactional Model of Communication

Researchers have also examined the idea that we all construct our own interpretations of the message. What I said (or wrote) and what you heard may be different. In the constructivist model (Figure 1.2.3 "The Constructivist Model of Communication"), we focus on the negotiated meaning, or common ground, when trying to describe communication. Pearce, W. B., & Cronen, V. (1980). *Communication, Action, and Meaning: The Creating of Social Realities*. New York: Praeger, Cronen, V., & Pearce, W. B. (1982). The coordinated management of meaning: a theory of communication. In F. E. Dance (Ed.), *Human Communication Theory* (pp. 61–89). New York: Harper & Row.

Imagine that you are visiting Atlanta, Georgia, and go to a restaurant for dinner. When asked if you want a “Coke,” you may reply, “sure.” The waiter may then ask you again, “what kind?” and you may reply, “Coke is fine.” The waiter then may ask a third time, “what kind of soft drink would you like?” The misunderstanding in this example is that in Atlanta, the home of The Coca-Cola Company, most soft drinks are generically referred to as “Coke.” When you order a soft drink, you need to specify what type, even if you wish to order a beverage that is not a cola or not even made by The Coca-Cola Company. To someone from other regions of the United States, the words “pop,” “soda pop,” or “soda” may be the familiar way to refer to a soft drink; not necessarily the brand “Coke.” In this example, both you and the waiter understand the word “Coke,” but you each understand it to mean something different. In order to communicate, you must each realize what the term means to the other person, and establish common ground, in order to fully understand the request and provide an answer.

Because we carry the multiple meanings of words, gestures, and ideas within us, we can use a dictionary to guide us, but we will still need to negotiate meaning.

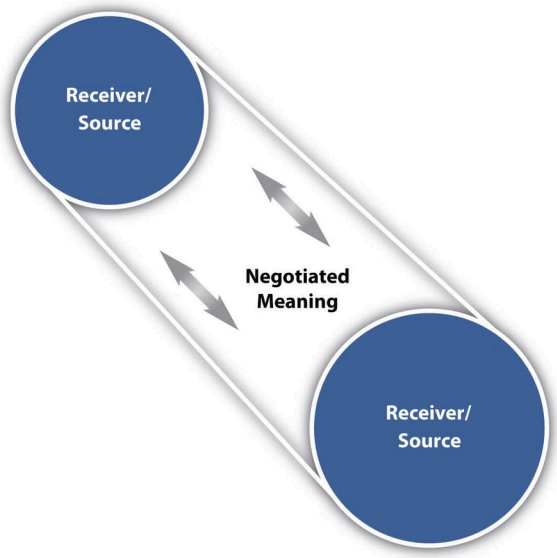


Figure 1.2.3: The Constructivist Model of Communication

Key Takeaway

The communication process involves understanding, sharing, and meaning, and it consists of 8 essential elements: source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, context, and interference.

Exercise 1.2.1

1. Draw what you think communication looks like. Share your drawing with your classmates.
2. List three environmental cues and indicate how they influence your expectations for communication. Please share your results with your classmates.
3. How does context influence your communication? If you could design the perfect date, what activities, places, and/or environmental cues would you include to set the mood? Please share your results with your classmates.

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1.3: Communication in Context

Learning Objectives

1. Identify and describe five types of communication contexts

Now that we have examined the eight components of communication, let's examine this in context. Is a quiet dinner conversation with someone you care about the same experience as a discussion in class or giving a speech? Is sending a text message to a friend the same experience as writing a professional project proposal or a purchase order? Is working in a team or group the same as working together as a family? Each context has an influence on the communication process. Contexts can overlap, creating an even more dynamic process. You have been communicating in many of these contexts across your lifetime, and you'll be able to apply what you've learned through experience in each context to group communication.

Intrapersonal Communication

Have you ever listened to a speech or lecture and gotten caught up in your own thoughts so that, while the speaker continued, you were no longer listening? During a phone conversation, have you ever been thinking about what you are going to say, or what question you might ask, instead of listening to the other person? Finally, have you ever told yourself how you did after you wrote a document or gave a presentation? As you "talk with yourself" you are engaged in intrapersonal communication.

Intrapersonal communication involves one person; it is often called "self-talk."Wood, J. (1997). *Communication in Our Lives*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, p.22. Donna Vocate'sVocate, D. (Ed.). (1994). *Intrapersonal Communication: Different Voices, Different Minds*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. book on intrapersonal communication explains how, as we use language to reflect on our own experiences, we talk ourselves through situations. For example, the voice within you that tells you, "Keep on Going! I can DO IT!" when you are putting your all into completing a five-mile race; or that says, "This report I've written is pretty good." Your intrapersonal communication can be positive or negative, and directly influences how you perceive and react to situations and communication with others.

What you perceive in communication with others is also influenced by your culture, native language, and your world view. As the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas said, "Every process of reaching understanding takes place against the background of a culturally ingrained preunderstanding." Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Vol. 1). Boston: Beacon Press, p. 100.

For example, you may have certain expectations of time and punctuality. You weren't born with them, so where did you learn them? From those around you as you grew up. You learned from your family or the group of people who raised you. What was normal for them became normal for you, but not everyone's idea of normal, is the same.

When your supervisor invites you to a meeting and says it will start at 7 p.m., does that mean 7:00 sharp, 7-ish, or even 7:30? In the business context, when a meeting is supposed to start at 9 a.m., is it promptly a 9 a.m.? Variations in time expectations depend on regional and national culture as well as individual corporate cultures. In some companies, everyone may be expected to arrive 10-15 minutes before the announced start time to take their seats and be ready to commence business at 9:00 sharp. In other companies, "meeting and greeting" from about 9 to 9:05 or even 9:10 is the norm. When you are unfamiliar with the expectations for a business event, it is always wise to err on the side of being punctual, regardless of what your own internal assumptions about time and punctuality may be.

Interpersonal Communication

The second major context within the field of communication is interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication normally involves two people, and can range from intimate and very personal to formal and impersonal. You may carry on a conversation with a loved one, sharing a serious concern. Later, at work, you may have a brief conversation about plans for the weekend with the security guard on your way home. What's the difference? Both scenarios involve interpersonal communication but are different in levels of intimacy. The first example implies a trusting relationship established over time between two caring individuals. The second example level implies some previous familiarity, and is really more about acknowledging each other than

any actual exchange of information, much like saying hello or goodbye.

Group Communication

Have you ever noticed how a small group of people in class sit near each other? Perhaps they are members of the same sports program or just friends, but no doubt they often engage in group communication.

“Group communication is a dynamic process where a small number of people engage in a conversation.” McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 14. Group communication is generally defined as involving three to eight people. The larger the group, the more likely it is to break down into smaller groups.

To take a page from marketing, does your audience have segments or any points of convergence/divergence? We could consider factors like age, education, sex, and location to learn more about groups and their general preferences as well as dislikes. You may find several groups within the larger audience, such as specific areas of education, and use this knowledge to increase your effectiveness as a communicator.

Public Communication

In public communication, one person speaks to a group of people; the same is true of public written communication, where one person writes a message to be read by a small or large group. The speaker or writer may ask questions, and engage the audience in a discussion (in writing, examples are an email discussion or a point-counter-point series of letters to the editor), but the dynamics of the conversation are distinct from group communication, where different rules apply. In a public speaking situation, the group normally defers to the speaker. For example, the boss speaks to everyone, and the sales team quietly listens without interruption.

This generalization is changing as norms and expectations change, and many cultures have a tradition of “call-outs” or interjections that are not to be interpreted as interruptions or competition for the floor, but instead as affirmations. The boss may say, as part of a charged-up motivational speech, “Do you hear me?” and the sales team is expected to call back “Yes Sir!” The boss, as a public speaker, recognizes that intrapersonal communication (thoughts of the individual members) or interpersonal communication (communication between team members) may interfere with this classic public speaking dynamic of all to one, or the audience devoting all its attention to the speaker, and incorporate attention-getting and engagement strategies to keep the sales team focused on the message.

Mass Communication

How do you tell everyone on campus where and when all the classes are held? Would a speech from the front steps work? Perhaps it might meet the need if your school is a very small one. A written schedule that lists all classes would be a better alternative. How do you let everyone know there is a sale on in your store, or that your new product will meet their needs, or that your position on a political issue is the same as your constituents? You send a message to as many people as you can through mass communication. Does everyone receive mass communication the same way they might receive a personal phone call? Not likely. Some people who receive mass mailings assume that they are “junk mail” (i.e., that they do not meet the recipients’ needs) and throw them away unopened. People may tune out a television advertisement with a click of the mute button, delete tweets or ignore friend requests on Facebook by the hundreds, or send all unsolicited emails straight to the spam folder unread.

Mass media is a powerful force in modern society and our daily lives and is adapting rapidly to new technologies. Mass communication involves sending a single message to a group. It allows us to communicate our message to a large number of people, but we are limited in our ability to tailor our message to specific audiences, groups, or individuals. As a business communicator, you can use multimedia as a visual aid or reference common programs, films, or other images that your audience finds familiar yet engaging. You can tweet a picture that is worth far more than 140 characters and is just as likely to elicit a significant response. By choosing messages or references that many audience members will recognize or can identify with, you can develop common ground and increase the appeal of your message.

Key Takeaway

Communication contexts include intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass communication.

Exercise 1.3.1

1. Please recall a time when you gave a speech in front of a group. How did you feel? What was your experience? What did you learn from your experience? If given a second opportunity, how would you approach the group differently?
2. If you were asked to get the attention of your peers, what image or word would you choose and why?
3. If you were asked to get the attention of someone like yourself, what image or word would you choose and why?
4. Make a list of mass communication messages you observe for a one hour period of time. Share your list with classmates.

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1.4: Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Identify ways in which group communication differs from interpersonal communication
2. Identify relationship and task advantages and disadvantages of working in groups versus individually

"It used to be argued that slavery was abolished simply because it had ceased to be profitable, but all the evidence points the other way: in fact, it was abolished despite the fact that it was still profitable. What we need to understand, then, is a collective change of heart. Like all such great changes, it had small beginnings."Ferguson, N. *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British Empire and the Lessons for Global Power,* quoted in Steffen, A. (2006). *Worldchanging: A User's Guide for the 21st Century.* New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Niall Ferguson



Figure 1.4.1

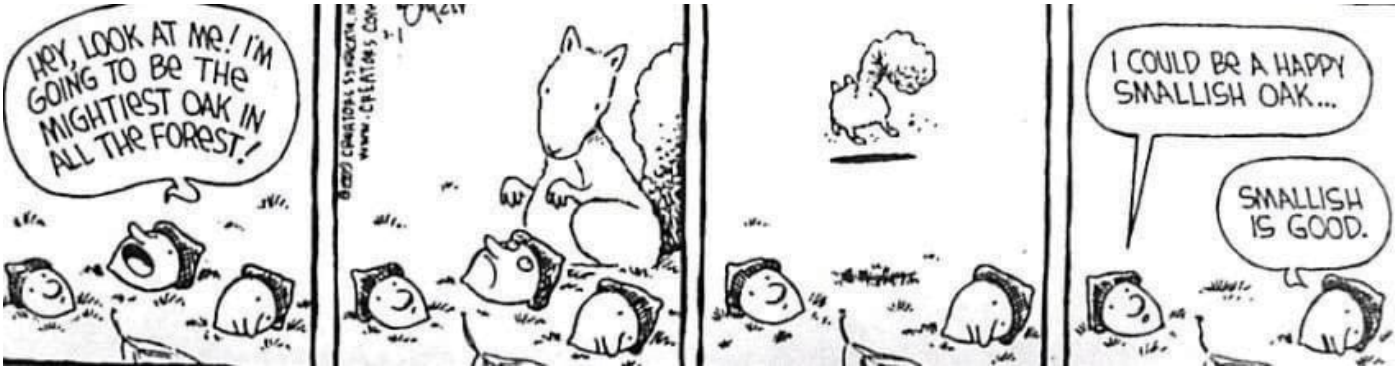


Figure 1.4.2

All human beings exist, spend time, and behave both individually and in groups. When you're a student, you spend a great deal of your time in groups. In the working world, whether you're already in it or not, you spend even more. O'Hair, D. & Wiemann, M.O. (2004). *The Essential Guide to Group Communication.* Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, p. 7.

Of course, many times you have no choice whether you'll work alone or in a group. You're just told what to do. Still, you're best apt

to be prepared if you know what to expect of each status.

Differences between Group and Interpersonal Communication

The mere fact that groups include multiple people leads to at least four consequences. Whether these consequences prove to be advantageous or not depends on the skill level and knowledge of a group's members.

First, since not everyone in a group can talk at the same time (at least, not if they intend to understand and be understood by each other), members have to seek permission to speak. They need to decide how to take turns. In this respect, a group is inherently more formal than a single individual or a dyad.

Second, members of a group have to share time together. The larger the group, the less average time per person is available and the fewer opportunities each member will likely have to contribute to discussions.

Third, communication in groups is generally less intimate than in interpersonal settings. Because there are so many personalities and levels of relationship to consider, people in groups are less inclined to share personal details or express controversial views.

Finally, group work is more time-consuming than individual or interpersonal effort. Why? For one thing, group members usually try to let everyone share information and views. Also, the more people are involved in a discussion, the more diverse opinions may need to be considered and allowed to compete.

As we've noted earlier, groups apply themselves toward reaching aims and accomplishing things. In addition to this task-oriented characteristic, however, they include and depend upon relationships among their members. Although these two elements are usually intertwined rather than discrete and separate, an overview of the pluses and minuses of each can help you make the most of your experience in a group.

Relationship Advantages

The columnist David Brooks interpreted research as indicating that human beings are "wired to cooperate and collaborate, just as much as we are to compete." Galanes, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective Group Discussion: Theory and Practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 5. What's in it for you in terms of relationships, then, if you work in a group instead of alone? Well, you may have a number of your most important human needs satisfied. Here are some specifics:

- You may enjoy fellowship and companionship
- You may receive moral and emotional support for your views and objectives
- You may meet three important needs identified by William Schutz, which we'll discuss more in Chapter 2: Galanes, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective Group Discussion: Theory and Practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 5. inclusion, affection, and control.
- You may have your impulsiveness curbed or your reticence challenged
- You may cultivate ties that yield future personal or career advantages

In the next chapter, we'll further explore the ideas William Schutz, who theorized about levels of basic human needs and how they may vary from person to person and according to people's circumstances. We'll also review Abraham Maslow's model of human needs.

Relationship Disadvantages

Despite the advantages it offers, working in groups almost invariably presents challenges and disadvantages in the realm of relationships. These are some of the chief dangers you may encounter as part of a group:

- It will probably take a lot of time to create, maintain, and repair the human relationships involved in a group
- Your group may generate conflict which hurts people's feelings and otherwise undermines their relationships
- You may misunderstand other group members' intentions or messages
- Some group members may attempt to deceive, manipulate, or betray the trust of other members

Task Advantages

Anthropologists have asserted that a major feature of mainstream culture in the United States is a relentless pressure to do things—to accomplish things. Tom Peters is credited with first calling this cultural feature "a bias for action." One best-selling business self-help book reinforced this national passion for dynamic behavior. Its title is *A Bias for Action: How Effective Managers Harness Their Willpower, Achieve Results, and Stop Wasting Time*. Bruch, H., & Ghoshal, S. (2004). *A Bias for Action: How Effective Managers Harness Their Willpower, Achieve Results, and Stop Wasting Time*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press. Without a doubt, accomplishing tasks constitutes a central purpose of most human behavior in the modern world.

When you're trying to get something done, working in a group promises many positive possibilities, among them being the following:

- The group will most likely have access to much more information than any member possesses.
- The group can focus multiple attentions and diverse energy on a topic.
- The group may be more thorough in dealing with a topic than any individual might be. This thoroughness may arise simply because of the number of perspectives represented in the group, but it also owes to the fact that members often "propel each other's thinking."Wood, J.T. (1997). *Communication in Our Lives*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, p. 270.
- The group may harness and exploit conflict to generate new and better ideas than an individual could. When tension and disagreement are resolved constructively, the chances of achieving group goals increase.
- The group may attain deeper understanding of topics. One analysis of studies, for instance, indicated that students in group-based learning environments learned more, and remembered more of what they learned, than did counterparts exposed to more traditional methods. Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Smith, K.A. (1998, July/August). Cooperative learning returns to college. *Change*, *30* (4), 31.
- Synergy—a combined effect greater than the simple sum total of individual contributions—can arise. Sometimes synergy results through enhanced creativity as group members share and build upon each other's strengths and perspectives. You can probably think of examples of an athletic squad or business group comprising members with modest individual strengths that performed superlatively together.
- The group may spur needed social change. Margaret Mead wrote, "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." It may be reasonable to question whether the world always works the way Mead described, but many examples do exist of small groups that initiated changes that spread to larger and large parts of society. All other things being equal, a group of committed individuals will project more credibility and engender more support than will a solitary person.

Task Disadvantages

Groups aren't always successful at reaching their goals. You've probably experienced many situations in which you became frustrated or angry because a group you were part of seemed to be taking two steps backward for every step forward—or perhaps you felt it was going only backward. Here are some features of group work which distinguish it in a potentially negative way from what you might be able to accomplish by yourself or with a single partner:

- In order to be successful, groups need broad, ongoing, time-consuming exchanges of messages. They need to invest in coordinating and monitoring what they're doing. With people as busy as they are in the twenty-first century, "out of sight" is indeed often "out of mind." If they don't keep in touch frequently, group members may forget what they've most recently discussed or decided as a group. They also run the risk of losing track of the structures and processes they've put in place to help them move toward their goals.
- Some group members may engage in "social loafing." When one or two people are assigned a task, they know they're being watched and are apt to shoulder the burden. In a larger group, however, any given member will feel less personally responsible for what takes place in it. If too many members follow the natural tendency to observe rather than act, a group may lose its efficiency and thereby find it much more difficult to reach its aims.
- Groupthink may sap the creative potential of the members. Too much diversity in outlooks and work styles may act as a barrier to a group, but too little diversity also represents a threat to success. If they too easily adopt and hold onto one viewpoint or course of action, people may fall prey to two dangers. First, they may overlook flaws in their thinking. Second, they may fail to anticipate dangers that they might have been detected with closer scrutiny and longer reflection.

Key Takeaway

To accomplish tasks and relate effectively in a group, it's important to know the advantages and disadvantages inherent in groups.

Exercise 1.4.1

1. Identify two groups of which you're a member. Describe the following:
    1. How each group determined how to take turns in communicating—or, if you weren't part of determining this process, how people take turns now;
    2. The most controversial view you can recall being expressed in each group; and
    3. A task which feel each group performed better than any of its individuals might have done alone.
2. Describe an experience in which you observed people cooperating or collaborating when they might instead have competed. What do you believe motivated them to cooperate?
3. Identify two examples of your personal or vocational growth which you feel you owe to participation in a group.
4. Identify a group you've been part of which contributed to positive social change. How did it establish its credibility and influence with other people and groups?

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1.5: Group Communication and Social Media

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the nature and types of social media
2. Identify ways in which social media can foster and endanger group communication
3. Identify safeguards that groups can adopt when communicating via social media

Progress might have been all right once, but it's gone too far.

Ogden Nash

I would trade all of my technology for an afternoon with Socrates.

Steve Jobs



Figure 1.5.1

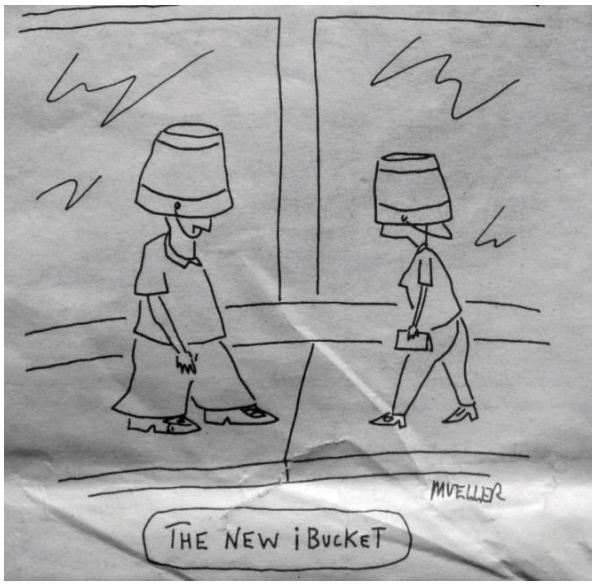


Figure 1.5.2

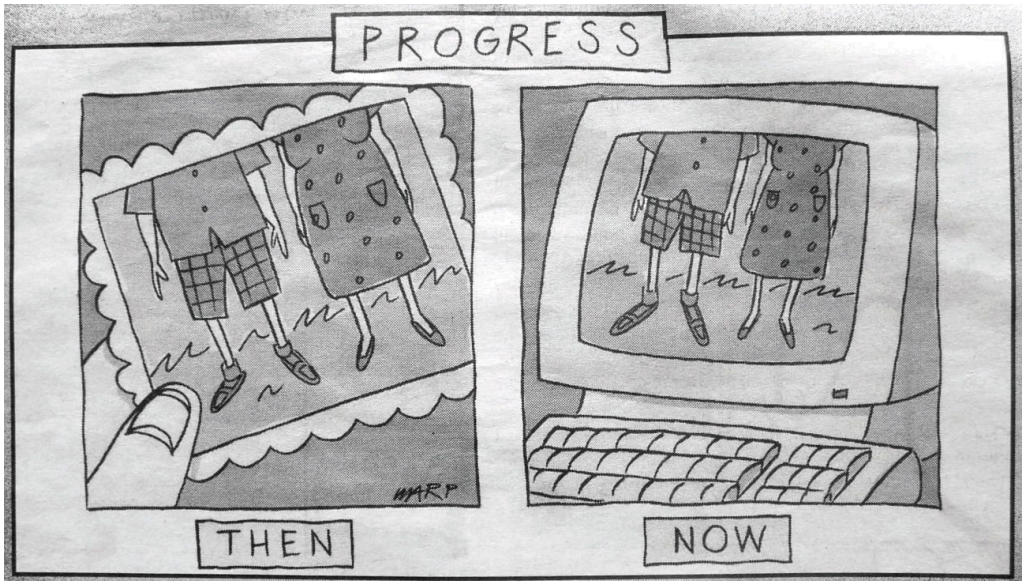


Figure 1.5.3

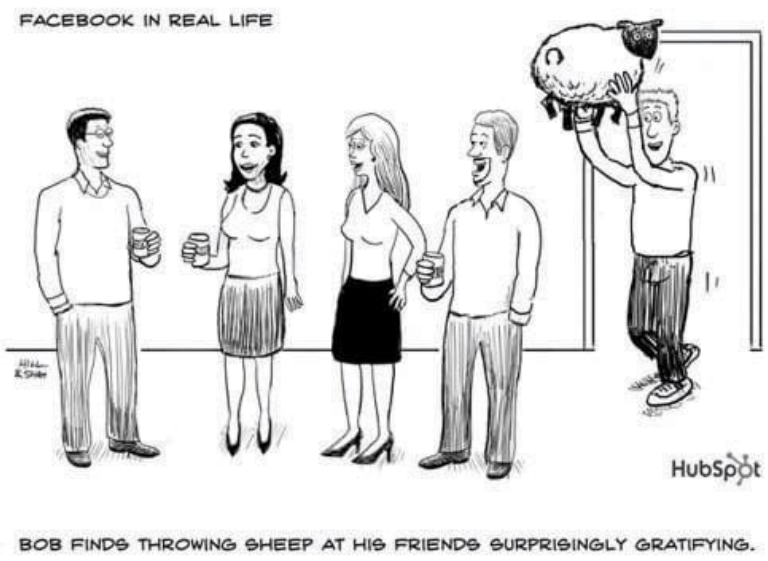


Figure 1.5.4

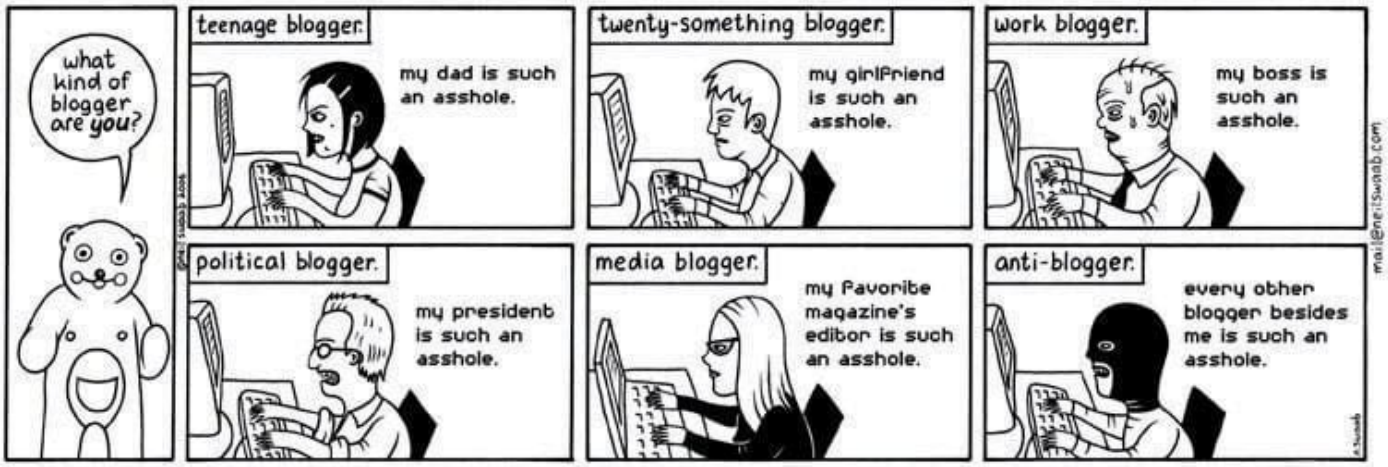


Figure 1.5.5

You may disagree with the whimsical words of Ogden Nash and the more philosophical statement by Steve Jobs. Perhaps you feel that today's electronic technologies are nothing but wonderful. Whatever your opinion, though, you'll have a hard time arguing that the Internet is a small part of people's lives in today's world. Consider these facts about social media:

- Facebook was expected to register its one-billionth user sometime in 2012
- Ten hours of video recordings are uploaded to YouTube every minute
- Flickr provides access to more than three billion photographs
- More than three-quarters of everyone worldwide who uses the Internet takes part in social media. Hunter, C. (2012, January 23). Number of Facebook users could reach 1 billion by 2012. *The Exponent Online* Retrieved from *www.purdueexponent.org/features/article_8815d757-8b7c-566f-8fbe-49528d4d8037.html*; Kaplan, A.M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons, 53*, 59–69.

Do you remember the first time you saw the ocean? Did it awe and overwhelm you, as it did the authors of this book? Did you feel small and insignificant?

The ocean can affect us emotionally, but it can also make an intellectual impression. Knowing its scientific side, we realize that people can interact with the ocean in sundry ways. We also know it's not possible for us as individuals or groups to go everywhere on the ocean at once or to tap all its potential. So it is with social media in the Digital Age.

The vastness, breadth, and ease of access of social media are unprecedented in human history. But they resemble the ocean in other ways besides their size. When we go to sea, bad things can happen. We can fall prey to storms, find ourselves becalmed

and bored, or discover that we don't have the right gear to snag a particular kind of fish. We may also fall overboard and drown. Similar perils are associated with social media.

What Are Social Media?

A simple definition of social media is that they are Web-based and mobile technologies that enable interaction among people. Social media may be divided into six types: collaborative projects, such as Wikipedia; blogs and microblogs, such as Twitter; content communities, such as YouTube; social networking sites, such as Facebook; virtual game worlds; and virtual social worlds. Of these types, the first four are most likely to be valuable for serious and purposeful group communication.

How Social Media Help Groups

Until just a few generations ago, members of a group who wanted to communicate with each other at the same time needed to move themselves to a shared physical location to do so. Today, social media make it unnecessary for people to "transport their atoms" like this. These media also facilitate communication within groups in the several ways. First, they allow physically separated people to communicate in real-time. Such communication is called "synchronous," whereas interchanges that don't follow each other are referred to as "asynchronous." Just the "wow" factor of seeing and hearing people simultaneously when they're dispersed over hundreds or thousands of miles can propel a group forward.

Social media also allow people in different places to collaborate on projects. As information related to tasks emerges over time, people can sustain their focus and attention on individual and shared responsibilities.

Social media permit people to keep in contact with each other when they're not meeting formally. Electronic availability makes it possible for people to enjoy a sense of proximity and familiarity with each other.

Social media enable group members to identify and collect information pertinent to their aims. Visiting forums, blogs, podcasts, and other Internet sites can make it possible for members to enlarge their understanding of the topics they deal with.

Finally, social media can benefit members by focusing attention primarily on messages instead of "status markers" such as titles, age, and attire.

Communicating through social media frees groups from the constraints of place and time that until recently used to apply to all human interactions. It can also save considerable money and time that people used to have to spend.

How Social Media Endanger Groups

If you're using a butter knife and drop it on your foot, your foot will hurt. If you're using a chain saw and drop it on your foot, you may become permanently disabled. When it comes to group communication, social media resemble chain saws much more than they do butter knives. People may fracture friendships, lose jobs, squander opportunities, and wreck reputations through their use and misuse of social media.

Groups may encounter many kinds of dangers when they use social media. For one thing, social media can constitute a huge time sink. Nearly half of all Facebook and Twitter users sign in to their accounts during the night or first thing in the morning.Is social media the new addiction? *Marketing Profs*. Retrieved from *static.vizworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Social-Network-Map3.png*, 2010. Because these resources are so multifaceted and visually enticing, they may distract groups from both their task-related and group maintenance functions. Trying to select and learn to use social media can lead groups down blind alleys.

Social media also make it easy to distribute hurtful or dubious material. Misunderstandings can spread quickly and widely via electronic media, and they can be difficult to correct once people's feelings have been hurt or inflamed. Even just a few intemperate words composed in haste, or comments intended to be taken in jest but open to multiple interpretations, can create lasting problems within a group.

Third, social media may drain the sense of "social presence" from interactions because they transmit people's nonverbal messaging incompletely, if at all.

Last of all, groups using social media may leave dirty "digital tracks." Nothing that members of a group post to the Internet should be considered private, and inappropriate messages or images can easily prompt criticism or even legal action.

Social media make it possible to transmit messages faster and more widely than face-to-face communication can. At the same time, reactions to messages exchanged via social media may vary dramatically because the media lack “personalness” and are processed by each individual according to that person’s circumstances and frame of mind.

Safeguards for Groups Using Social Media

To make the most of the convenience that social media offer while avoiding the pitfalls they may present, groups should be careful how they operate. As a general rule, it’s best not to say or do anything using social media that you wouldn’t do in a face-to-face setting. Here are some specific steps your group can take to best communicate via social media:

1. Set guidelines for how you intend to use social media. A full-blown “policy” may not be necessary for small and informal groups, but it never hurts to put something in writing that your group members can refer to as they work or that you can offer to new members as part of their orientation to the group. These guidelines should probably identify ways in which social media are to be used to support group members. In addition, a statement should probably be included which indicates that all group members are expected to behave professionally when using social media.
2. Check the privacy settings on the social media sites you use. Make sure you know how much of your communication is shared with which potential audiences. If you’re not sure whether a message or post will be accessible to the whole world, assume that it will be and act accordingly.
3. Monitor your group’s online “persona” regularly. Find out what other people see when they enter the group’s name or other details in a search engine.
4. Never divulge passwords from your group’s social media resources. Though the likelihood is slight, someone with access to such information could post objectionable content while posing as a group member.
5. Take care to share messages and information with only the individuals you mean them for. Pause, think, and look carefully before pressing any “send” or “share” button.
6. Be sure you know the copyright status of any materials you draw upon as you conduct your group’s business. If you’re not sure it’s legal or ethical to borrow or copy a particular item without asking, assume that it isn’t.

Real-time communication through social media makes it possible for group members to gauge each other’s attitudes and feelings with some accuracy. Responses to asynchronous messages transmitted via social media may not arrive in a timely fashion, however. As a result, using social media to explore topics and solve problems requires tact, patience, and flexibility.

Key Takeaway

Social media are pervasive and can facilitate the operation of groups, but they must be used carefully to avoid causing serious harm.

Exercise 1.5.1

1. Identify two social media you or your friends have used regularly. Describe a problem you solved while using the media.
2. Describe a misunderstanding you’ve experienced while using social media. How might it have been avoided in a face-to-face setting?
3. Imagine that you and five classmates or work colleagues have established communication via a social medium. What rule or guideline would you adopt above all others to govern your activities?

Review Questions

1. Interpretive Questions:
    1. What assumptions are present in the transactional model of communication?
    2. How does our native language or culture influence our communication or style of presentation?
2. Application Questions:
    1. Observe two people talking. Describe their communication. See if you can find all eight components and provide an example for each one.
    2. Find an example of a model of communication where you work and provide an example for all eight components.

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2: GROUP COMMUNICATION THEORY

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2.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. List the family and social groups you belong to and interact with on a regular basis—for example, within a 24-hour period or within a typical week. Please also consider forums, online communities, and websites where you follow threads of discussion or post regularly. Discuss your results with your classmates.
2. List the professional (i.e., work-related) groups you interact with in order of frequency. Please also consider informal as well as formal groups (e.g., the 10:30 coffee club and the colleagues you often share your commute with). Compare your results with those of your classmates.
3. Identify one group to which you no longer belong. List at least one reason why you no longer belong to this group. Compare your results with those of your classmates.

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

Andrew Carnegie

Getting Started

As humans, we are social beings. We naturally form relationships with others. In fact, relationships are often noted as one of the most important aspects of a person's life, and they exist in many forms. Interpersonal communication occurs between two people, but group communication may involve two or more individuals. Groups are a primary context for interaction within the business community. Groups may have heroes and enemies, sages alongside new members. Groups overlap, and may share common goals, but may also engage in conflict. Groups can be supportive or coercive and can exert powerful influences over individuals.

Within a group, individuals may behave in distinct ways, use unique or specialized terms, or display symbols that have meaning to that group. Those same terms or symbols may be confusing, meaningless, or even unacceptable to another group. An individual may belong to both groups, adapting his or her communication patterns to meet group normative expectations. Groups are increasingly important across social media venues, and there are many examples of successful business ventures on the web that value and promote group interaction.

Groups use words to exchange meaning, establish territory, and identify who is a stranger versus who is a trusted member. Are you familiar with the term "troll"? It is often used to identify someone who is not a member of an online group or community, who does not share the values and beliefs of the group, and who posts a message in an online discussion board to initiate flame wars, cause disruption, or otherwise challenge the group members. Members often use words to respond to the challenge that are not otherwise common in the discussions, and the less than flattering descriptions of the troll are a rallying point.

Groups have existed throughout human history, and continue to follow familiar patterns across emerging venues as we adapt to technology, computer-mediated interaction, suburban sprawl, and modern life. We need groups, and groups need us. Our relationship with groups warrants attention to this interdependence as we come to know ourselves, our communities, and our world.

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2.1: What Is a Group?

Learning Objectives

1. Define groups and teams
2. Discuss how primary and secondary groups meet our interpersonal needs
3. Discuss how groups tend to limit their own size and create group norms

Let's get into a time machine and travel way, way back to join early humans in prehistoric times. Their needs are like ours today: they cannot exist or thrive without air, food, and water—and a sense of belonging. How did they meet these needs? Through cooperation and competition. If food scarcity was an issue, who got more and who got less? This serves as our first introduction to roles, status and power, and hierarchy within a group. When food scarcity becomes an issue, who gets to keep their spoon? In some Latin American cultures, having a job or earning a living is referred to by the slang term "*cuchara*," which literally means "spoon" and figuratively implies food, safety, and security.

Now let's return to the present and enter a modern office. Cubicles define territories, and corner offices denote status. In times of economic recession or slumping sales for the company, there is a greater need for cooperation, and there is competition for scarce resources. The loss of a "spoon"—or of one's cubicle—may now come in the form of a pink slip of paper instead of no food around the fire, but it is no less devastating.

We form self-identities through our communication with others, and much of that interaction occurs in a group context. A group may be defined as three or more individuals who affiliate, interact, or cooperate in a familial, social, or work context. Group communication may be defined as the exchange of information with those who are alike culturally, linguistically, and/or geographically. Group members may be known by their symbols, such as patches and insignia on a military uniform. They may be known by their use of specialized language or jargon; for example, someone in information technology may use the term "server" in reference to the internet, whereas someone in the foodservice industry may use "server" to refer to the worker who takes customer orders in a restaurant. Group members may also be known by their proximity, as in gated communities. Regardless of how the group defines itself, and regardless of the extent to which its borders are porous or permeable, a group recognizes itself as a group. Humans naturally make groups a part of their context or environment.

Types of Groups in the Workplace

As a skilled communicator, learning more about groups, group dynamics, management, and leadership will serve you well. Mergers, forced sales, downsizing, and entering new markets all call upon individuals within a business or organization to become members of groups. In our second introductory exercise you were asked to list the professional (i.e., work-related) groups you interact with in order of frequency. What did your list include? Perhaps you noted your immediate co-workers, your supervisor and other leaders in your work situation, members of other departments with whom you communicate, and the colleagues who are also your personal friends during off-work times. Groups may be defined by function. They can also be defined, from a developmental viewpoint, by the relationships within them. Groups can also be discussed in terms of their relationship to the individual, and the degree to which they meet interpersonal needs.

Some groups may be assembled at work to solve problems, and once the challenge has been resolved, they dissolve into previous or yet to be determined groups. Functional groups like this may be immediately familiar to you. You take a class in sociology from a professor of sociology, who is a member of the discipline of sociology. To be a member of a discipline is to be a disciple, and adhere to a common framework to for viewing the world. Disciplines involve a common set of theories that explain the world around us, terms to explain those theories, and have grown to reflect the advance of human knowledge. Compared to your sociology instructor, your physics instructor may see the world from a completely different perspective. Still, both may be members of divisions or schools, dedicated to teaching or research, and come together under the large group heading we know as the university.

In business, we may have marketing experts who are members of the marketing department, who perceive their tasks differently from a member of the sales staff or someone in accounting. You may work in the mailroom, and the mailroom staff is a group in itself, both distinct from and interconnected with the larger organization.



Figure 2.1.1: Groups and teams are an important part of business communication © Jupiter Images

Relationships are part of any group, and can be described in terms of status, power, control, as well as role, function, or viewpoint. Within a family, for example, the ties that bind you together may be common experiences, collaborative efforts, and even pain and suffering. The birth process may forge a relationship between mother and daughter, but it also may not. An adoption may transform a family. Relationships are formed through communication interaction across time, and often share a common history, values, and beliefs about the world around us.

In business, an idea may bring professionals together, and they may even refer to the new product or service as their "baby," speaking in reverent tones about a project they have taken from the drawing board and "birthed" into the real world. As in family communication, workgroups or teams may have challenges, rivalries, and even "birthing pains" as a product is adjusted, adapted, and transformed. Struggles are a part of relationships, both in families and business, and form a common history of shared challenged overcome through effort and hard work.

Through conversations and a shared sense that you and your co-workers belong together, you meet many of your basic human needs, such as the need to feel included, the need for affection, and the need for control.Schutz, W. (1966). *The Interpersonal Underworld*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books. In a work context, "affection" may sound odd, but we all experience affection at work in the form of friendly comments like "good morning," "have a nice weekend," and "good job!" Our professional lives also fulfill more basic needs such as air, food, and water, as well as safety. While your workgroup may be gathered together with common goals, such as to deliver the mail in a timely fashion to the corresponding departments and individuals, your daily interactions may well go beyond this functional perspective.

In the same way, your family may provide a place for you at the table and meet your basic needs, but they also may not meet other needs. If you grow to understand yourself and your place in a way that challenges group norms, you will be able to choose which parts of your life to share and to withhold in different groups, and to choose where to seek acceptance, affection, and control.

Primary and Secondary Groups

There are fundamentally two types of groups that can be observed in many contexts, from church, to school, from family to work: primary and secondary groups. The hierarchy denotes the degree to which the group(s) meet your interpersonal needs. Primary groups meet most, if not all, of one's needs. Groups that meet some, but not all, needs are called secondary groups. Secondary groups often include work groups, where the goal is to complete a task or solve a problem. If you are a member of the sales department, your purpose is to sell.

In terms of problem-solving, work groups can accomplish more than individuals. People, each of whom have specialized skills, talents, experience, or education come together in new combinations with new challenges, find new perspectives to create unique approaches that they themselves would not have formulated alone.

Secondary groups may meet your need for professional acceptance, and celebrate your success, but may not meet your need for understanding and sharing on a personal level. Family members may understand you in ways that your co-workers cannot, and vice versa.

If Two's Company and Three's a Crowd, What Is a Group?

This old cliché refers to the human tendency to form pairs. Pairing is the most basic form of relationship formation; it applies to childhood "best friends," college roommates, romantic couples, business partners, and many other dyads (two-person relationships). A group, by definition, includes at least three people. We can categorize groups in terms of their size and complexity.

When we discuss demographic groups as part of a market study, we may focus on large numbers of individuals that share common characteristics. If you are the producer of an ecologically innovative car such as the Smart ForTwo, and know your customers have an average of four members in their family, you may discuss developing a new model with additional seats. While the target audience is a group, car customers don't relate to each other as a unified whole. Even if they form car clubs and have regional gatherings, a newsletter, and competitions at their local race tracks each year, they still subdivide the overall community of car owners into smaller groups.

The larger the group grows, the more likely it is to subdivide. Analysis of these smaller, or microgroups, is increasingly a point of study as the internet allows individuals to join people of similar mind or habit to share across time and distance. A microgroup is a small, independent group that has a link, affiliation, or association with a larger group. With each additional group member the number of possible interactions increases. Harris, T., & Sherblom, J. (1999). *Small Group and Team Communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.'McLean, S. (2003). *The Basics Of Speech Communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Table 2.1 Possible Interaction in Groups

Number of Group Members	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Number of Possible Interactions	2	9	28	75	186	441	1,056

Small groups normally contain between three and eight people. One person may involve intrapersonal communication, while two may constitute interpersonal communication, and both may be present within a group communication context. You may think to yourself before taking a speech turn or writing your next post, and you may turn to your neighbor or co-worker and have a side conversation, but a group relationship normally involves three to eight people.

In Table 2.1, you can quickly see how the number of possible interactions grows according to how many people are in the group. At some point, we all find the possible and actual interactions overwhelming and subdivide into smaller groups. Forums may have hundreds or thousands of members, and you may have hundreds of friends on MySpace or Facebook, but how many do you regularly communicate with? You may be tempted to provide a number well north of eight, but if you exclude the "all to one" messages, such as a general Twitter to everyone (but no one person in particular), you'll find the group norms will appear.

Group norms are customs, standards, and behavioral expectations that emerge as a group forms. If you blog every day on your FaceBook page, and your friends stop by to post on your wall and comment, and then stop for a week, you'll violate a group norm. They will wonder if you are sick or in the hospital where you can't access a computer to keep them updated. If, however, you only post once a week, the group will come to naturally expect your customary post. Norms involve expectations, self and group imposed, that often arise as groups form and develop.

If there are more than eight members, it becomes a challenge to have equal participation, where everyone has a chance to speak, be heard, listen, and respond. Some will dominate, others will recede, and smaller groups will form. Finding a natural balance within a group can also be a challenge. Small groups need to have enough members to generate a rich and stimulating exchange of ideas, information, and interaction, but not so many people that what each brings cannot be shared. Galanes, G., Adams, K., & Brilhart, J. (2000). *Communication in Groups: Applications and Skills* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Key Takeaway

Forming groups fulfills many human needs, such as the need for affiliation, affection, and control; individuals also need to cooperate in groups to fulfill basic survival needs.

Exercise 2.1.1

1. Think of the online groups you participate in. Forums may have hundreds or thousands of members, and you may have hundreds of friends on MySpace or Facebook, but how many do you regularly communicate with? Exclude the "all-to-one" messages, such as a general Twitter to everyone (but no one person in particular). Do you find that you gravitate toward the group norm of eight or fewer group members? Discuss your answer with your classmates.
2. What are some of the primary groups in your life? How do they compare with the secondary groups in your life? Write a 2–3 paragraph description of these groups and compare it with a classmate's description.

3. What group is most important to people? Create a survey with at least two questions, identify a target sample size, and conduct your survey. Report how you completed the activity and your findings. Compare the results with those of your classmates.
4. Are there times when it is better to work alone rather than in a group? Why or why not? Discuss your opinion with a classmate.

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2.2: Group Life Cycles and Member Roles

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the typical stages in the life cycle of a group
2. Describe different types of group members and group member roles

Groups are dynamic systems, in constant change. Groups grow together and eventually come apart. People join groups and others leave. This dynamic changes and transforms the very nature of the group. Group socialization involves how the group members interact with one another and form relationships. Just as you were once born, and changed your family, they changed you. You came to know a language and culture, a value system, and a set of beliefs that influence you to this day. You came to be socialized, to experience the process of learning to associate, communicate, or interact within a group. A group you belong to this year—perhaps a soccer team or the cast of a play—may not be part of your life next year. And those who are in leadership positions may ascend or descend the leadership hierarchy as the needs of the group, and other circumstances, change over time.

Group Life Cycle Patterns

Your life cycle is characterized by several steps, and while it doesn't follow a prescribed path, there are universal stages we can all recognize. You were born. You didn't choose your birth, your parents, your language, or your culture, but you came to know them through communication. You came to know yourself, learned skills, and discovered talents, and met other people. You worked, learned, lived, and loved, and as you aged, minor injuries took longer to heal. You competed in ever-increasing age groups in your favorite sport, and while your time for each performance may have increased as you aged, your experience allowed you to excel in other ways. Where you were once the novice, you have now learned something to share. You lived to see some of your friends pass before you, and the moment will arrive when you too must confront death.

In the same way, groups experience similar steps and stages and take on many of the characteristics we associate with life. Moreland, R., & Levine, J. (1982). Socialization in small groups: temporal changes in individual group relations. (L. Berkowitz, Ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 15*, 153. They grow, overcome illness and dysfunction, and transform across time. No group, just as no individual, lives forever.

Your first day on the job may be comparable to the first day you went to school. At home you may have learned some of the basics, like how to write with a pencil, but knowledge of that skill and its application are two different things. People spoke in different ways at school than at home, and you came to understand the importance of recess, of raising your hand to get the teacher's attention, and how to follow other school rules. At work, you may have trained for your profession, but the academic knowledge only serves as your foundation, much as your socialization at home served to guide you at school. On the job they use jargon terms, have schedules that may include coffee breaks (recess), have a supervisor (teacher), and have their own rules, explicit and understood. On the first day, it was all new, even if many of the elements were familiar.

In order to better understand group development and its life cycle, many researchers have described the universal stages and phases of groups. While there are modern interpretations of these stages, most draw from the model proposed by Tuckman. Tuckman, B. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin, 63*, 384–399. This model, shown in Table 2.2, specifies the usual order of the phases of group development, and allows us to predict several stages we can anticipate as we join a new group.

Tuckman begins with the forming stage as the initiation of group formation. This stage is also called the orientation stage because individual group members come to know each other. Group members who are new to each other and can't predict each other's behavior can be expected to experience the stress of uncertainty. Uncertainty theory states that we choose to know more about others with whom we have interactions in order to reduce or resolve the anxiety associated with the unknown. Berger, C., & Calabrese, R. (1975). Some explorations in initial interactions and beyond: toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research, 1*, 99–112.'Berger, C. (1986). Response uncertain outcome values in predicted relationships: uncertainty reduction theory then and now. *Human Communication Research, 13*, 34–38.' Gudykunst, W. (1995). Anxiety/uncertainty management theory. In R. W. Wiseman (Ed.), *Intercultural Communication Theory* (pp. 8–58). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. The more we know about others, and become accustomed to how they communicate, the better we can predict how

they will interact with us in future contexts. If you learn that Monday mornings are never a good time for your supervisor, you quickly learn to schedule meetings later in the week. Individuals are initially tentative and display caution as they begin to learn about the group and its members.

If you don't someone very well, it is easy to offend. Each group member brings to the group a set of experiences, combined with education and a self-concept. You won't be able to read this information on a name tag, you will only come to know it through time and interaction. Since the possibility of overlapping and competing viewpoints and perspectives exists, the group will experience a storming stage, a time of struggles as the members themselves sort out their differences. There may be more than one way to solve the problem or task at hand, and some group members may prefer one strategy over another. Some members of the group may be senior to the organization in comparison to you, and members may treat them differently. Some group members may be as new as you are and just as uncertain about everyone's talents, skills, roles, and self-perceptions. The wise communicator will anticipate the storming stage and help facilitate opportunities for the members to resolve uncertainty before the work commences. There may be challenges for leadership and conflicting viewpoints. The sociology professor sees the world differently than the physics professor. The sales agent sees things differently than someone from accounting. A manager who understands and anticipates this normal challenge in the group's life cycle can help the group become more productive.

A clear definition of the purpose and mission of the group can help the members focus their energies. Interaction prior to the first meeting can help reduce uncertainty. Coffee and calories can help bring a group together. Providing the group with what they need, and opportunities to know each other, prior to their task can increase efficiency.

Groups that make a successful transition from the storming stage will next experience the norming stage, where the group establishes norms, or informal rules, for behavior and interaction. Who speaks first? Who takes notes? Who is creative and visual, and who is detail-oriented? Sometimes our job titles and functions speak for themselves, but human beings are complex. We are not simply a list of job functions, and in the dynamic marketplace of today's business environment you will often find that people have talents and skills well beyond their "official" role or task. Drawing on these strengths can make the group more effective.

The norming stage is marked by less division and more collaboration. The level of anxiety associated with interaction is generally reduced, making for a more positive work climate that promotes listening. When people feel less threatened, and their needs are met, they are more likely to focus their complete attention on the purpose of the group. If they are still concerned with who does what, and whether they will speak in error, the interaction framework will stay in the storming stage. Tensions are reduced when the normative expectations are known, and the degree to which a manager can describe these at the outset can reduce the amount of time the group remains in uncertainty. Group members generally express more satisfaction with clear expectations and are more inclined to participate.

Ultimately, the purpose of a workgroup is performance, and the preceding stages lead us to the performing stage, in which the group accomplishes its mandate, fulfills its purpose, and reaches its goals. To facilitate performance, group members can't skip the initiation of getting to know each other, or the sorting out of roles and norms, but they can try to focus on performance with clear expectations from the moment the group is formed. Productivity is often how we measure success in business and industry, and the group has to produce. Outcome assessments may have been built into the system from the beginning and would serve as a benchmark for success. Wise managers know to celebrate success, as it brings more success, social cohesion, group participation, and a sense of job satisfaction. Incremental gains toward a benchmark may also be cause for celebration and support, and failure to reach a goal should be regarded as an opportunity for clarification.

It is generally wiser to focus on the performance of the group rather than individual contributions. Managers and group members will want to offer assistance to underperformers as well as congratulating members for their contributions. If the goal is to create a community where competition pushes each member to perform, individual highlights may serve your needs, but if you want a group to solve a problem or address a challenge as a group, you have to promote group cohesion. Members need to feel a sense of belonging, and praise (or the lack thereof) can be a sword with two edges. One stimulates and motivates, while the other demoralizes and divides.

Groups should be designed to produce and perform in ways and at levels that individuals cannot, or else you should consider compartmentalizing the tasks. The performing stage is where productivity occurs, and it is necessary to make sure the group has what it needs to perform. Missing pieces, parts, or information can stall the group, and reset the cycle to storming all over again. Loss of performance is inefficiency, and that carries a cost. Managers will be measured by the group's productivity and performance, and their success reflects on the manager. Make sure the performing stage is one that is productive and healthy for its members.

Imagine that you are the manager of a group that has produced an award-winning design for an ecologically innovative four-seat car. Their success is your success. Their celebrations are yours, even if you are not the focus of them. A manager manages the

process, while group members perform. If you were a member of the group, and you helped design the beltline, you made a fundamental contribution to the style of the car. Individual consumers may never consider the line from the front fender, across the doors, to the rear taillight as they make a purchase decision, but they will recognize beauty. You will know that you could not have achieved that fundamental part of car design without help from the engineers in the group, and if the number-crunching accountants had not seen the efficiency of the production process that produced it, it may never have survived the transition from prototype to production. The group came together and accomplished its goals with amazing results.

Now, as typically happens eventually with all groups, the time has come to move on to new assignments. In the adjourning stage, group members leave the group. The group may cease to exist, or it may be transformed with new members and a new set of goals. Your contributions may have caught the attention of management, and you may be assigned to the redesign of the flagship vehicle, the halo car of your marque or brand. It's quite a professional honor, and it's yours because of your successful work in a group. Others will be reassigned to tasks that require their talents and skills, and you may or may not collaborate with them in the future.

You may miss the interactions with the members, even the more cantankerous ones, and will experience both relief and a sense of loss. Like life, the group process is normal, and mixed emotions are to be expected. A wise manager anticipates this stage and facilitates the separation with skill and ease. We often close this process with a ritual marking its passing, though the ritual may be as formal as an award or as informal as a "thank you" or a verbal acknowledgment of a job well done over coffee and calories.

On a more sober note, it is important not to forget that groups can reach the adjourning stage without having achieved success. Some businesses go bankrupt, some departments are closed, and some individuals lose their positions after a group fails to perform. Adjournment can come suddenly and unexpectedly, or gradually and piece by piece. Either way, a skilled business communicator will be prepared and recognize it as part of the classic group life cycle.

Table 2.2 Tuckman's Linear Model of Group Development. Tuckman, B. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin, 63*, 384–399.

Stages	Activities
Forming	Members come together, learn about each other, and determine the purpose of the group.
Storming	Members engage in more direct communication and get to know each other. Conflicts between group members will often arise during this stage.
Norming	Members establish spoken or unspoken rules about how they communicate and work. Status, rank and roles in the group are established.
Performing	Members fulfill their purpose and reach their goal.
Adjourning	Members leave the group.

The Life Cycle of Member Roles

Just as groups go through a life cycle when they form and eventually adjourn, so the members of groups fulfill different roles during this life cycle. These roles, proposed by Moreland and Levine, Moreland, R., & Levine, J. (1982). Socialization in small groups: temporal changes in individual group relations. (L. Berkowitz, Ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 15*, 153. are summarized in Table 2.3.

Suppose you are about to graduate from school, and you are in the midst of an employment search. You've gathered extensive information on a couple of local businesses and are aware that they will be participating in the university job fair. You've explored their websites, talked to people currently employed at each company, and learned what you can from the public information available. At this stage, you are considered a potential member. You may have an electrical, chemical, or mechanical engineering degree soon, but you are not a member of an engineering team.

You show up at the job fair in professional attire and completely prepared. The representatives of each company are respectful, cordial, and give you contact information. One of them even calls a member of the organization on the spot and arranges an interview for you next week. You are excited at the prospect and want to learn more. You are still a potential member.

The interview goes well the following week. The day after the meeting you receive a call for a follow-up interview, which leads to a committee interview. A few weeks later, the company calls you with a job offer. However, in the meantime, you have also been

interviewing with other potential employers, and you are waiting to hear back from two of them. You are still a potential member.

After careful consideration, you decide to take the job offer and start the next week. The projects look interesting, you'll be gaining valuable experience, and the commute to work is reasonable. Your first day on the job is positive, and they've assigned you a mentor. The conversations are positive, but at times you feel lost, as if they are speaking a language you can't quite grasp. As a new group member, your level of acceptance will increase as you begin learning the groups' rules, spoken and unspoken. Fisher, B. A. (1970). Decision emergence: phases in group decision making. *Speech Monographs, 37*, 56–66. You will gradually move from the potential member role to the role of a new group member as you learn to fit into the group.



Figure 2.2.1: As a member of a new group, you will learn new customs and traditions © Jupiter Images

Over time and projects, you gradually increase your responsibilities. You are no longer looked at as the new person, and you can follow almost every conversation. You can't quite say "I remember when" because your tenure hasn't been that long, but you are a known quantity and know your way around. You are a full member of the group. Full members enjoy knowing the rules and customs, and can even create new rules. New group members look to full members for leadership and guidance. Full group members can control the agenda and have considerable influence on the agenda and activities.

Full members of a group, however, can and do come into conflict. When you were a new member, you may have remained silent when you felt you had something to say, but now you state your case. There is more than one way to get the job done. You may suggest new ways that emphasize efficiency over existing methods. Co-workers who have been working in the department for several years may be unwilling to adapt and change, and tension may result. Expressing different views can cause conflict and may even interfere with communication.

When this type of tension arises, divergent group members pull back, contribute less, and start to see themselves as separate from the group. Divergent group members have less eye contact, seek out each other's opinions less frequently, and listen defensively. At the beginning of the process, you felt a sense of belonging, but now you don't. Marginal group members start to look outside the group for their interpersonal needs.

After several months of trying to cope with these adjustments, you decide that you never really investigated the other two companies; that your job search process was incomplete. Perhaps you should take a second look at the options. You will report to work on Monday but will start the process of becoming an ex-member, one who no longer belongs. You may experience a sense of relief upon making this decision, given that you haven't felt like you belonged to the group for a while. When you line up your next job and submit your resignation, you make it official.

Table 2.3 The Life Cycle of Member Roles. Moreland, R., & Levine, J. (1982). Socialization in small groups: temporal changes in individual group relations. (L. Berkowitz, Ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 15*, 153.

1	Potential Member	Curiosity and Interest
2	New Member	Joined the group but still an outsider, and unknown
3	Full Member	Knows the "rules" and is looked to for leadership
4	Divergent Member	Focuses on differences
5	Marginal Member	No longer involved
6	Ex-Member	No longer considered a member

This process has no set timetable. Some people overcome differences and stay in the group for years. Others get promoted and leave the group only when they get transferred to regional headquarters. As a skilled communicator, you will recognize the signs of divergence, just like you anticipate the storming stage, and do your best to facilitate success.

Positive and Negative Member Roles

If someone in your group always makes everyone laugh, that can be a distinct asset when the news is less than positive. At times when you have to get work done, however, the class clown may become a distraction. Notions of positive and negative will often depend on the context when discussing groups. Table 2.4 and Table 2.5 list both positive and negative roles people sometimes play in a group setting.Beene, K., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. *Journal of Social Issues, 37*, 41–49.'McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Table 2.4 Positive Roles. Beene, K., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. *Journal of Social Issues, 37*, 41–49.'McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics Of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Initiator-Coordinator	Suggests new ideas or new ways of looking at the problem
Elaborator	Builds on ideas and provides examples
Coordinator	Brings ideas, information, and suggestions together
Evaluator-Critic	Evaluates ideas and provides constructive criticism
Recorder	Records ideas, examples, suggestions, and critiques

Table 2.5 Negative RolesBeene, K., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. *Journal of Social Issues, 37*, 41–49.'McLean, S. (2005). *The Basics of Interpersonal Communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Dominator	Dominates discussion, not allowing others to take their turn
Recognition Seeker	Relates discussion to their accomplishments, seeks attention
Special-Interest Pleader	Relates discussion to special interest or personal agenda
Blocker	Blocks attempts at consensus consistently
Joker or Clown	Seeks attention through humor and distracts group members

Now that we've examined a classical view of positive and negative group member roles, let's examine another perspective. While some personality traits and behaviors may negatively influence groups, some are positive or negative depending on the context.

Just as the class clown can have a positive effect in lifting spirits or a negative effect in distracting members, so a dominator may be exactly what is needed for quick action. An emergency physician doesn't have time to ask all the group members in the emergency unit how they feel about a course of action; instead, a self-directed approach based on training and experience may be necessary. In contrast, the pastor of a church may have ample opportunity to ask members of the congregation their opinions about a change in the format of Sunday services; in this situation, the role of coordinator or elaborator is more appropriate than that of dominator.

The group is together because they have a purpose or goal, and normally they are capable of more than any one individual member could be on their own, so it would be inefficient to hinder that progress. But a blocker, who cuts off collaboration, does just that. If a group member interrupts another and presents a viewpoint or information that suggests a different course of action, the point may be well taken and serve the collaborative process. If that same group member repeatedly engages in blocking behavior, then the behavior becomes a problem. A skilled communicator will learn to recognize the difference, even when positive and negative aren't completely clear.

Key Takeaway

Groups and their individual members come together and grow apart in predictable patterns.

Exercise 2.2.1

1. Is it possible for an outsider (a non-group member) to help a group move from the storming stage to the norming stage? Explain your answer and present it to the class.
2. Think of a group of which you are a member and identify some roles played by group members, including yourself. Have your roles, and those of others, changed over time? Are some roles more positive than others? Discuss your answers with your classmates.
3. In the course where you are using this book, think of yourself and your classmates as a group. At what stage of group formation are you currently? What stage will you be at when the school year ends?
4. Think of a group you no longer belong to. At what point did you become an ex-member? Were you ever a marginal group member or a full member? Write a 2–3 paragraph description of the group, how and why you became a member, and how and why you left. Share your description with a classmate.

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2.3: Why Communicate in Groups?

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the role of interpersonal needs in group communication

"I love mankind. It's people I can't stand."

Charles M. Schulz (through Charlie Brown)

"Communication is a continual balancing act, juggling the conflicting needs for intimacy and independence."

Deborah Tannen



Figure 2.3.1

Munro Leaf wrote and illustrated a classic children's book in 1936 called *Manners Can Be Fun*. Here are the drawings and text from its first few pages:



Figure 2.3.2

If you lived all by yourself out on a desert island, others would not care whether you had good manners or not. It wouldn't bother them. But if someone else lived there with you, you would both have to learn to get along together pleasantly.

If you did not, you would probably quarrel and fight all the time, or––

stay apart and be lonesome because you could not have a good time together. Neither would be much fun.

Although Leaf's drawings and text are simple and plain, they convey important truths about human beings: we need to get along with other people, and to get along we need to communicate in groups.

If we ask ourselves, then, "What's the point of communicating in groups instead of just sitting at home or in a workplace alone?" we'll conclude that our group interactions and relationships help us meet basic human needs. We may also recognize that not all our needs are met by any one person, job, experience, or context; instead, we need to diversify our communication interactions in order to meet our needs.McLean, S. (2010). *Business Communication for Success*. Irvington, NY: Flat World Knowledge.

At first, you may be skeptical of the idea that we communicate to meet our basic needs. Let's consider two theories on the subject, however, and see how well they predict, describe, and anticipate our tendency to interact.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, represented in Figure 2.3.3 may be familiar to you. Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and Personality* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harper & Row. We need the resources listed in level one (e.g., air, food, and water) to survive. If we have met those basic needs, we move to level two: safety. A job may represent this level of safety at its most basic level. Regardless of how much satisfaction you may receive from a job well done, a paycheck ultimately represents meeting the basic needs of many.

If we feel safe and secure, we are more likely to seek the companionship of others. Human beings tend to form groups naturally, and if basic needs are met, love and belonging occur in level three. Perhaps you've been new to a class, or a club, or at work and didn't understand the first thing about what was going on. Conflict may have been part of that experience, but you were probably still eager to interact with the other people in the group rather than staying by yourself like the miserable stick figure in Leaf's final drawing of the desert island.

As you came to know what was what and who was who, you learned how to negotiate the landscape and avoid landmines. Your self-esteem (level four) improved as you perceived that you belonged as part of the group.

Over time, you may have learned your job tasks and the strategies for succeeding in your class, your club, or your job. Perhaps you even came to be known as a reliable resource for others, as someone who would know how to respond helpfully if someone came to you with a problem. People may eventually have looked up to you within your role and have been impressed with your ability to make a difference. Maslow called this "self-actualization" (level five) and discussed how people come to perceive a sense of control or empowerment over their context and environment.

Beyond self-actualization, Maslow recognized our innate need to know (level six) that drives us to grow and learn, explore our environment, or engage in new experiences. We come to appreciate a sense of self that extends beyond our immediate experiences, beyond the function, and into the community and the representational. We can take in beauty for its own sake, and value aesthetics (level seven) that we previously ignored or had little time to consider.



Figure 2.3.3: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's theory is individualistic, focusing primarily on how one person at a time may meet his or her basic needs. The theory

has been criticized in light of the fact that many cultures are not centered on the individual. It's also been pointed out that even people whose physical resources are severely limited can enjoy rich interpersonal relationships and experience cultural, intellectual, and social treasures. Nevertheless, Maslow's hierarchy serves as a good place from which to begin our discussion about group communication.

What do we need from our environment? Why do we communicate in groups? The answers to both questions are often related.

William Schutz's Interpersonal Needs offered an alternate version of human interaction. Schutz, W. (1966). *The Interpersonal Underworld*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books. Like Maslow, he considered the universal aspects of our needs, but he contended that they operate within a range or continuum for each person.McLean, S. (2010). *Business Communication for Success*. Irvington, NY: Flat World Knowledge. According to Schutz, the need for affection, or appreciation, is basic to all humans. We all need to be recognized and feel like we belong, but some people need more interaction with groups than others. Schutz describes underpersonals as people who seek limited interaction. On the opposite end of the spectrum, you may know people in school or at work who continually seek attention and affirmation. Schutz refers to these people as overpersonals. The individual who strikes a healthy balance between meeting needs through solitary action and group interaction is referred to as a personal individual.

Humans also have a need for control, or the ability to influence people and events. But that need may vary according to the context, environment, and sense of security. If you act primarily autonomously to plan and organize your affairs as part of a group, Schutz would describe your efforts to control your situation as autocratic, or self-directed. Abdicrats, on the other hand, are people who according to Schutz shift the burden of responsibility from themselves to others and rely upon others for a sense of control. Democrats, finally, balance individual and group and are apt to gather and share information on the road to group progress.

Finally, Schutz echoed Maslow in his assertion that belonging is a basic interpersonal need, but he noted that it exists within a range or continuum and that some people need more and others less. Undersocials may be less likely to seek interaction, may prefer smaller groups, and will generally not be found on center stage. Oversocials, by contrast, crave attention and are highly motivated to seek belonging. A social person is one who strikes a healthy balance between being withdrawn and being the constant center of attention.

Schutz described these three interpersonal needs of affection, control, and belonging as interdependent and variable. In one context, an individual may have a high need for control, while in others he or she may not perceive the same level of motivation or compulsion to meet that need. Maslow and Schutz offer us two related versions of interpersonal needs that begin to address the central question: why communicate in groups?

We communicate with each other to meet our needs, regardless of how we define those needs. From the time you are a newborn infant crying for food or the time you are a toddler learning to say "please" when requesting a cup of milk, to the time you are an adult learning the rituals of a college classroom or a job interview, you learn to communicate in groups to gain a sense of self within the group or community, meeting your basic needs as you grow and learn.

Key Takeaway

Human beings communicate in groups in order to meet some of their most important basic needs.

Exercise 2.3.1

1. Review the types of individuals from Schutz's theory described in this section. Which types do you think fit you? Which types fit some of your coworkers or classmates? Why? Share your opinions with your classmates and compare your self-assessment with the types they believe describe you.
2. Think of two or more different situations and how you might express your personal needs differ from one situation to the other. Have you observed similar variations in personal needs in other people from one situation to another? Discuss your thoughts with a classmate.

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2.4: What Is a Theory?

Learning Objectives

1. Define “theory”
2. Identify the functions of theories
3. Evaluate the practicality of using theories

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”

Kurt Lewin

“Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away.”

Philip K. Dick

“Can I make it through that intersection before the light turns red?” “Will I have enough money left at the end of the month to take my honey out to dinner at a nice restaurant?” “Can I trust my office mate to keep a secret?” Every day we apply conceptions of how the world works to make decisions and answer questions like these.

Many of these conceptions are based on our own past experiences, what other people have told us, what we’ve read or viewed online, and so on. Sometimes the conceptions are clearly present in our minds as we act; other times they lie beneath our awareness. In reality, the conceptions may represent a hodgepodge of fact, fiction, hunches, conjectures, wishes, and assumptions. And they may change over time for reasons we may or may not even be able to identify.

We may informally refer to these kinds of conceptions as “theories.” For instance, we might say, “He made a big mistake when he did that. My theory is that he was under a lot of stress because of getting laid off from his job.” In studying communication, however, we make use of a more refined definition of the term “theory” which is anything but a hodgepodge.

Defining “Theory”

Hoover, Hoover, K. R. (1984). *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking* (3rd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 38. straightforwardly defined a theory as “a set of interrelated propositions that suggest why events occur in the manner that they do.” According to the National Academy of Sciences, Boss, J. (2010). *Think; Critical Thinking for Everyday Life*. New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 379. a scientific theory is “a well-substantiated explanation of some aspect of the natural world that can incorporate facts, laws, inferences, and tested hypotheses.” Similar definitions have been put forth by other authorities. All the definitions, however, describe theories as products of intellectual activity and as sources of insight into interpreting phenomena.

Some theories are solid and universally accepted. Examples include the heliocentric theory and germ theory. It’s assumed that these theories require no further testing or evidence to continue to be accepted.

Other more provisional theories, such as string theory in physics or self-efficacy theory in psychology, require continual exploration and testing in order to be supported and retained. Theories are never to be regarded as factual, but rather as models which conform to facts as closely as possible.

Functions of Theory

So—what can theories do for us? Their main function is to help us make sense of phenomena, including human behavior. They help us answer “why” and “how” questions about the world. More specifically, they can fulfill three major functions.

The first function is explanation. Theories can help us understand why entities—physical objects, processes, or people—behave the way they do, individually or in interactions with each other.

The second function is “postdiction.” Theories can help us interpret specific past incidents and events and account for why they

would be expected to happen as they did. Thus, they give us an assurance that order exists in at least part of the world.

The final function is prediction, whereby theories help us gain confidence in describing what is likely to take place in the future. Many physical phenomena occur with a degree of stability and consistency over time. Although human beings often surprise each other, psychologists have contended that someone's past behavior is the best predictor of that person's future behavior. Thus, if our theories have properly and accurately postdicted the way someone has acted, they should lead us to a clear picture of what future behavior that person will exhibit.

Before they had reasonable theories regarding physical science, our ancestors found events like eclipses and earthquakes to be inexplicable. They responded to such phenomena with dread or superstitious speculation. The same was true with respect to complex bodily functions and the spread of disease. Having theories about our natural world and our place in it gives us as human beings a comfortable, reliable foundation upon which to strengthen and enlarge our knowledge. Theories, in short, free us to spread our mental wings and fly into new territory.

Three other characteristics are associated with good theories. First, they exhibit parsimony; that is, they are as simple as possible. Second, they should be consistent with previous theories. Third, they also need to be deniable.

Deniability means that those who hold a theory should be able to describe evidence that would cause them to abandon it. If this weren't the case, choosing among competing theories would be a matter only of who spoke loudest or fought hardest on behalf of their opinions.

What Theories Are Not

Many ingredients make up human inquiry. We've established that theories rank among the most important. Several others, however, are part of the landscape and need to be differentiated from theories.

First of all, theories are not laws. Laws specify uniform cause-and-effect relationships that hold true under limited, defined circumstances. Unlike theories, which are broader, they do not claim to explain why the relationships exist. Consider Newton's First Law of Motion, for instance: "Every object in a state of uniform motion tends to remain in that state of motion unless an external force is applied to it." The theory of gravity, in contrast, more broadly states that any two or more objects exert a force of attraction on one another.

Second, theories are not claims. Claims are contentions based on belief or opinion. They do not necessarily rely on empirical evidence—i.e., evidence acquired through conventional sense perceptions and assessed through scientific processes. Individuals and groups may continue to maintain their claims without regard to investigations and discoveries which counter their beliefs. Theories, in contrast, are developed—and modified, if contrary evidence arises—by careful, systematic observation and testing among members of a community.

Finally, theories are not arguments. In everyday language, an argument is simply a reason someone offers for accepting or stating a particular claim. More formally, a logician would say that an argument comprises a premise and a conclusion. A premise might be "We all know that gray clouds sometimes produce rain. I see gray clouds in the sky." This would be followed with a conclusion, such as "There's a possibility that it's going to rain." A theory about the weather, beyond its relevance to specific conditions in the sky at a particular time, encompasses all sorts of meteorological phenomena and is meant to apply universally.

Are Theories Practical?

There may be more than meets the eye to Kurt Lewin's statement at the beginning of this section concerning theory and practice. Obviously, not all theories will be equally practical. Some can be applied with more assurance to broader domains than others, some occupy a tenuous place among many other competing theories, and some are simply bad. Whether theories successfully guide action depends on whether they're properly developed, whether they correspond well to reality, and whether they're sufficiently flexible to evolve as circumstances change and new information becomes available.

Furthermore, it's been pointed out that knowing theories does not necessarily mean that we will act according to them. Sandelands, L.E. (1990). "*What Is So Practical about Theory? Lewin Revisited.*" *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 20 (3): 235–262. And other forms of communication can sometimes be as provocative and valuable to us as theory. Good poetry, essays, and fiction all may inspire us and help instill the kind of confidence we need to make decisions and cover new intellectual ground.

Still, it's clear that theory can serve as an important contextual factor as individuals and groups refine and elaborate upon the practices they follow. As we'll see in the next section, group communication theory constitutes just such a valuable contextual factor for us.

Key Takeaway

A good theory can help us explain and predict phenomena.

Exercise 2.4.1

1. The theory of gravity tells us that all objects, in all situations and at all times, exert an attractive force upon each other. Can you think of any statements about human interaction that apply in all situations and at all times? What makes you confident in your answer?
2. What are one or two major assumptions you make about people in groups which guide your own behavior as part of those groups?

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2.5: Group Communication Theory

Learning Objectives

1. Identify ways in which group communication theory can help groups
2. Understand how theories are properly developed
3. Identify prominent theoretical paradigms regarding communication

"[C]reating a new theory is not like destroying an old barn and erecting a skyscraper in its place. It is rather like climbing a mountain, gaining new and wider views, discovering unexpected connections between our starting point and its rich environment. But the point from which we started out still exists, and can be seen, although it appears smaller and forms a tiny part of our broad view gained by the mastery of the obstacles on our adventurous way up."

Albert Einstein

"In making theories, always keep a window open so that you can throw one out if necessary."Einstein, A., & Infeld, L. (1938). The Evolution of Physics. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Béla Schick

Functions of Group Communication Theory

Theory helps us to bear our ignorance of facts.

George Santayana in The Sense of Beauty

What can theories about group communication do for us? Like all theories, they can help us explain, postdict, and predict behavior. Specifically, theory can help us deal with group communication in four ways. Hahn, L.K., Lipper, L., & Paynton, S.T. (2011). *Survey of Communication Study*. http://bit.ly/ImokVO.

First, these theories can help us interpret and understand what happens when we communicate in groups. For example, a person from a culture such as Japan's may be taken by surprise when someone from mainstream US culture expresses anger openly in a formal meeting. If we're familiar with a theory which describes and identifies "high" versus "low-context" cultures, we can make better sense of interactions like this with people from cultures other than our own.

Second, the theories can help us choose what elements of our experience in groups to pay attention to. As Einstein wrote, "It is theory that decides what can be observed." If we know that cultures can be "high-" or "low-context," then when we interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds we'll watch for behaviors that we believe are associated with each of those categories. For example, if people are from high-context cultures they may tend to avoid explicit explanations and questions.

Third, the theories can enlarge our understanding. Theories strengthen as they're examined and tested in the light of people's experience. Students, scholars, and citizens can all broaden their knowledge by discussing and explaining theories. Reflecting on questions and other reactions they receive in response can also refine theories and make them more useful.

Fourth, the theories may impel us to challenge prevailing cultural, social, and political practices. Most of the ways that people behave in groups are products of habit, custom, and learning. They aren't, in other words, innate. By applying theoretical perspectives to how groups operate, we may be able to identify fairer and more just approaches.

Where Group Communication Theories Come From

"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data."

Arthur Conan Doyle (via Sherlock Holmes in "A Scandal in Bohemia," 1891)

To develop group communication theories, people generally follow a three-step process that parallels what Western science calls “the scientific method.” Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (2005). *Theories of Human Communication* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

1. Ask important questions. What stages should most groups expect to pass through as they form and adopt goals? How does the size of a group affect its ability to pursue its goals? What methods of group decision-making work best with which kinds of people? Which blend of individual personalities contributes most to the satisfaction of a group? All these questions are meaningful and significant to groups, and all of them have served as the foundation of theories about group communication.
2. Observe people’s behavior in groups. To be productive, this observation should proceed on the basis of well-defined terms and within clear boundaries. To find out which blend of individual personalities contributes most to group satisfaction, for instance, it’s necessary first to define “personality” and “satisfaction.” It is also important to decide which kinds of groups to observe under which circumstances.
3. Analyze the results of the observation process and base new theories upon them. The theories should fit the results of the observations as closely as possible.

You may want to go online and look at a journal devoted to group communication topics, such as “Small Group Research.” If you do, you’ll see that the titles of its articles refer often to existing theories and that the articles themselves describe experiments with groups that have tested and elaborated upon those theories.

Theoretical Paradigms for Group Communication

Groups of theories may compose theoretical paradigms, which are collections of concepts, values, assumptions, and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality for a community that shares them. Hahn, L.K., Lipper, L., & Paynton, S.T. (2011). *Survey of Communication Study*. http://bit.ly/ImokVO Group communication theories tend to cluster around the following five paradigms:

- The systems theory paradigm. Systems theory examines the inputs, processes, and outputs of systems as those systems strive toward balance, or homeostasis. This paradigm for group communication emphasizes that processes and relationships among components of a group are interdependent and goal-oriented. Thus, the adage that “it is impossible to do just one thing” is taken to be true by systems theorists. Focus is placed more on developing a complete picture of groups than upon examining their parts in isolation.
- The rhetorical theories paradigm. The field of rhetoric originated with the Greeks and Romans and is the study of how symbols affect human beings. For example, Aristotle’s three elements of persuasion—ethos (credibility), logos (logic), and pathos (appeal to emotion)—are still used today to describe and categorize people’s statements. Rhetorical analysis of group communication lays the greatest emphasis on describing messages, exploring their functions, and evaluating their effectiveness.
- The empirical laws paradigm. This paradigm, also known as the positivist approach, bases investigation of group communication on the assumption that universal laws govern human interaction in much the same way that gravity or magnetism act upon all physical objects. “If X, then Y” statements may be used to characterize communication behavior in this paradigm. For instance, you might claim that “If people in a group sit in a circle, a larger proportion of them will share in a conversation than if they are arranged in rows facing one direction.” The effects of empirical laws governing group communication are usually held to be highly likely rather than absolute.
- The human rules paradigm. Instead of contending that behavior by people in groups conforms to absolute and reliable laws, this paradigm holds that people construct and then follow rules for their interactions. Because these rules are subjective and arise out of social circumstances and cultural environments which may change, they can’t be pinned down the way that laws describing the physical world can be and are apt to evolve over time.
- The critical theories paradigm. Should we simply analyze and describe the ways in which groups communicate, or should we challenge those ways and propose others? The critical theories paradigm proposes that we should strive to understand how communication may be used to exert power and oppress people. Foss, K. A., & Foss, S. K. (1989). Incorporating the feminist perspective in communication scholarship: A research commentary. In C. Spitzack & K. Carter (Eds.), *Doing Research on Women's Communication: Alternative Perspectives in Theory and Method* (pp. 64–94). Norwood, NJ: Ablex. When we have determined how this oppression takes place, we should seek to remedy it. This combination of theory and action is defined as praxis.

No single theoretical paradigm is accepted by everyone who studies group communication. Whether a description or prediction concerning people’s behavior in groups is found to be accurate or not will depend on which viewpoint we come from and which kinds of groups we observe.

Key Takeaway

If they are properly developed, theories of group communication can help group members understand and influence group processes.

Exercise 2.5.1

1. Identify a group that you've been part of at school or in the workplace. What aspects of its behavior do you feel you might have better understood if you'd had a grasp of group communication theory?
2. Think of another significant experience you've had recently as part of a group. Of the theoretical paradigms for group communication described in this section, which would you feel most comfortable in applying to the experience? Which paradigm, if any, do you feel it would be inappropriate to apply? Why?

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2.6: Additional Resources

Read about groups and teams on the business website 1000 Ventures. http://www.1000ventures.com/business_guide/crosscuttings/team_main.html

Learn more about Tuckman's Linear Model. http://www.infed.org/thinkers/tuckman.htm

Learn more about Dewey's sequence of group problem solving on this site from Manatee Community College in Florida. faculty.mccfl.edu/frithl/SPC1600/handouts/Dewey.htm

Read a hands-on article about how to conduct productive meetings. www.articlesnatch.com/Article/How-To-Conduct-Productive-Meetings-/132050

Visit this WikiHow site to learn how to use VOIP. http://www.wikihow.com/Use-VoIP

Watch a YouTube video on cloud computing. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PNuQHUiV3Q

Read about groups and teams, and contribute to a wiki about them, on Wikibooks. http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Managing_Groups_and_Teams

How did Twitter get started? Find out. http://twitter.com/about

Take a (nonscientific) quiz to identify your leadership style. psychologyabout.com/library/quiz/bl-leadershipquiz.htm

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3: GROUP DEVELOPMENT

3.0: Chapter Introduction

3.1: Group Life Cycles

3.2: The Life Cycle of Member Roles

3.3: Why People Join Groups

3.4: Social Penetration Theory

3.5: Group Norms

3.6: Summary

3.7: Additional Resources

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3.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. Have you ever been in a group that seems stuck in endless loops of conflict, where nothing gets done, and all the energy was spent on interpersonal conflicts? Can you share an example? Share and compare your results with classmates.
2. Have you ever been in a group that gets things done, where everyone seems to know their role and responsibilities, where all members contribute and perform? Can you share an example? Share and compare your results with classmates.

The ratio of We's to I's is the best indicator of the development of a team.

Anonymous

Getting Started

A group is people doing something together. It can be a large group of thousand and we'll call them a crowd. It can be a small group of just three members. People might be social, or work together, formal or informal with each other, they might be assigned or self-selected as members—the range is great and varied, and as the group grows so does the complexity.

In this section, we explore group development. Groups start out as a zero in our lives. They require no time, no thought, no energy, and no effort. Then we choose to be part of one or receive an assignment. Now the group is no longer a zero in our lives. It might have a number, like 10%, meaning we spend about 10% of our work time on a project with a group. It could be 100%, as in we work every day within the group. We could call it a 10 for the ten hours a week we invest in it. Regardless of what we call a group in our lives, we have to call it something because it now exists for us, where once it did not.

We can also anticipate conflicts in a group. At work, we may see people in terms, or between departments, conflict with each other. Even at home, we may observe the friction that occurs between family members even after years of interaction. Where there are groups there will be conflict.

We find norms and expectations within groups. Every group has a code of conduct, no matter how informal, of who does what when and how. Power, status, and even companionship all play a role in group expectations for its members.

Finally, all groups end. Families end, change, and transform. Work relationships change as well. Groups accept new members, lose former members, and they themselves become new groups, rising out of the ashes of the old.

All groups form, have conflicts, form norms, and dissolve. In this section we'll explore three related theories on group development, comparing their similarities and differences. We'll learn more about why we need groups, and why they need us. We will explore how it that we come to know each other, and how important groups are in our lives.

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3.1: Group Life Cycles

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the typical stages in the life cycle of a group

Groups are dynamic systems, in constant change. Groups grow together and eventually come apart. People join groups and others leave. This dynamic changes and transforms the very nature of the group. Group socialization involves how the group members interact with one another and form relationships. Just as you were once born, and changed your family, they changed you. You came to know a language and culture, a value system, and a set of beliefs that influence you to this day. You came to be socialized, to experience the process of learning to associate, communicate, or interact within a group. A group you belong to this year—perhaps a soccer team or the cast of a play—may not be part of your life next year. And those who are in leadership positions may ascend or descend the leadership hierarchy as the needs of the group, and other circumstances, change over time.

Group Life Cycle Patterns

Your life cycle is characterized by several steps, and while it doesn't follow a prescribed path, there are universal stages we can all recognize. You were born. You didn't choose your birth, your parents, your language, or your culture, but you came to know them through communication. You came to know yourself, learned skills, discovered talents, and met other people. You worked, learned, lived, and loved, and as you aged, minor injuries took longer to heal. You competed in ever-increasing age groups in your favorite sport, and while your time for each performance may have increased as you aged, your experience allowed you to excel in other ways. Where you were once the novice, you have now learned something to share. You lived to see some of your friends pass before you, and the moment will arrive when you too must confront death.

In the same way, groups experience similar steps and stages and take on many of the characteristics we associate with life. Moreland, R., & Levine, J. (1982). Socialization in small groups: temporal changes in individual group relations. (L. Berkowitz, Ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 15*, 153. They grow, overcome illness and dysfunction, and transform across time. No group, just as no individual, lives forever.

Your first day on the job may be comparable to the first day you went to school. At home, you may have learned some of the basics, like how to write with a pencil, but knowledge of that skill and its application are two different things. People spoke in different ways at school than at home, and you came to understand the importance of recess, of raising your hand to get the teacher's attention, and how to follow other school rules. At work, you may have trained for your profession, but the academic knowledge only serves as your foundation, much as your socialization at home served to guide you at school. On the job they use jargon terms, have schedules that may include coffee breaks (recess), have a supervisor (teacher), and have their own rules, explicit and understood. On the first day, it was all new, even if many of the elements were familiar.

In order to better understand group development and its life cycle, many researchers have described the universal stages and phases of groups. While there are modern interpretations of these stages, most draw from the model proposed by Tuckman. Tuckman, B. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin, 63*, 384–399. This model, shown in Table 3.1, specifies the usual order of the phases of group development, and allows us to predict several stages we can anticipate as we join a new group.

Tuckman begins with the forming stage (also called the orientation stage or orientation phase**)** as the initiation of group formation. This stage is also called the orientation stage because individual group members come to know each other. Group members who are new to each other and can't predict each other's behavior can be expected to experience the stress of uncertainty. Uncertainty theory states that we choose to know more about others with whom we have interactions in order to reduce or resolve the anxiety associated with the unknown. Berger, C., & Calabrese, R. (1975). Some explorations in initial interactions and beyond: toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research, 1*, 99–112.'Berger, C. (1986). Response uncertain outcome values in predicted relationships: uncertainty reduction theory then and now. *Human Communication Research, 13*, 34–38.' Gudykunst, W. (1995). Anxiety/uncertainty management theory. In R. W. Wiseman (Ed.), *Intercultural communication theory* (pp. 8–58). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. The more we know about others, and become accustomed to how they communicate, the better we can predict how they will interact with us in future contexts. If you

learn that Monday mornings are never a good time for your supervisor, you quickly learn to schedule meetings later in the week. Individuals are initially tentative and display caution as they begin to learn about the group and its members.

If you don't someone very well, it is easy to offend. Each group member brings to the group a set of experiences, combined with education and a self-concept. You won't be able to read this information on a name tag, you will only come to know it through time and interaction. Since the possibility of overlapping and competing viewpoints and perspectives exists, the group will experience a storming stage, a time of struggles as the members themselves sort out their differences. There may be more than one way to solve the problem or task at hand, and some group members may prefer one strategy over another. Some members of the group may be senior to the organization in comparison to you, and members may treat them differently. Some group members may be as new as you are and just as uncertain about everyone's talents, skills, roles, and self-perceptions. The wise communicator will anticipate the storming stage and help facilitate opportunities for the members to resolve uncertainty before the work commences. There may be challenges for leadership and conflicting viewpoints. The sociology professor sees the world differently than the physics professor. The sales agent sees things differently than someone from accounting. A manager who understands and anticipates this normal challenge in the group's life cycle can help the group become more productive.

A clear definition of the purpose and mission of the group can help the members focus their energies. Interaction prior to the first meeting can help reduce uncertainty. Coffee and calories can help bring a group together. Providing the group with what they need, and opportunities to know each other, prior to their task can increase efficiency.

Groups that make a successful transition from the storming stage will next experience the norming stage, where the group establishes norms, or informal rules, for behavior and interaction. Who speaks first? Who takes notes? Who is creative and visual, and who is detail-oriented? Sometimes our job titles and functions speak for themselves, but human beings are complex. We are not simply a list of job functions, and in the dynamic marketplace of today's business environment, you will often find that people have talents and skills well beyond their "official" role or task. Drawing on these strengths can make the group more effective.

The norming stage is marked by less division and more collaboration. The level of anxiety associated with interaction is generally reduced, making for a more positive work climate that promotes listening. When people feel less threatened, and their needs are met, they are more likely to focus their complete attention on the purpose of the group. If they are still concerned with who does what, and whether they will speak in error, the interaction framework will stay in the storming stage. Tensions are reduced when the normative expectations are known, and the degree to which a manager can describe these at the outset can reduce the amount of time the group remains in uncertainty. Group members generally express more satisfaction with clear expectations and are more inclined to participate.

Ultimately, the purpose of a workgroup is performance, and the preceding stages lead us to the performing stage, in which the group accomplishes its mandate, fulfills its purpose, and reaches its goals. To facilitate performance, group members can't skip the initiation of getting to know each other, or the sorting out of roles and norms, but they can try to focus on performance with clear expectations from the moment the group is formed. Productivity is often how we measure success in business and industry, and the group has to produce. Outcome assessments may have been built into the system from the beginning and would serve as a benchmark for success. Wise managers know to celebrate success, as it brings more success, social cohesion, group participation, and a sense of job satisfaction. Incremental gains toward a benchmark may also be cause for celebration and support, and failure to reach a goal should be regarded as an opportunity for clarification.

It is generally wiser to focus on the performance of the group rather than individual contributions. Managers and group members will want to offer assistance to underperformers as well as congratulating members for their contributions. If the goal is to create a community where competition pushes each member to perform, individual highlights may serve your needs, but if you want a group to solve a problem or address a challenge as a group, you have to promote group cohesion. Members need to feel a sense of belonging, and praise (or the lack thereof) can be a sword with two edges. One stimulates and motivates, while the other demoralizes and divides.

Groups should be designed to produce and perform in ways and at levels that individuals cannot, or else you should consider compartmentalizing the tasks. The performing stage is where productivity occurs, and it is necessary to make sure the group has what it needs to perform. Missing pieces, parts, or information can stall the group, and reset the cycle to storming all over again. Loss of performance is inefficiency, and that carries a cost. Managers will be measured by the group's productivity and performance, and their success reflects on the manager. Make sure the performing stage is one that is productive and healthy for its members.

Imagine that you are the manager of a group that has produced an award-winning design for an ecologically innovative four-seat car. Their success is your success. Their celebrations are yours, even if you are not the focus of them. A manager manages the process, while group members perform. If you were a member of the group, and you helped design the beltline, you made a

fundamental contribution to the style of the car. Individual consumers may never consider the line from the front fender, across the doors, to the rear taillight as they make a purchase decision, but they will recognize beauty. You will know that you could not have achieved that fundamental part of car design without help from the engineers in the group, and if the number-crunching accountants had not seen the efficiency of the production process that produced it, it may never have survived the transition from prototype to production. The group came together and accomplished its goals with amazing results.

Now, as typically happens eventually with all groups, the time has come to move on to new assignments. In the adjourning stage, group members leave the group. Before you leave the group it may be time for a debriefing, a meeting to go over what worked, what didn't, and ways to improve for next time, or if you are in the US military, to participate in the "After Action Review" or AAR. While it is important to focus on group progress throughout the cycle, closure brings perspective. The completion of any training, mission, task, or journey provides an opportunity to review what occurred with a bit of distance. This stage can provide an important opportunity for managers and group members alike to learn from failure and success.

The group may cease to exist, or it may be transformed with new members and a new set of goals. Your contributions may have caught the attention of management, and you may be assigned to the redesign of the flagship vehicle, the halo car of your marque or brand. It's quite a professional honor, and it's yours because of your successful work in a group. Others will be reassigned to tasks that require their talents and skills, and you may or may not collaborate with them in the future.

You may miss the interactions with the members, even the more cantankerous ones, and will experience both relief and a sense of loss. Like life, the group process is normal, and mixed emotions are to be expected. A wise manager anticipates this stage and facilitates the separation with skill and ease. We often close this process with a ritual marking its passing, though the ritual may be as formal as an award or as informal as a "thank you" or a verbal acknowledgment of a job well done over coffee and calories.

On a more sober note, it is important not to forget that groups can reach the adjourning stage without having achieved success. Some businesses go bankrupt, some departments are closed, and some individuals lose their positions after a group fails to perform. Adjournment can come suddenly and unexpectedly, or gradually and piece by piece. Either way, a skilled business communicator will be prepared and recognize it as part of the classic group life cycle.

Table 3.1 Tuckman's Linear Model of Group Development. Tuckman, B. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin, 63*, 384–399.

Stages	Activities
Forming	Members come together, learn about each other, and determine the purpose of the group.
Storming	Members engage in more direct communication and get to know each other. Conflicts between group members will often arise during this stage.
Norming	Members establish spoken or unspoken rules about how they communicate and work. Status, rank, and roles in the group are established.
Performing	Members fulfill their purpose and reach their goal.
Adjourning	Members leave the group.

Let's now turn our attention to two other model's group lifecycles. While Tuckman's model is familiar, both Tubbs and Fisher offer two distinct, though similar views. Each model provides an area of emphasis, and all follow a similar progression.

In Tubb's Small Group Communication Theory (1995), the emphasis is on conflict vs. groupthink. As we've discussed, conflict is present in all groups, and we see the danger of groupthink raised in its absence. When the emphasis is on conformity, the group lacks diversity of viewpoints and the tendency to go along with the flow can produce disastrous results.

First Tubb's (Tubbs, 1995)Tubbs, Stewart. (1995). *A systems approach to small group interaction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995. asserts that we are involved in an orientation phase. We get to know each other, focus on limitations, opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses, and begin to discuss the task at hand. This stage is followed by the conflict stage, characterized by different viewpoints, disagreements, competing agendas, and debate. This stage is natural and in this model is viewed as necessary to inhibit conformity or groupthink. The consensus stage follows conflict, where group members select some ideas or actions over others and the group proceeds to get the task done. It is characterized by agreement and teamwork. Individual differences are not as apparent, having been sorted out during the previous conflict stage. All groups end, and once the task has been completed as a result of consensus and action, the group dissolves in the closure stage. This stage often features statements of agreement and support for the result, action, or outcome.

We can compare and contrast Tubb's model of group development to Fisher's (1970)Fisher, B. Aubrey. (1970). Decision emergence: Phases in group decision making. *Speech Monographs, 37*, 53–66. and view both overlap and divergence. Here the emphasis is on the group process of individuals becoming a functioning group that emerges successfully from conflict. The first stage is familiar: Orientation. It is characterized by awkward moments as individuals get to know each other, their backgrounds or special skill areas, and people size each other up. The group turns the corner to conflict where divergent points of view are presented, often characterized by struggles for power or a speech turn. As the group descends into conflict there can emerge allies and challengers, as members persuade each other and present alternatives. This process continues until one viewpoint, course of action, or path becomes the generally-agreed upon course for the group, and they emerge together in the emergence stage. Dissension and argument are no longer features of the conversation, and the emphasis is on action. The team acts and then progresses to the reinforcement stage, characterized by affirmations and statements of agreement or support for the task or actions. Group members often look to each other for support at this stage, and it sharply contrasts with the preceding conflict stage, where opposing viewpoints were aired. The emphasis is on group members to reinforce each other and the decision or outcome.

Finally, we can consider Poole's (1989)Poole, Marshall Scott, & Roth, Jonelle. (1989). Decision development in small groups V: Test of a contigency model. *Human Communication Research, 15,* 549–589. approach to group development, itself a distinct and divergent model that provides additional insight into group dynamics. In the case of Tuckman, Tubbs, and Fisher, we can observe a step-by-step process from start to finish. Poole asserts group development is far more complex but offers three distinct, interdependent tracks or patterns of communication that overlap, start and stop, and go back and forth as the group wrestles with the challenges. Here the emphasis is on the transitions between the two main tracks: Topic and Relation. In the topic track, group members discuss the topic and all the relevant issues as they explore how to approach it, get a handle on it, or resolve it. In the relation track, group members also discuss themselves, self-disclosure information, and ask questions to learn more about each other. It relates to reducing uncertainty between group members, and sometimes the group shifts from the topic track to the relationship track as members sort out personal issues or work on relationships. In this moment where the group shifts between the two main tracks emerges a third track: breakpoints. The breakpoint stage is characterized by turns in the conversation that regulate interaction, from an actual break in the discussion like a coffee break to a shift in the conversation to something they all have in common, like participation in a softball league. Breakpoints can also include postponement, where decisions are delayed to allow for further research or consideration, regression in the conversation, where topics once considered and addressed are raised yet again, or even adjournment, where the group closes for a time, for the day, or disbands to address new tasks as members of new groups.

Finally, let's turn our attention to assessing whether the group is working together, pulling apart, and ways to improve group interactions. An effective group can be recognized in several ways including:

- Group members are active, interested, and involved.
- Group members are comfortable; no obvious tensions.
- Group members understand and accept the task, goal, or activity.
- Disagreement is resolved amicably.
- Active listening behaviors can be frequently observed.
- Group members interact freely; no one member is in control.
- Group members openly discuss their progress.
- Criticism is present, accepted, and discussed openly.

These signs allow us insight into the group dynamics, and we can observe how they contribute to task completion as well as group health. Conversely, there are also several ways we can recognize when a group is ineffective:

- Some group members are not active, interested, or involved.
- Group member interactions include obvious tensions.
- Group members do not understand or accept the task, goal, or activity; passive/aggressive behaviors may be present.
- Disagreement is not resolved.
- Active listening behaviors cannot be frequently observed.
- Group members do not interact freely; one member is in control.
- Group members do not discuss their progress.
- Criticism is not present; groupthink is a significant risk.

With these telltale signs in mind, we can take an active part in promoting an active, effective, and healthy group:

- Encourage every member to contribute, speak, or share their thoughts.
- Encourage every member to understand their role, and everyone's roles, and how they complement each other.

- Encourage interdependence and interaction.
- Encourage the group to build on their common strengths and skills, celebrating incremental success.
- Encourage active listing and refrain from interruptions.
- Encourage group members to assess their collective progress frequently.

In this section we have examined group development and several theories on how groups come together, complete their task, goal, or activity, and grow apart. Just like interpersonal relationships include signs of health and prosperity, so do groups. The effective group leader understands both group process and ways to make a positive difference.

- Individual members demonstrate interest and involvement.
- There are no obvious tensions.
- It is clear the group understands and accepts the task.
- Listen behaviors are clearly demonstrated.
- Difference of opinion or viewpoint doesn't upset the group. Humor is a common characteristic, and tensions that may arise are quickly and amicably resolved.
- People feel free to express their viewpoints, thoughts, and feelings. Criticism is considered by group members and not considered as a personal attack.
- Consensus in decision-making is apparent.
- No one individual dominates the group.
- The group self-regulates, evaluating progress, regrouping, or advancing towards a common goal.
- Group member roles are clear and accepted.

An ineffective group can also be recognized in several ways:

- Some topics are not discussed and understood as off-limits.
- There is a sense of urgency, preferring advancement and task completion before consideration or consensus.
- One or more group members dominate the discussion.
- Individual members demonstrate a lack of interest and involvement.
- There are obvious tensions.
- It is clear the group does not understand or accepts the task. Group members are arguing in cycles, returning again and again to themes with no resolution.
- Listen behaviors are not clearly demonstrated.
- Difference of opinion or viewpoint upsets the group. Tensions rise with the expression of criticism.
- Criticism is not considered by group members and often interpreted as a personal attack.
- Consensus in decision-making is not apparent.
- The group does not self-regulate, and little discussion on group progress is present.
- Group member roles are not clear or accepted.

As we close our discussion on group development, let's consider five action steps members can encourage to help a group become more effective:

- Group members take turns speaking and listening and do not interrupt.
- Group members acknowledge and combine their strengths.
- Group members separate the issues from personalities, the message from the messenger.
- Group members outline action steps and discuss progress periodically.
- Group members clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

Key Takeaway

- Groups come together and grow apart in predictable patterns.

Exercise 3.1.1

1. Is it possible for an outsider (a non-group member) to help a group move from the storming stage to the norming stage? Explain your answer and present it to the class.

2. Think of a group of which you are a member and identify some roles played by group members, including yourself. Have your roles, and those of others, changed over time? Are some roles more positive than others? Discuss your answers with your classmates.
3. In the course where you are using this book, think of yourself and your classmates as a group. At what stage of group formation are you currently? What stage will you be at when the school year ends?

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3.2: The Life Cycle of Member Roles

Learning Objectives

1. Describe different types of group members and group member roles

Just as groups go through a life cycle when they form and eventually adjourn, so the members of groups fulfill different roles during this life cycle. These roles, proposed by Moreland and Levine, Moreland, R., & Levine, J. (1982). Socialization in small groups: temporal changes in individual group relations. (L. Berkowitz, Ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 15*, 153. are summarized in Table 3.2.

Suppose you are about to graduate from school, and you are in the midst of an employment search. You've gathered extensive information on a couple of local businesses and are aware that they will be participating in the university job fair. You've explored their websites, talked to people currently employed at each company, and learned what you can from the public information available. At this stage, you are considered a potential member. You may have an electrical, chemical, or mechanical engineering degree soon, but you are not a member of an engineering team.

You show up at the job fair in professional attire and completely prepared. The representatives of each company are respectful, cordial, and give you contact information. One of them even calls a member of the organization on the spot and arranges an interview for you next week. You are excited at the prospect and want to learn more. You are still a potential member.

The interview goes well the following week. The day after the meeting you receive a call for a follow-up interview, which leads to a committee interview. A few weeks later, the company calls you with a job offer. However, in the meantime, you have also been interviewing with other potential employers, and you are waiting to hear back from two of them. You are still a potential member.

After careful consideration, you decide to take the job offer and start the next week. The projects look interesting, you'll be gaining valuable experience, and the commute to work is reasonable. Your first day on the job is positive, and they've assigned you a mentor. The conversations are positive, but at times you feel lost, as if they are speaking a language you can't quite grasp. As a new group member, your level of acceptance will increase as you begin learning the groups' rules, spoken and unspoken. Fisher, B. A. (1970). Decision emergence: phases in group decision making. *Speech Monographs, 37*, 56–66. You will gradually move from the potential member role to the role of a new group member as you learn to fit into the group.



Figure 3.2.1: As a member of a new group, you will learn new customs and traditions © Jupiter Images

Over time and projects, you gradually increase your responsibilities. You are no longer looked at as the new person, and you can follow almost every conversation. You can't quite say "I remember when" because your tenure hasn't been that long, but you are a known quantity and know your way around. You are a full member of the group. Full members enjoy knowing the rules and customs, and can even create new rules. New group members look to full members for leadership and guidance. Full group members can control the agenda and have considerable influence on the agenda and activities.

Full members of a group, however, can and do come into conflict. When you were a new member, you may have remained silent when you felt you had something to say, but now you state your case. There is more than one way to get the job done. You may suggest new ways that emphasize efficiency over existing methods. Co-workers who have been working in the department for several years may be unwilling to adapt and change, and tension may result. Expressing different views can cause conflict and may even interfere with communication.

When this type of tension arises, divergent group members pull back, contribute less, and start to see themselves as separate

from the group. Divergent group members have less eye contact, seek out each other's opinions less frequently, and listen defensively. At the beginning of the process, you felt a sense of belonging, but now you don't. Marginal group members start to look outside the group for their interpersonal needs.

After several months of trying to cope with these adjustments, you decide that you never really investigated the other two companies; that your job search process was incomplete. Perhaps you should take a second look at the options. You will report to work on Monday but will start the process of becoming an ex-member, one who no longer belongs. You may experience a sense of relief upon making this decision, given that you haven't felt like you belonged to the group for a while. When you line up your next job and submit your resignation, you make it official.

Table 3.2 The Life Cycle of Member Roles. Moreland, R., & Levine, J. (1982). Socialization in small groups: temporal changes in individual group relations. (L. Berkowitz, Ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 15*, 153.

1	Potential Member	Curiosity and Interest
2	New Member	Joined the group but still an outsider, and unknown
3	Full Member	Knows the "rules" and is looked to for leadership
4	Divergent Member	Focuses on differences
5	Marginal Member	No longer involved
6	Ex-Member	No longer considered a member

This process has no set timetable. Some people overcome differences and stay in the group for years. Others get promoted and leave the group only when they get transferred to regional headquarters. As a skilled communicator, you will recognize the signs of divergence, just like you anticipate the storming stage, and do your best to facilitate success.

Key Takeaway

- Group membership follows a predictable pattern of stages.

Exercise 3.2.1

1. Consider a time when you were exploring group members, but had not yet decided to join. It would be accepting a job or joining a church, for example. What points did you consider when deciding to become a member (or not). Share your results with your classmates.
2. You decided to be part of a group but quickly learned that there were members of the group, full members, who viewed you as the new person. How did you know they considered you a new person, and how did their language use reflect their full membership? Did they use terms that were unfamiliar? Did they discuss topics that made little sense to you? Share your results with classmates.
3. As a full member of a group, you may have been asked to train a new employee, help a new person find their way around, or otherwise help them learn about the group, organization, or company. Did you think about your own orientation process and did your experience guide your actions? What did you do to help this person? What would you do differently if the same situation presented itself again? Share your results with classmates.
4. As a full member of the group, you know the ins and outs. You know the strengths and weaknesses of the group members, their likes and dislikes, and at times, familiarity can breed contempt. Have you had conflicts arise because of this close familiarity and how was it resolved? Share and compare your results with classmates.
5. Think of a group you no longer belong to. At what point did you become an ex-member? Were you ever a marginal group member or a full member? Write a 2–3 paragraph description of the group, how and why you became a member, and how and why you left. Share your description with a classmate.

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3.3: Why People Join Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the role of interpersonal needs in the communication process

“What are you doing?” You may have had no problem answering the question, and simply pulled a couple of lines from yesterday’s Twitter or reviewed your BlackBerry calendar. But if you had to compose an entirely original answer, would it prove to be a challenge? Perhaps at first, this might appear to be a simple task. You have to work and your job required your participation in a meeting, or you care about someone and met him or her for lunch.

Both scenarios make sense on the surface, but we have to consider the "why" with more depth. Why that meeting, and why that partner? Why not another job, or a lunch date with someone else? If we consider the question long enough, we’ll come around to the conclusion that we communicate with others in order to meet basic needs, and our meetings, interactions, and relationships help us meet those needs. We may also recognize that not all of our needs are met by any one person, job, experience, or context; instead, we diversify our communication interactions in order to meet our needs. At first, you may be skeptical of the idea that we communicate to meet our basic needs, but let’s consider a theory on the subject and see how well it predicts, describes, and anticipate our tendency to interact.

William Schutz, Schutz, W. (1966). *The interpersonal underworld*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books. offers an alternate version of interpersonal needs. Like Maslow, he considers the universal aspects of our needs, but he outlines how they operate within a range or continuum for each person. According to Schutz, the need for affection, or appreciation, is basic to all humans. We all need to be recognized and feel like we belong but may have differing levels of expectations to meet that need. When part of the merger process is announced and the news of layoffs comes, those co-workers who have never been particularly outgoing and have largely kept to themselves may become even more withdrawn. Schutz describes underpersonals as people who seek limited interaction. On the opposite end of the spectrum, you may know people where you work that are often seeking attention and affirmation. Schutz describes overpersonals as people who have a strong need to be liked and constantly seek attention from others. The person who strikes a healthy balance is called a personal individual.

Humans also have a need for control, or the ability to influence people and events. But that need may vary by the context, environment, and sense of security. You may have already researched similar mergers, as well as the forecasts for the new organization, and come to realize that your position and your department are central to the current business model. You may have also of taken steps to prioritize your budget, assess your transferable skills, and look for opportunities beyond your current context. Schutz would describe your efforts to control your situation as autocratic, or self-directed. At the same time, there may be several employees who have not taken similar steps who look to you and others for leadership, in effect abdicating their responsibility. Abdicrats shift the burn of responsibility from themselves to others, looking to others for a sense of control. Democrats share the need between the individual and the group and may try to hold a departmental meeting to gather information and share.

Finally, Schutz echoes Maslow in his assertion that belonging is a basic interpersonal need, but notes that it exists within a range or continuum, where some need more and others less. Undersocials may be less likely to seek interaction, may prefer smaller groups, and will generally not be found on center stage. Oversocials, however, crave the spotlight of attention and are highly motivated to seek belonging. A social person is one who strikes a healthy balance between being withdrawn and being the constant center of attention.

Schutz describes these three interpersonal needs of affection, control, and belonging as interdependent and variable. In one context an individual may have a high need for control, while in others he or she may not perceive the same level of motivation or compulsion to meet that need. Both Maslow and Schutz offer us two related versions of interpersonal needs that begin to address the central question: why communicate?

We communicate with each other to meet our needs, regardless of how we define those needs. From the time you are a newborn infant crying for food or the time you are a toddler learning to say “please” when requesting a cup of milk, to the time you are an adult learning the rituals of the job interview and the conference room, you learn to communicate in order to gain a sense of self within the group or community, meeting your basic needs as you grow and learn.

Key Takeaway

- Through communication, we meet universal human needs.

Exercise 3.3.1

1. Review the types of individuals from Schutz's theory described in this section. Which types do you think fit you? Which types fit some of your co-workers or classmates? Why? Share your opinions with your classmates and compare your self-assessment with the types they believe describe you.
2. Think of two or more different situations and how you might express your personal needs differ from one situation to the other. Have you observed similar variations in personal needs in other people from one situation to another? Discuss your thoughts with a classmate.

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3.4: Social Penetration Theory

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss social penetration theory, self-disclosure, and the principles of self-disclosure
2. Describe interpersonal relations

How do you get to know other people? If the answer springs immediately to mind, we're getting somewhere: communication. Communication allows us to share experiences, come to know ourselves and others, and form relationships, but it requires time and effort. You don't get to know someone in a day, a month, or even a year. At the same time, you are coming to know them, they are changing, adapting, and growing—and so are you. When groups come together people get to know each other and start the trust-building process. When we do not take the time to get to know each other, and focus simply on the task at hand, the group often suffers.

Altman and Taylor, Altman, I., & Taylor, D. (1973). *Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationship*s. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press. describe this progression from superficial to intimate levels of communication in social penetration theory, which is often called the Onion Theory because the model looks like an onion and involves layers that are peeled away. According to the social penetration theory, we fear that which we do not know. That includes people. Strangers go from being unknown to known through a series of steps that we can observe through conversational interactions. People come together in groups and teams and do amazing things.

If we didn't have the weather to talk about, what would we say? People across cultures use a variety of signals to indicate neutral or submissive stances in relation to each other. A wave, a nod, or a spoken reference about a beautiful day can indicate an open, approachable stance rather than a guarded, defensive posture. At the outermost layer of the onion, in this model, there is only that which we can observe. We can observe the characteristics of each other and make judgments, but they are educated guesses at best. Our nonverbal displays of affiliation, like a team jacket, a uniform, or a badge, may communicate something about us, but we only peel away a layer when we engage in conversation, oral or written.

As we move from public to private information we make the transition from small talk to substantial, and eventually intimate, conversations. Communication requires trust and that often takes time. Beginnings are fragile times and when expectations, roles, and ways of communicating are not clear, misunderstandings can occur. Some relationships may never proceed past observations on the weather, while others may explore controversial topics like politics or religion. A married couple that has spent countless years together may be able to finish each other's sentences, and as memory fades, the retelling of stories may serve to bond and reinforce the relationship. Increasingly intimate knowledge and levels of trust are achieved over time, involving frequency of interaction and well as length and quality. Positive interactions may lead to more positive interactions, while negative ones may lead to less overall interaction.

This may appear to be common sense at first, but let's examine an example. You are new to a position and your supervisor has been in his or her role for a number of years. Some people at the same level as you within the organization enjoy a level of knowledge and ease of interaction with your supervisor that you lack. They may have had more time and interactions with the supervisor, but you can still use this theory to gain trust and build a healthy relationship. Recognize that you are unknown to your supervisor, and they to you. Start with superficial conversations that are neutral and non-threatening, but that demonstrate a willingness to engage in communication. Silence early in a relationship can be a sign of respect, but it can also send the message that you are fearful, shy, or lack confidence. It can be interpreted as an unwillingness to communicate, and may actually discourage interaction. If the supervisor picks up the conversation, keep your responses short and light. If not, keep an upbeat attitude and mention the weather.

Over time the conversations may gradually grow to cross topics beyond the scope of the office, and a relationship may form that involves trust. To a degree, you and your co-workers learn to predict one another's responses and relax in the knowledge of mutual respect. If, however, you skip from superficial to intimate topics too quickly, you run the risk of violating normative expectations. Trust takes time, and with can come empathy and understanding, but if you share with your supervisor your personal struggles on day one, it may erode your credibility. According to the social penetration theory, people go from superficial to intimate conversations as trust develops through repeated, positive interactions. Self-disclosure is "information, thoughts, or feelings we tell others about ourselves that they would not otherwise know."McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. pp. 112 Taking it step by step, and not rushing to self-disclose or asking personal questions too soon,

can help develop positive business relationships.

Principles of Self-Disclosure

Write down five terms that describe your personal self, and five terms that describe your professional self. Once you have completed your two lists, compare the results. They may have points that overlap or may have words that describe you in your distinct roles that are quite different. This difference can be easy to address, but at times it can be a challenge to maintain. How much of "you" do you share in the workplace? Our personal and professional lives don't exist independently, and in many ways are interdependent.

How do people know more about us? We communicate information about ourselves, whether or not we are aware of it. You cannot not communicate. Watzlawick, P. (1993). *The language of change: elements of therapeutic communication*. New York, NY: Norton & Company. From your internal monologue and intrapersonal to communication, to verbal and nonverbal communication, communication is constantly occurring. What do you communicate about yourself by the clothes (or brands) you wear, the tattoos you display, or the piercing you remove before you enter the workplace? Self-disclosure is a process by which you intentionally communicate information to others, but can involve unintentional, but revealing slips. Beebe, Beebe, and RedmondBeebe, S., Beebe, S., & Redmond, M. (2002). *Interpersonal communication relating to others* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. offer us five principles of self-disclosure that remind us that communication is an integral part of any business or organizational setting. Let's discuss them one by one.

Self-Disclosure Usually Moves in Small Steps

Would you come to work on your first day wearing a large purple hat? If you knew that office attire was primarily brown and gray suits? Most people would say, "of course not!" as there is a normative expectation for dress, sometimes called a dress code. After you have worked within the organization, earned trust and established credibility, and earned your place in the community, the purple hat might be positively received with a sense of humor. But if you haven't yet earned your place, your fashion statement may be poorly received. In the same way, personal information is normally reserved for those of confidence, and earned over time. Take small steps as you come to know your colleagues, taking care to make sure who you are does not speak louder than what you say.

Self-Disclosure Moves from Impersonal to Intimate Information

So you decided against wearing the purple hat to work on your first day, but after a successful first week you went out with friends from your college days. You shut down the bar late in the evening and paid for it on Sunday. At work on Monday, is it a wise strategy to share the finer tips of the drinking games you played on Saturday night? Again, most people would say, "of course not!" It has nothing to do with work and only makes you look immature. Some people have serious substance abuse issues, and your stories could sound insensitive, producing a negative impact. How would you know, as you don't really know your co-workers yet? In the same way, it is not a wise strategy to post photos from the weekend's escapades on your MySpace, Facebook, or similar social networking web page. Employers are increasingly aware of their employees' web pages, and the picture of you looking stupid may come to mind when your supervisor is considering you for a promotion. You represent yourself, but you also represent your company and its reputation. If you don't represent it well, you run the risk of not representing it at all.

Self-Disclosure Is Reciprocal

Monday morning brings the opportunity to tell all sorts of stories about the weekend, and since you've wisely decided to leave any references to the bar in the past, you may instead choose the wise conversational strategy of asking questions. You may ask your co-workers what they did, what it was like, who they met, and where they went, but eventually, all conversations form a circle that comes back to you. The dance between source and receiver isn't linear, it's transactional. After a couple of stories, sooner or later, you'll hear the question "What did you do this weekend?" It's now your turn. This aspect of conversation is universal. We expect when we reveal something about ourselves that others will reciprocate. The dyadic effect is the formal term for this process and is often thought to meet the need to reduce uncertainty about conversational partners. If you stay quiet or decline to answer after everyone else has taken a turn, what will happen? They may be put off at first, they may invent stories and let their imaginations run wild, or they may reject you. It may be subtle at first, but reciprocity is expected.

You have the choice of what to reveal, and when. You may choose to describe your weekend by describing friends and

conversations while omitting any reference to the bar. You may choose to focus on your Sunday afternoon gardening activities. You may just say you read a good book and mention the title of the one you are reading. Regardless of what option you choose, you have the freedom and responsibility within the dyadic effect to reciprocate, but you have a degree of control. You can learn to anticipate when your turn will come and to give some thought to what you will say before the moment arrives.

Self-Disclosure Involves Risk

If you decided to go with the "good book" option, or perhaps mention that you watched a movie, you just ran the risk that whatever you are reading or watching may be criticized. If the book you are enjoying is controversial, you might anticipate a bit of a debate, but if you mentioned a romance novel or one that has a science fiction theme, you may have thought it wouldn't generate criticism. Sometimes the most innocent reference or comment can produce conflict when the conversational partners have little prior history. At the same time, nothing ventured, nothing gained. How are you going to discover that the person you work with appreciates the same author or genre if you don't share that information? Self-disclosure involves risk but can produce positive results.

Self-Disclosure Involves Trust

Before you mention the title of the book or movie you saw this weekend, you may consider your audience and what you know about them. If you've only known them for a week, your awareness of their habits, quirks, likes, and dislikes may be limited. At the same time, if you feel safe and relatively secure, you may test the waters with a reference to the genre but not the author. You may also decide that it is just a book, and they can take it or leave it.

"Trust is the ability to place confidence in or rely on the character or truth of someone." McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. pp 114 Trust is a process, not a badge to be earned. It takes time to develop and can be lost in a moment. Even if you don't agree with your co-worker, understand that self-revelation communicates a measure of trust and confidence. Respect that confidence, and respect yourself.

Also, consider the nature of the information. Some information communicated in confidence must see the light of day. Sexual harassment, fraud, theft, and abuse are all issues in the workplace, and if you become aware of these behaviors you will have a responsibility to report them according to your organization's procedures. A professional understands that trust is built over time and understands how valuable this intangible commodity can be to success.

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal communication can be defined as communication between two people, but the definition fails to capture the essence of a relationship. This broad definition is useful when we compare it to intrapersonal communication, or communication with ourselves, as opposed to mass communication, or communication with a large audience, but it requires clarification. The developmental view of interpersonal communication places emphasis on the relationship, rather than the size of the audience, and draws a distinction between impersonal and personal interactions.

For example, one day your co-worker and best friend, Iris, whom you've come to know on a personal as well as a professional level, gets promoted to the position of manager. She didn't tell you ahead of time because it wasn't certain, and she didn't know how to bring up the possible change of roles. Your relationship with Iris will change as your roles transform. Her perspective will change, and so will yours. You may stay friends, or she may not have as much time for after-hours activities as she once did. Over time you and Iris gradually grow apart, spending less time together. You eventually lose touch. What is the status of your relationship?

If you have ever had even a minor interpersonal transaction such as buying a cup of coffee from a clerk, you know that some people can be personable, but does that mean you've developed a relationship within the transaction process? For many people, the transaction is an impersonal experience, however pleasant. What is the difference between the brief interaction of a transaction and the interactions you periodically have with your colleague Iris who is now your manager?

The developmental view places an emphasis on the prior history but also focuses on the level of familiarity and trust. Over time and with increased frequency, we form bonds or relationships with people, and if that time and frequency are diminished, we lose that familiarity. The relationship with the clerk may be impersonal, but so can the relationship with the manager after time has passed and the familiarity is lost. From a developmental view, interpersonal communication can exist across this range of experience and interaction.

Review the lists you made for Introductory Exercise #3 at the beginning of this chapter. If you evaluate your list of what is important to you, will you find objects or relationships? You may value your home or vehicle, but for most people, relationships with friends and family are at the top of the list. Interpersonal relationships take time and effort to form, and they can be challenging. All relationships are dynamic, meaning that they transform and adapt to changes within the context and environment. They require effort and sacrifice, and at times give rise to the question: why bother? A short answer may be that we as humans are compelled to form bonds, but it still fails to answer the question, why?

Uncertainty theory states that we choose to know more about others with whom we have interactions in order to reduce or resolve the anxiety associated with the unknown. Berger, C., & Calabrese, R. (1975). Some explorations in initial interactions and beyond: toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research, 1*, 99–112.'Berger, C. (1986). Response uncertain outcome values in predicted relationships: uncertainty reduction theory then and now. *Human Communication Research, 13*, 34–38.' Gudykunst, W.(1995) Anxiety/uncertainty management theory. In R. W. Wiseman (Ed.), *Intercultural communication theory* (pp. 8–58). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. The more we know about others, and become accustomed to how they communicate, the better we can predict how they will interact with us in future contexts. If you learn that Monday mornings are never a good time for your supervisor, you quickly learn to schedule meetings later in the week. The predicted outcome value theory asserts that not only do we want to reduce uncertainty, we also want to maximize our possible benefit from the association. Sunnafrank, M. (1986). Predicted outcome value during initial interactions: a reformulation of uncertainty reduction theory. *Human Communication Research*, 3–33.' Sunnafrank, M. (1990). Predicted outcome value and uncertainty reduction theory: a test of competing perspective. *Human Communication Theory, 17*, 76–150.' Kellerman, K., & Reynolds, R. (1990). when ignorance is bliss: the role of motivation to reduce uncertainty in uncertainty reduction theory. *Human Communication Research, 17*, 5–75. This theory would predict that you would choose Tuesday or later for a meeting in order to maximize the potential for positive interaction and any possible rewards that may result. One theory involves the avoidance of fear while the other focuses on the pursuit of a reward, and together they provide a point of reference as we continue our discussion on interpersonal relationships.

Regardless of whether we focus on collaboration or competition, we can see that interpersonal communication is necessary for the business environment. We want to know our place and role within the organization, accurately predict those within our proximity, and create a sense of safety and belonging. Family for many is the first experience in interpersonal relationships, but as we develop professionally, our relationships at work may take on many of the attributes we associate with family communication. We look to each other with similar sibling rivalries, competition for attention and resources, and support. The workplace and our peers can become as close, or closer, than our birth families, with similar challenges and rewards.

Key Takeaways

- Interpersonal relationships are an important part of the work environment.
- We come to know one another gradually.
- Self-disclosure involves risk and reward and is a normal part of communication.

Exercise 3.4.1

1. Write down five terms that describe your personal self, and five terms that describe your professional self. Compare your results with a classmate.
2. Think of someone you trust and who trusts you. How did you come to have a mutually trusting relationship? Did it take effort on both people's part? Discuss your thoughts with a classmate.
3. How important do you think self-disclosure is in business settings? Give some examples. Discuss your thoughts with a classmate.

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3.5: Group Norms

Learning Objectives

1. Define group norms
2. Discuss the role and function of group norms
3. Discuss the effect of group norms on a group's development

A new vice president came into an organization. At the end of her first weekly meeting with her staff members, she tossed a nerf ball to one of them and asked the person to say how she was feeling. When that person finished, the vice president asked her to toss the ball to someone else, and so on, until everyone had expressed himself or herself. This process soon became a regular feature of the group's meetings.

In our earlier section on group life cycles, you learned about Bruce Tuckman's model of forming, storming, norming, and performing. Along with roles, status, and trust, which we'll encounter in the next chapter, norms are usually generated and adopted after a group's "forming" and "storming" stages.

As a group moves from "forming" toward "performing," then, norms help guide its members along the way. Whether we see them or not, norms are powerful predictors of a group's behavior.

What Norms Are

Group norms are rules or guidelines that reflect expectations of how group members should act and interact. They define what behaviors are acceptable or not; good or not; right or not; or appropriate or not (O'Hair & Wieman, p. 19). O'Hair, D. & Wiemann, M.O. (2004). *The essential guide to group communication*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Norms may relate to how people look, behave, or communicate with each other. Tossing a nerf ball around a circle of workers is perhaps a peculiar way to start a meeting, and it probably doesn't contribute directly to achieving substantive goals, but it did represent a norm in the vice president's group we described—which, by the way, was a real group and not a product of imagination!

Some norms relate to how a group as a whole will act—e.g., when and how often it will meet, for instance. Others have to do with the behavior of individual group members and the roles those members play within the group.

By defining what social behavior lies within acceptable boundaries, norms can help a group function smoothly and face conflict without falling apart (Hayes, p. 31). Hayes, N. (2004). *Managing teams: A strategy for success*. London: Thomson. Thus, they can constitute a potent force to promote positive interaction among group members.

Origin of Norms

In a new group, norms may arise organically as members settle into their relationships and start to function together. Decisions need to be made and time needs to be taken for diverse activities such as identifying goals, determining tasks, and allocating human and tangible resources. Who will take the lead on these areas of the group's behavior has to be determined.

Further questions need to be answered as the group gets off the ground. Here are some examples:

- What topics are and are not appropriate for the group to discuss?
- How and to what degree will members respect and attend to each other's statements and viewpoints?
- How and when, if ever, will the group behave casually?
- What mechanisms will the group use to solve problems?

Any group eventually needs to deal with these questions, and the answers it reaches will become embodied as norms.

Implicit Norms

Whether a group is new or not, its norms aren't always expressed or discussed. People may simply assume that certain norms exist and accept them "by unspoken consent" (Galanes & Adams, p. 162), Galanes, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective group discussion: Theory and practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill. in which case they are implicit norms.

Consider "same seat syndrome," for example. How often have you found that people in a college classroom seem to gravitate every day to exactly the same chairs they've always sat in? Nobody says, "Hey, I've decided that this will be my chair forever" or "I see that that's your territory, so I'll never sit there," do they?

Often norms are difficult for group members to express in words. What topics are okay or not okay to talk about during informal "chit-chat" may be a matter of unstated intuition rather than something that people can readily describe. Nevertheless, implicit norms may be extremely powerful, and even large groups are apt to have at least some implicit norms.

The cultural background each member brings to a group may lie beneath conscious awareness, yet it may exert a powerful influence on both that person's and the group's behavior and expectations. Just as a fish is unaware that it lives in water, a person may easily go through life and participate in group interactions without perceiving that he or she is the product of a culture.

Explicit Norms

Sometimes group norms are stated outright, either orally or in writing; then they are explicit norms. Such explicit rules may be imposed by an authority figure such as an executive or designated team leader. They may be part of formal policies or regulations. Wearing a uniform or answering the telephone in a certain way, for instance, may be written requirements in a workplace group.

Manuals, and even books, have been composed to provide members of groups with norms of how to behave. A manager in one organization we know wrote a policy in response to almost every problem or difficulty his division experienced. Because the manager served for more than 15 years in his position, the collection of these incident-based policies eventually filled a large tabbed binder. The bigger the group, the more likely it is that its norms will be rigid and explicit like these (Lamberton, L., & Minor-Evans, L., 2002). Lamberton, L., & Minor-Evans, L. (2002). *Human relations: Strategies for success* (2nd ed.). New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill.

Table 3.3 Implicit, Explicit, Individual, and Whole-Group Norms.

	Individual	Whole-Group
Explicit	Each new member receives a copy of the group's bylaws	The group keeps minutes of all its meetings
Implicit	A person should raise his/her hand to signal a desire to speak	Someone brings doughnuts or other treats every time the group meets

Interaction, Procedure, Status, and Achievement Norms

Norms may relate to four aspects of a group's identity: interaction, procedure, status, and achievement (Engleberg & Wynn, p. 37). Engleberg, I.N., & Wynn, D. R. (2013). *Working in groups* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson. Let's look at each of these kinds of norms.

Interaction norms specify how people communicate in the group. Is it expected that everyone in the group should have an opportunity to speak about any topic that the group deals with? How long is it okay for one person to speak?

Procedure-oriented norms identify how the group functions. Does it hold meetings according to an established schedule? Who speaks first when the group gets together? Does someone distribute a written record of what happened after every time the group gets together?

Status norms indicate the degree of influence that members possess and how that influence is obtained and expressed. Who decides when a group discussion has concluded? When and how are officers for the group elected?

Achievement norms relate to standards the group sets for the nature and amount of its work. Must members cite readings or the

comments of authorities when they make presentations to the group? What happens to a group member who completes tasks late or fails to complete them at all?

As we'll discover in the next chapter, enforcing and changing the norms of a group throughout its life cycle may present substantial challenges. Those challenges can best be overcome if members share a common understanding of their group's norms.

Key Takeaway

- Group norms, whether explicit or implicit, underlie and affect almost all aspects of a group's activities.

Exercise 3.5.1

1. Think of an unusual norm you've encountered in a group you were part of. Do you know how and from whom it originated? If not, what is your speculation about its origin?
2. Identify an implicit norm in a group you were part of. Would it have been a good idea to make the norm explicit instead? Why or why not?
3. Describe a group norm you've experienced that dealt with either interaction, procedure, status, or achievement.

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3.6: Summary

In this chapter, we have discussed group development and several theories. We have discussed group stages of development and their hallmark features. Working in a group can be challenging, but with insight and understanding into the group development process, the effective group communicator can make a positive difference.

Review Questions

1. Discuss storming as a stage, how to recognize it and the role it plays in group development.
2. Discuss adjournment as a stage, how to recognize it, and the role it plays in group development.
3. Select the least important group development stage and discuss why you selected it.
4. Select the most important group development stage and discuss why you selected it.
5. Conflict is present in all groups. Discuss one positive role of conflict in a group and provide an example.

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3.7: Additional Resources

Read about groups and teams on the business website 1000 Ventures. http://www.1000ventures.com/business_guide/crosscuttings/team_main.html

Learn more about Tuckman's Linear Model. http://www.infed.org/thinkers/tuckman.htm

Learn more about Dewey's sequence of group problem solving on this site from Manatee Community College in Florida. faculty.mccfl.edu/frithl/SPC1600/handouts/Dewey.htm

Read a hands-on article about how to conduct productive meetings. www.articlesnatch.com/Article/How-To-Conduct-Productive-Meetings-/132050

Visit this WikiHow site to learn how to use VOIP. http://www.wikihow.com/Use-VoIP

Watch a YouTube video on cloud computing. www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PNuQHUiV3Q

Read about groups and teams, and contribute to a wiki about them, on Wikibooks. http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Managing_Groups_and_Teams

How did Twitter get started? Find out. http://twitter.com/about

Take a (nonscientific) quiz to identify your leadership style. http://psychology.about.com/library/quiz/bl-leadershipquiz.htm

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4: GROUP MEMBERSHIP

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4.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. Think of a group to which you belong. Make a list of the members and include one describing word for each one, focusing on what they do or contribute to the group. Share your results with classmates.
2. Think of a group to which you no longer belong. Make a list of the members and include one describing word for each one, focusing on what they do or contribute to the group. Share your results with classmates.

Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.

Vince Lombardi

Getting Started

If all the world is a stage, then we each play distinct roles, whether we know it or not, when we are members of a group, team, family, or community. If we are aware of our roles, then we can know our lines, our responsibilities, and perform. When we do not know what we are supposed to do it is awfully hard to get the right job done correctly the first time. In this chapter, we will explore the many facets to group membership.

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4.1: Introducing Member Roles

Learning Objectives

1. Describe group member roles and their impact on group dynamics

The performance of a team or group is often influenced, if not determined, by its members' roles.

We can start our analysis of member roles with the work of Benne and Sheats (1948). They focused on studying small discussion groups that engaged in problem-solving activities. From their observations, they proposed three distinct types of roles: task, building and maintenance, and self-centered. Task roles were identified by facilitating and co-coordinating behaviors such as suggesting new ideas or ways of solving problems. Building and maintenance roles involved encouragement, including praise, statements of agreement, or acceptance of others and their contributions nonverbally or verbally. Self-centered roles involved ego-centric behaviors that call attention to the individual, not the group, and distract or disrupt the group dynamic.

Table 4.1 Group Roles

Group Task Roles	**Coordinator: facilitates order and progress** **Evaluator-critic: analyzes suggestions for strengths and weaknesses** **Orienter: focuses on group progress, recaps discussions** **Recorder: takes notes on the group discussions, important decisions, and commitments to action**
Group Building and Maintenance Roles	Supporter: Encourages everyone, making sure they have what they need to get the job done Harmonizer: Helps manage conflict within the group, facilitating common ground, helping define terms, and contributing to consensus Tension-releaser: Uses humor and light-hearted remarks, as well as nonverbal demonstrations (brings a plate of cookies to the group), to reduce tensions and work-related stress Compromiser: Focuses on common ground, common points of agreement, and helps formulate an action plan that brings everyone together towards a common goal, task, or activity Standard Setter: Sets the standard for conduct and helps influence the behavior of group members

Group Task Roles	**Coordinator: facilitates order and progress** **Evaluator-critic: analyzes suggestions for strengths and weaknesses** **Orienter: focuses on group progress, recaps discussions** **Recorder: takes notes on the group discussions, important decisions, and commitments to action**
Self-Centered Roles	Aggressor: Belittles other group members Block: Frequently raises objections Deserter: Abandons group or is very unreliable Dominator: Demand control and attention Recognition-seeker: Frequently seeks praise Confessor: Uses the group to discuss personal problems Joker or Clown: Frequent use of distracting humor, often attention-seeking behavior.

Bales (1950) built on their research and analyzed interaction from two categorical perspectives: task-orientation and socio-emotional. Belbin's (1981) work on successful teams focused on the number of team members in a group and their respective roles. Imagine a baseball team, with each distinct team member with a clearly defined role and territory. Someone guards first base, and someone covers left field. Each person has both a role and a personality. The role, according to Belbin, was imposed. The team manager would assign a team member, or player in our example, to a position. Some people place first base better than others. Personality traits, talents, and relative skills are relatively stable over time (Pervin, 1989), and it was a challenge to match the best player to the most appropriate role. Get the combinations right across the whole team and you have a serious contender for the World Series. Get the combinations wrong and the manager will be looking for a job in short order.

Again the emphasis in this area of inquiry was the effectiveness of teams. It is all about the win, or the progress, or the degree of completion. This line of investigation does not explore what it means to be a healthy family, or a productive community, though each type of group is related to this discussion.

Belbin (1981, 1983) used a Self Perception Inventory that consists of seven sections to assess which group member would be best for his nine group roles:

Table 4.2 Belbin's Role Characteristics

	Title	Description
1	Plant (PL)	Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Solves difficult tasks and problems.
2	Resource Investigator (RI)	Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative. Develops contacts, networks, and explores opportunities.
3	Co-Coordinator	Mature, confident, effective chairperson. Promotes decision-making, delegates, and clarifies goals.
4	Shaper (SH)	Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. The drive and courage to overcome obstacles.
5	Monitor Evaluator (ME)	Sober, strategic, and discerning. Makes accurate judgments. Perceives several options.
6	Team Worker (TW)	Cooperative, perceptive, mild, and diplomatic. Avoids tension, listens, a consensus builder
7	Implementer (IMP)	Reliable, disciplined, and efficient. Turns abstract ideas into practical actions
8	Completer-Finisher (CF)	Anxious, detail-oriented, and conscientious. Searches out errors and omissions. Delivers on time.

	Title	Description
9	Specialist (SP)	Dedicated, self-motivated, and single-minded. Provides specific knowledge or skills

If someone in your group always makes everyone laugh, that can be a distinct asset when the news is less than positive. At times when you have to get work done, however, the class clown may become a distraction. Notions of positive and negative will often depend on the context when discussing groups. Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 list both positive and negative roles people sometimes play in a group setting. Beene, K., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. *Journal of Social Issues, 37*, 41–49.'McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Table 4.3 Positive Roles. Beene, K., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. Journal of Social Issues, 37, 41–49.,McLean, S. (2005). The basics of interpersonal communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Initiator—Coordinator	Suggests new ideas or new ways of looking at the problem
Elaborator	Builds on ideas and provides examples
Coordinator	Brings ideas, information, and suggestions together
Evaluator-Critic	Evaluates ideas and provides constructive criticism
Recorder	Records ideas, examples, suggestions, and critiques

Table 4.4 Negative Roles. Beene, K., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. Journal of Social Issues, 37, 41–49.,McLean, S. (2005). The basics of interpersonal communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Dominator	Dominates discussion, not allowing others to take their turn
Recognition Seeker	Relates discussion to their accomplishments, seeks attention
Special-Interest Pleader	Relates discussion to special interest or personal agenda
Blocker	Blocks attempts at consensus consistently
Joker or Clown	Seeks attention through humor and distracts group members

Now that we've examined a classical view of positive and negative group member roles, let's examine another perspective. While some personality traits and behaviors may negatively influence groups, some are positive or negative depending on the context.

Just as the class clown can have a positive effect in lifting spirits or a negative effect in distracting members, so a dominator may be exactly what is needed for quick action. An emergency physician doesn't have time to ask all the group members in the emergency unit how they feel about a course of action; instead, a self-directed approach based on training and experience may be necessary. In contrast, the pastor of a church may have ample opportunity to ask members of the congregation their opinions about a change in the format of Sunday services; in this situation, the role of coordinator or elaborator is more appropriate than that of dominator.

The group is together because they have a purpose or goal, and normally they are capable of more than any one individual member could be on their own, so it would be inefficient to hinder that progress. But a blocker, who cuts off collaboration, does just that. If a group member interrupts another and presents a viewpoint or information that suggests a different course of action, the point may be well taken and serve the collaborative process. If that same group member repeatedly engages in blocking behavior, then the behavior becomes a problem. A skilled communicator will learn to recognize the difference, even when positive and negative aren't completely clear.

Key Takeaway

- Group members perform distinct roles that impact and influence the group in many ways.

Exercise 4.1.1

1. Think of a group of which you are currently a member. Create a list of the members of your group and see if you can match them to group roles as discussed in this section. Use describing words to discuss each member. Share and compare with classmates.
2. Think of a group of which you are no longer a member. Create a list of the members of the group and see if you can match them to group roles as discussed in this section. Use describing words to discuss each member. Share and compare with classmates.

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4.2: Norms among Group Members

Learning Objectives

1. Identify positive sentiments, as well as challenges, associated with group norms
2. Discuss ways in which group norms may be enforced
3. Identify processes for challenging and changing group norms

Knotty Norms

Before we had our daughter, my husband and I used to just take a couple of moments before dinner and hold hands, just to bring us to a still quiet place, before beginning the evening meal. So, when he had our little girl, really from the time she could sit in the high chair, we held hands together, just for a few moments of silence, and then we squeezed hands and released.

Well, we did this day in, day out, year in, year out, and then when she was old enough to count--I don't know how old she was--but one evening we squeezed hands and she looked up and smiled and said, "I got to 35."

And her dad and I both looked at her and said, "What?"

And she said, "I got to 35." She said, "Usually I only get to 20 or 25."

And simultaneously, my husband and I said, "You count?"

And she looked at us and said, "Well, what do you do?"

And here all these years, where we thought this was just this little almost a spiritual moment, we never explained to her what that was about or what we were doing, and she thought we were all counting.

A *New Yorker* cartoon shows a couple that's apparently just left a large room filled with people partying. The woman is reaching to press the button of an elevator, while the man holds a tripod, a long pointer, and several large charts and graphs under his arm. The woman says, "Frankly, Benjamin, you're beginning to bore everyone with your statistics."

It's important to identify a group's norms if we're to have a good shot at predicting what it will do under different circumstances. In the comments above, the mother whose daughter used the quiet time before dinner to count in her head thought her family's mealtime norms were clear to all its members, but she was mistaken.

Do members of a group understand its norms, then? And if they understand them, do they accept and follow them? When and how do they change them? The answers to these questions play a large role in determining the effectiveness of the members and of the group as a whole.

Responding to Norms

What does it mean to you if you say something is "normal"? Probably it means that you feel it's usual and right—correct? Part of your reaction to something you consider "normal," therefore, is likely to be a sense of comfort and assurance. Furthermore, you wouldn't want to intentionally engage in or be around someone who engages in behavior that you don't consider to be normal. The term for such behavior is, after all, "abnormal."

Shortly we'll examine how groups enforce their norms, what happens when people violate them, and how we can best try to change them. Let's recognize first, however, that considering something "normal" or "the norm" in the first place can lead to challenges. As we'll be reminded later when we discuss conflict in groups, one such challenge arises from the fact that people's opinions—about everything—differ.

In a large organization where one of the authors worked, a male colleague told a joke while he and some other employees waited for a staff meeting to start. In the joke, a man who thought he had cleverly avoided being executed found that he had been

outsmarted and was going to be raped instead. The people who heard the joke laughed, work-related topics came up, and the staff meeting commenced.

Sometimes differences of opinion in groups deal with inconsequential topics or norms and therefore cause no difficulty for anyone. Who cares, for instance, whether people bring coffee with them to morning meetings or not, or whether they wear bright-colored articles of clothing?

Up to a certain point, furthermore, we all tend to accommodate differences between ourselves and others on a daily basis without giving it a second thought. We may even pride ourselves on our tolerance when we accept those differences.

On the other hand, we know that things which are customary aren't always right. Slavery was once considered normal throughout the world, for instance, and so was child labor. Obviously, we may find it challenging to confront norms that differ significantly from our personal beliefs and values.

Enforcing Norms

Whether a group enforces a norm, and if so in what way, depends on several factors. These factors may include the level of formality of the group, the importance the group attaches to a particular norm, and the degree and frequency with which the norm is violated.

If a norm is of minor importance, and especially if it's implicit, violating it may not provoke much of a response. Perhaps someone will just frown, shake a finger at the "violator," or otherwise convey displeasure without using words. (Think about a time when someone's cell phone went off in a large crowd at a speech or professional conference, for example).

On the other hand, explicit norms are often accompanied by explicit efforts to enforce them. A group may make it clear, either orally or in writing, what will happen if someone violates such a norm. The syllabus produced by one university professor we know, for instance, stipulated that anyone whose cell phone rings during a lesson must either write a 500-word essay or bring donuts to everyone else in class the next time they met.

Policy manuals and rule books comprise formal, clear expressions of norms both in and outside academe. So do city ordinances, state and federal laws, and IRS regulations. These manifestations of norms include statements of what consequences will be associated with violating them.

On the level of a small group, a team of college students preparing for a class presentation might decide to have its members sign an agreement indicating their willingness to meet at certain predetermined times or to contact each other regularly by phone or text messages. The agreement might also indicate that the group will report a teammate to their instructor if that person fails to observe its terms.

The example we've just considered involves a form of punishment, which can be one consequence of violating a norm. What else can happen if you violate a group norm? Galanes & Adams (p. 163) Galanes, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective group discussion: Theory and practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill. identify these consequences:

- Loss of influence
- Ostracism
- Exclusion

Particularly within large organizations, groups can benefit from contemplating early in their "life cycle" just how they would expect to respond to various kinds of behavior that violate their norms. They may decide that punishment will be part of the picture for serious violations. If so, they should probably reflect on how members might rejoin the group or regain their stature within it after a punishment has been administered and an offense has been corrected.

Challenging and Changing Group Norms

Think back to the story about our colleague at the staff meeting. Evidently, he thought that the norms of the organization permitted him to tell his joke. When his fellow employees laughed, he probably also assumed that they found the joke to be amusing.

After the meeting, however, as four or five people lingered in the room, one of the female staffers spoke. "It's really hard for me

to say this," she said, "but I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't tell jokes about rape."

The woman who expressed herself to the group made clear that she felt its norms needed to be changed if jokes about rape were considered acceptable. The woman was right in two respects. First, rape is no laughing matter, and a group norm that condones jokes about it ought to be rejected. Second, when she told her colleagues "It's really hard for me to say this," she illustrated that it's difficult to confront other people to propose that they change the norms they operate under.

In this case, one group member submitted a polite request to her fellow group members. As it turned out, those members accepted her request. The man who told the joke apologized, and to our knowledge, no more jokes about rape were told in the group.

Things aren't always this straightforward, though. Therefore, adopting a systematic approach may prepare you for the wide-ranging situations in which you or your fellow group members want to change your norms. What principles and behaviors, then, should you follow if you feel a group norm is ineffective, inappropriate, or wrong?

Lamberton and Minor-Evans (pp. 226–227) Lamberton, L., & Minor-Evans, L. (2002). *Human relations: Strategies for success* (2nd ed.). New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill. recommend that you follow these steps:

1. Confirm whether everyone in the group agrees on the purpose of the group. Different norms will arise from different assumptions about the group's purpose and will fit the different assumptions on which they are based. Misunderstandings or disagreements about the purpose of the group need to be identified and worked through.
2. See if other people's understanding of the group's current norms is the same as yours. Again, it's important to know whether other members of the group agree on what norms the group actually has.

Remember the examples at the beginning of this section, in which a small daughter thought that holding hands before dinner was a time for silent counting and a man thought it was okay to bring charts and graphs to a social occasion? They illustrate that it's possible to completely misconstrue a group norm even in close, ongoing relationships and at any age.

1. Explain to the group why you feel a particular norm ought to be changed.
2. Offer a plan for changing the norm, including a replacement for it which you feel will be better, drawing upon the full potential of each member.
3. If necessary, change the composition and role assignments of the group.

Key Takeaway

- Once they have been established, group norms are generally enforced in some way but can also be challenged and modified.

Exercise 4.2.1

1. Identify two norms, one explicit and one implicit, that you've encountered in a group setting. Did you observe the norms being enforced in some way? If so, what kind of enforcement was employed, and by whom?
2. Describe a time when you were part of a group and believed that one of its norms needed to be changed. What made you feel that way? Was your view shared by anyone else in the group?
3. What steps have you taken to challenge a group norm? How did the other members of the group respond to your challenge? If you had a chance to go back and relive the situation, what if anything would you change about your actions? (If you don't recall ever having challenged a group norm, describe a situation in which someone else did so).

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4.3: Status

Learning Objectives

1. Define status
2. Discuss behaviors associated with high status in a group
3. Identify dangers associated with status differentials

When E.F. Hutton talks, people listen.

Advertising slogan for a stock brokerage firm.

If you want to see your plays performed the way you wrote them, become President.

Vaclav Havel

The higher up you go, the more mistakes you are allowed. Right at the top, if you make enough of them, it's considered to be your style.

Fred Astaire

Status can be defined as a person's level of importance or significance within a particular environment. In a group, members with higher status are apt to command greater respect and possess more prestige than those with lower status.

Have you ever wanted to join a group partly because you knew other people would respect you a little more if they knew you were a member of it? Whether an informal group, a club, or any other kind of organization thrives or fades away may depend to some degree on whether belonging to it is perceived as being a sign of status. In fact, one of the major reasons why many of us enter groups is that we expect to gain status by doing so.

Understanding status, thus, can help both group members and the groups they join function smoothly and productively.

Origins of Status in a Group

Where does a group member's status come from? Sometimes a person joins a group with a title that causes the other members to accord him or her status at their first encounter. In professional circles, for instance, having earned a "terminal" degree such as a Ph.D. or M.D. usually generates a degree of status. The same holds true for the documented outcomes of schooling or training in legal, engineering, or other professional fields. Likewise, people who've been honored for achievements in any number of areas may bring status to a group by virtue of that recognition if it relates to the nature and purpose of the group.

Some groups may confer status upon their members on the basis of age, wealth, physical stature, perceived intelligence, or other attributes. On one floor of a new college residence hall where one of the authors lived, for example, two men gained instant status. Why? Because they both took part in varsity athletics, and one of them was the son of an All-American football player.

Once a group has formed and begun to sort out its norms, it will also build upon the initial status that people bring to it by further allocating status according to its own internal processes and practices. For instance, choosing a member to serve as an officer in a group generally conveys status to that person.

The two athletes in the residence hall just mentioned were elected president and vice president of their floor, which simply reflected their original status. Meanwhile, other residents were chosen to fill additional roles in the group's government, which did add to those individuals' status.

What High Status Means

All right. Let's say you've either come into a group with high status or have been granted high status by the other members.

What does this mean to you, and how are you apt to behave? Here are some predictions based on research from several sources (Beebe, S.A., & Masterson, J.T., 2006, Borman, 1989; Brilhart & Galanes, 1997; and Homans, 1992): Beebe, S.A., & Masterson, J.T. (2006). *Communicating in small groups: Principles and practices* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson.' Borman, E.G. (1989). *Discussion and group methods: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). New York: Harper and Row.' Brilhart, J.K., & Galanes, G.J. (1997). *Effective group discussion*. Dubuque, IA: Brown.' Homans, G.C. (1992). *The human group*. New York: Harcourt Brace & World.

First, the volume and direction of your speech will differ from those of others in the group. You'll talk more than the low-status members do, and you'll communicate more with other high-status members than you will with lower-status individuals. In addition, you'll be more likely to speak to the whole group than will members with lower status.

Second, some indicators of your participation will be particularly positive. Your activity level and self-regard will surpass those of lower-status group members. So will your level of satisfaction with your position. Furthermore, the rest of the group is less likely to ignore your statements and proposals than it is to disregard what lower-status individuals say.

Finally, the content of your communication will probably be different from what your fellow members discuss. Because you may have access to special information about the group's activities and may be expected to shoulder specific responsibilities because of your position, you're apt to talk about topics that are relevant to the central purposes and direction of the group. Lower-status members, on the other hand, are likely to communicate more about other matters.

When group members' status is clear to everyone, it becomes easier for all members to understand what they expect of each other. They'll know, among other things, whom to approach when they're wondering about how the group operates or are grappling with a problem that concerns them all.

If you've got high status, then, be prepared to have people approach you with questions and concerns that you'd otherwise not encounter. If it makes you feel good to help others in this way, having high status will probably enhance your self-respect and self-esteem. If it doesn't, you may feel overwhelmed.

Dangers of Status

Having people with different status levels adds spice and diversity to a group. It can, however, also result in risks and challenges.

Here's an example. In one large state, all the public and private college presidents have joined into an association to share information and promote their common interests. The executive director of the association is a woman we know well. She organizes the group's meetings, distributes agendas and minutes, and provides other high-level support for the group. According to this woman, presidents in the group continuously jockey for position and status. In fact, they spend so much time trying to gain more status that they sometimes fail to contribute constructively to the work of the association.

At one annual conference of the presidents' organization, a particularly prominent and nationally-known figure from the business world was on the schedule as an after-lunch speaker. Several of the most active and assertive presidents approached the executive director and asked her to seat them next to the visitor at lunch.

Our friend was in a quandary. She didn't want to disappoint or displease any of the presidents. She knew, though, that no matter whom she allowed to sit next to the important visitor, all the other presidents who'd approached her would be disgruntled. We'll explain in a later section of this book how she solved this vexing problem. The point, for now, is simply that competition among status seekers can disrupt a group's progress.

"If you're riding ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there."

Will Rogers

A second peril associated with the inevitable status differences in a group is the possibility that status may not correspond to competence. We'd like to believe that groups are meritocracies—that is, that they recognize and reward talent. Sometimes, however, people's talents may be submerged or suppressed instead.

People in groups sometimes gain status and its perks just by sticking around longer than anyone else. Being involved in a group for an extended period does not, however, necessarily lead to wisdom or the capability to handle new responsibilities. As someone once put it, "It's possible to have 10 years of experience or one year of experience 10 times." Lawrence Peter (Peter & Hull, 1969) Peter, L.J., & Hull, R.(1969). *The Peter Principle: Why things always go wrong*. New York: William Morrow and Company.

made a case for what he called “The Peter Principle,” which stated that everyone in an organization rises to his or her level of incompetence and that eventually every role is performed by someone unfit to manage it.

Someone who gains status without possessing the skills or attributes required to use it well may cause real damage to other members of a group, or to a group as a whole. A high-status, low-ability person may develop an inflated self-image, begin to abuse power, or both. One of us worked for the new president of a college who acted as though his position entitled him to take whatever actions he wanted. In the process of interacting primarily with other high-status individuals who shared the majority of his viewpoints and goals, he overlooked or pooh-poohed concerns and complaints from people in other parts of the organization. Turmoil and dissension broke out. Morale plummeted. The president eventually suffered votes of no confidence from his college’s faculty, staff, and students and was forced to resign.

There’s no such thing as a “status neutral” group—one in which everyone always has the same status as everyone else. Some people are always going to have higher status than others. As we’ve noted in this section, a group can make positive use of status differentials if it first recognizes them and then

Key Takeaway

- Differences in status within a group are inevitable and can be dangerous if not recognized and managed.

Exercise 4.3.1

1. Think of a time when you aspired to a new and higher status within a group. How did you demonstrate your desire? How did others in the group respond when you expressed what you hoped to achieve?
2. Recall a time when you gained status in a group. How, if at all, did the other members treat you differently after you acquired it? What new responsibilities or expectations did you face?
3. Consider a group that you’re part of. What advice would you offer to someone seeking to raise his or her status in that group?
4. Have you ever been part of a group in which all the members seemed to have the same status? How were the group’s activities affected by this equivalence?

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4.4: Trust

Learning Objectives

1. Define trust
2. Identify reasons why trust is difficult to establish and maintain in groups
3. Discuss qualities and behaviors which contribute to establishing trust
4. Describe how self-disclosure influences the level of trust in a group

To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim you don't grab hold of the water, because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead you relax, and float.

Alan Watts

To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful.

Edward R. Murrow

(T)he biggest problem we have in human society now is...our tribalism, our tendency to go beyond a natural pride in our group, whether it's a racial or an ethnic or religious group..., to fear and distrust and dehumanization and violence against the other... So what we have got to learn to do is not just to tolerate each other, but to actually celebrate our differences. And the only way you can do that is to be secure in the knowledge that your common humanity is more important than your most significant differences.

Bill Clinton

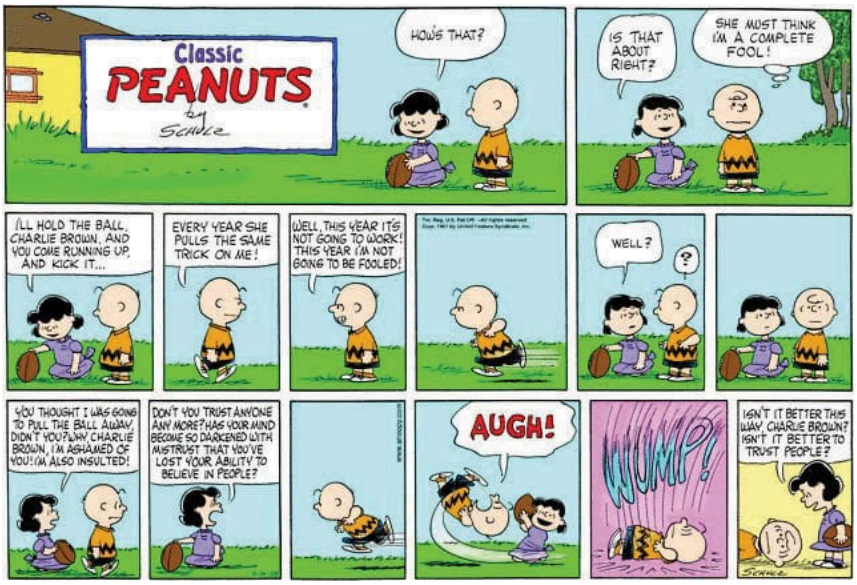


Figure 4.4.1

Did you ever see the series of "Peanuts" cartoons by Charles Schulz in which Lucy Van Pelt held a football for Charlie Brown to kick? In each cartoon, Charlie would run toward the ball at full speed. Lucy would jerk it away at the last instant. Charlie would then fly into the air and fall on his back. Time after time the cycle would repeat itself. Somehow, Charlie trusted Lucy over and over again despite her deceptive behavior.

Now recall the Aesop's fable, "The boy who cried wolf." The first time or two that the shepherd boy in the fable falsely called out an alarm, as you remember, people came running because they believed him. Eventually, when a wolf actually did show up, the boy's cries went unheeded.

The cartoon relationship between Charlie and Lucy may present an exaggerated view of human behavior. Likewise, most of us don't get exposed to multiple false reports about wolves or other dangers. Charlie's story amuses us, however, and the fable rings true. Why? Because we know that trust does play an important role in real human interactions and that it can be either rewarded or betrayed.

Building and maintaining trust can, in fact, be considered vital to the healthy functioning of a group. In his book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni contended that trusting one another is the foundation for any truly cohesive team (p. 189). Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team: A leadership fable*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. If trust is lacking, according to Lencioni, four other dysfunctions are almost sure to follow: fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results.

What, then, is trust? We can define it as reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, or dependability of a person or thing. Ideally, we trust people the way Alan Watts wrote that we should trust water when we're swimming: we should relax and forget that we're even performing an action called "trusting." Unfortunately, sometimes the water we swim in as part of a group are sometimes murky, and occasionally they're even infested with sharks.

Why Is It Hard to Trust?

Trusting ourselves is sometimes difficult. We've all made mistakes, so it's natural that we might occasionally doubt our own reliability.

To trust a family member or a person in some other primary group may also present challenges from time to time. We may misunderstand each other, hurt each other's feelings by behaving in unexpected ways, and so forth.

What about trusting people in secondary groups like the ones we join in school or work settings, then? Most likely it's going to be harder still. Why? First, we usually don't spend as much time over as long a period with secondary group members as we do with our families and other primary group members. In other words, we don't have as much to go on as we decide whether we can trust these people.

Second, the dynamics and level of mutual reliability of a secondary group may vary over time as people enter and leave the group, change status within it, or experience new circumstances in their own lives. In an academic environment, for instance, a teacher who's established a reputation for fairness and wisdom in that role may raise doubts or even suspicions among former peers about his or her trustworthiness upon accepting an administrative position in the same organization.

The more people are involved in a group, the more changes are apt to take place in it. Because trust rests in large part on constancy and predictability, such changes may endanger or weaken it. As Richard Reichert (1970) Reichert, R. (1970). *Self-awareness through group dynamics*. Dayton, OH: Fglaum wrote, "Trust is always a gamble."

Cultivating and Reinforcing Trust

Charlie Brown kept letting Lucy hold the football for him because he was naively trusting. Even though she deceived him time and time again, he engaged in what the organizational theorist Robert Kharasch (1973) Kharasch, Robert N. (1973). *The institutional imperative; How to understand the United States government and other bulky objects*. New York: Charterhouse Books. called "regeneration of the organs of belief": he forgot or overlooked her past behavior and allowed himself to be duped over and over.

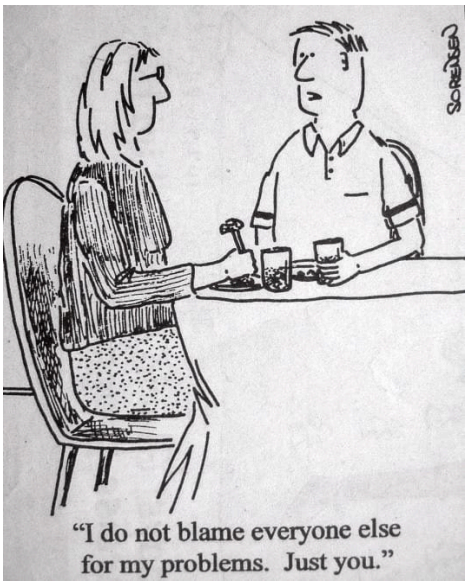


Figure 4.4.2

Alternatives to Charlie's approach certainly exist. In arms control dealings with Mikhail Gorbachev, for instance, Ronald Reagan used to quote a Russian saying—*doveryay, no proveryay* (Venditti, 2007). Venditti, P. (2007). *Building business success: Write, speak, think, and get along well in the professional world*. Centralia, WA: Gorham Printing. This meant "Trust, but verify." Reagan insisted that promises made by the Soviet Union concerning its nuclear weapons program be substantiated through empirical means such as official visits to military sites.

What Charlie Brown apparently didn't know, but Ronald Reagan evidently did, was that trust needs to be cultivated and reinforced—and occasionally even consciously tested—rather than taken for granted.

When we consciously decide we'll trust someone, it's best that we do so carefully and systematically. Gay and Donald Lumsden (2004)Lumsden, G., & Lumsden, D. (2004). *Communicating in groups and teams; Sharing leadership* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson. wrote that trust can be created if and when people demonstrate most or all of these qualities and behaviors:

- Directness—In mainstream American culture, "getting to the point" is usually valued over subtle or vague communication.
- Openness to influence—If a person seems receptive to others' ideas and preferences, he or she is likely to be seen as reliable and trustworthy.
- Commitment to others' success—When we feel that a person is concerned about others, we tend to feel more comfortable relying on him or her.
- Personal accountability—We prefer working with people who display integrity, in the sense that they can accept individual blame as well as praise for their actions.
- A willingness to share responsibility for problems—Very few difficulties in a group are caused by just one person. When someone admits that he or she "owns" at least part of a problem, we tend to feel that we can rely on him or her.

Bill Clinton's comments at the start of this section reflect the fact that trust can, indeed, be hard to establish. It can also be easy to lose, particularly in low-context cultures such as that of the United States which value explicit, comprehensive transmission of messages and feelings among people.

Self-Disclosure and Trust

Isn't it marvelous that groups, composed of so many different people each with constantly changing perceptions and desires, can function as well as they do? As we discovered earlier, groups decide upon norms that guide and govern their internal interactions and their relationships with people outside their membership. Somehow, people in most groups also successfully decide how much information is appropriate to communicate about themselves to others at what times.

Self-disclosure, which is the deliberate communication of information about yourself to others (Beebe & Masterson, 2006), Beebe, S.A., & Masterson, J.T. (2006). *Communicating in small groups: Principles and practices*. Boston: Pearson. can be risky. It's natural for us to want to play things safe in our lives. As the comedian Milton Berle said, "A worm has some things going for

it. For instance, it can't fall down." No one wants to live like a worm, but revealing personal information opens us to "falling down" by being rejected.

We can share our feelings and concerns on many levels. These may range from superficial pleasantries—"Nice weather, isn't it?"—to what John Powell (1990)Powell, J. (1990). *Why am I afraid to tell you who I am?* Niles, IL: Argus Communications. called "peak communication." What level of self-disclosure the members of a group select will usually depend on the kind of situation or topic they're dealing with and the expectations they've established for each other.

Self-disclosure generally deepens and expands as a group matures, but members should always be conscious of how their level of self-disclosure fits each other's needs and desires. Like all other kinds of communication, self-disclosure needs to be reciprocal rather than one-sided if it is to grow healthfully. If one person discloses something personal and the second doesn't respond in kind, trust between them can be strained or broken.

Self-disclosure can clearly contribute to trust, but we need to be discreet when employing it. Too much, too soon, can hinder rather than help a group. In Chapter 1 we drew a distinction between the task and relationship functions of groups. Although by its very nature self-disclosure engages people in considering personal material that may strengthen their relationship, it should also be relevant to whatever topic is being discussed at a particular time.

Key Takeaway

- Although it's difficult to establish and maintain, trust among group members is vital if they are to function at the highest possible level.

Exercise 4.4.1

1. Think of one of the groups you participate in. Which member of the group do you trust most? What has the person done or demonstrated to you that led you to trust him or her?
2. Describe a time when someone in a group of which you were apart betrayed or abused the group's trust. What might have prevented that behavior?
3. Identify a time when you engaged in appropriate self-disclosure in a group. What were the results?
4. Recall a time when you or someone else in a group practiced self-disclosure in a way that was not helpful to the group. What happened, and why did the results turn out as they did?

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4.5: Membership in Digital Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Identify dangers involved in moving from one communication environment to another
2. Identify major features of digital groups and what they imply regarding their members' behavior

Unlike you, Phil, I hate computers. So I'm writing this in full view of my computer in order to torture it.

A friend of one of the authors, in a letter written by hand in 2004

You think because you understand "one" you must understand "two," because one and one make two. But you must also understand "and."

Sufi Tradition

Different Strokes for Different Folks

The term "code-switching" is used by linguists to describe how bilingual speakers sometimes sprinkle expressions from one language into another. The title of a classic article about code-switching provides an example of the phenomenon: "Sometimes I start a sentence in English y *termino en español*" (Poplack, 1980). Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English *y termino en español*: Toward a typology of code-switching. In J. Amastea & L. Elías-Olivares (Eds.), *Spanish in the United States: Sociolinguistic aspects*, pp. 230–263. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Anyone who has come to command more than one language can attest that each of them transmits thoughts and emotions in unique and distinct ways. Code-switching can sometimes lead to serendipitous insights, but it can also bring about awkward moments. Combining two languages, as the Sufi adage above suggests, is not just a matter of adding one and one.

The slang expression "different strokes for different folks," which was popular in the 1960s, indicated that it's fine to have diverse opinions and styles in society. Today, just as half a century ago, different folks use different methods of communicating depending on the groups they're members of. In the same way that mixing parts of whole languages may yield unexpected results, switching between sub-vocabularies within one language may produce happy surprises or difficulties. A story will illustrate how.

The father of one of the authors was raised in a traditional family in the American Midwest. Just after high school, as World War II was coming to a close, he was drafted into the army and sent to the Philippines. Almost all the people with whom he spent the next three years were other young American men like himself.

Part of army culture in those days was that soldiers of equal ranks routinely peppered their talk with profanity. Perhaps this shocked some new recruits, but most quickly overcame their initial reaction and got used to using blue language with everyone else. For virtually all the enlisted personnel, a "code" of foul language became habitual.

When the author's father completed his tour of duty and returned to the U.S. in 1948, he spent some time at home before going off to college under the GI Bill. Just a few days after his joyous return to his hometown, he and his parents and younger sister were eating lunch in their dining room. Conversation was lively but routine. At some point, in a polite tone, he said, "Mom, please pass the f-ing butter."

Nature and Implications of Social Media

In Chapter 1 we defined social media and considered how they may affect people's interactions. Whether we employ them individually or with others as part of a group, such media generally permit or even encourage broad communication. They make it easy for us to spread information about our personalities, interests, and activities as broadly as we wish—even to total strangers.

Among the positive points of social media which we mentioned in Chapter 1 were that they 1) allow people in different places

to collaborate on projects; 2) permit people to maintain contact with each other when they're not meeting formally; 3) enable group members to identify and collect information pertinent to their aims; and 4) focus attention primarily on messages instead of "status markers."

We noted that people using social media may commit unintentional or good-natured mistakes which lead to awkwardness or embarrassment. What we didn't mention then is that some people may purposely employ techniques via social media to hurt others. Ivester (2011)Ivester, M. (2011). *Lol...omg!: What every student needs to know about online reputation management, digital citizenship and cyberbullying*. Reno, NV: Serra Knight Publishing. identified many examples of such intentionally harmful social media communication. Among others, these included "flaming," which is sending abusive messages with an intent to enrage someone; impersonating another person; "outing" an individual's personal or secret information; spamming, or sending large volumes of unwanted material; and mashups, which are alterations of digital content in such a way as to humiliate someone.

Social media, as we've seen, are wide-open spaces. Like the American "Wild West" 150 years ago, they can be unfettered and unpredictable territory.

Characteristics of Digital Groups

Now let's put aside our discussion of social media and think about what it means to be a member of a group connected by older and perhaps tamer forms of computer-mediated communication. In particular, let's consider digital groups that communicate solely or in large part via email, online discussion forums, or synchronous audio or video conferencing.

First, here are some notes about the nature of the kinds of digital groups we've just referred to:

Digital groups are pervasive. As of the end of 2011, nearly one of every three persons on Planet Earth had Internet access. In their guide to email, Shipley and Schwalbe (2007)Shipley, D., & Schwalbe W. (2007). *Send; The essential guide to email for office and home*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. indicated that trillions of email messages are sent each week in the United States alone. At the Federal level, they noted, the National Archives was expected to receive more than 100 million email messages from the Bush administration when it left office.

Digital groups range widely in their formality level and longevity. Some are casual, whereas others are more official and rigorous. Like other secondary groups, they may also be temporary and directed toward short-term goals or permanent.

Digital groups are, at least at face value, egalitarian. Assuming they can access the Internet, all the members of a digital group have an equal chance to enter and communicate in its discussions.

Digital groups come in all sizes. Many, if not most, comprise more than the eight individuals that lots of authorities deem to be the upper limit of a "small group." This can be deceiving, however, since once something gets shared within the group it may very well be sent outside it, either intentionally or not. Given that nothing on the Web is ever really "private," it's probably wise to assume that messages in digital groups are shared either with no one or with everyone.

Digital groups may communicate via either "rich" or "lean" media (Waldeck, Kearney, & Plax, 2013). Waldeck, J. H., Kearney, P., & Plax, T. (2013). *Business & professional communication in a digital age*. Boston: Wadsworth. Although it's possible to be brusque or even rude in any digital medium, some media tend to be better able to convey signals of civility than others. Rich media, such as audio or video conferencing, tend to permit or facilitate understanding because they transmit non-verbal as well as verbal communication cues. Lean media such as email or text messaging, which depend on written communication, are by their nature less capable of doing so.

Asynchronous feedback sent in digital groups may be limited, untimely, or otherwise inadequate. Because group members who use email or discussion forums usually don't see or hear each other immediately, "personalness" may be less than it would be if they were face to face. Without immediate cues to respond to, people sometimes shorten their messages or fail to include pleasantries that can promote easy understanding.

Regardless of the relatively intimate size of digital groups and the mutual familiarity among their members, the impact of asynchronous messages within them is always invisible. By this, we mean that someone who sends a message can't see and hear how its recipient responds right when that person reads, sees, or hears it.

Unlike what happens in face-to-face groups, when individual members write to someone about something in a digital environment it's possible that others may be doing so without their knowledge. Thus, the positive or negative impact of individually innocuous

or mild messages may be magnified many times.

Advice for Members of Digital Groups

Even those of us who use computers all day long at work or school for serious purposes may participate in informal digital groups there or elsewhere. Usually, we move back and forth between these communication worlds easily and without causing ourselves or others any problems.

Still, we run the risk that, like the author's father, we may accidentally transfer habits and practices that are appropriate in one environment to another in which they don't fit. Here are some tips on how to minimize this kind of risk and others associated with communication in a digital group:

First, know your group's norms. If you're not sure about something, ask. When in doubt, don't.

Second, be especially careful about sending or responding to any message if you've just been in a physical or digital location with different norms. Depending on your interests, you may be part of some social media in which most messages are snarky. In fact, digital forums exist in which participants try to outdo each other at being mean. Why? In order to attract attention--which is, after all, one of the chief purposes many people use social media in the first place.

Third, be aware of potential gender-related communication differences. According to research by Susan Herring, for instance, many men find using aggressive language to be amusing (Shipley and Schwalbe, 2007).Shipley, D., & Schwalbe W. (2007). *Send; The essential guide to email for office and home*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Women, on the other hand, may take such communication at face value and be put off or feel threatened by it.

Fourth, try to empathize. The physical distance inherent in digital communication can make us less sensitive to other people's feelings. Try to imagine the person(s) you're writing to sitting in front of you.

Finally, think twice about using what you consider to be humor. Use what Matt Ivester (2011) Ivester, M. (2011). *Lol...omg!: What every student needs to know about online reputation management, digital citizenship, and cyberbullying*. Reno, NV: Serra Knight Publishing. calls "the 'Get It?' test" and ask whether your message might be misinterpreted. What seems clever or witty to you may come across very differently to those who read it. Be particularly wary of using sarcasm (a word which, incidentally, comes from a Greek term for rending or tearing flesh).

Because of their electronic foundations, digital groups offer their members convenience and efficiency. Being a successful member of a digital group, however, requires focus, patience, and attention to the results of one's actions in a way that membership in a face-to-face group does not.

Key Takeaway

- Members of digital groups need to understand the nature and implications of those groups and act accordingly.

Exercise 4.5.1

1. Discuss these questions with one or two classmates: When considering communication in digital groups, is it truly possible to distinguish between personal and professional communication? Why or why not?
2. Think of a permanent digital group you're a member of and a temporary one. How, if at all, do the styles and contents of messages in the two groups differ?
3. Describe a misunderstanding you've experienced that resulted from the characteristics of a digital group using a "lean" rather than a "rich" medium.

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4.6: Summary

In this chapter, we have introduced task, group building, maintenance, and self-centered group member roles. We have described nine role characteristics, as well as five positive and five negative roles of group members. We have defined group norms and considered how people respond to norms, how norms are enforced, and how they may be challenged and changed. We have defined status; analyzed its origins and meaning within a group; and identified risks associated with it. We have examined the features of trust in groups, including ways to cultivate and reinforce it through such measures as self-disclosure. Finally, we have discussed the nature and implications of social media for groups and their members and made recommendations for actions to be taken by members of digital groups.

Review Questions

1. Interpretive Questions
    1. If a group member objects to the group's norms, what responsibility do you feel the other members bear for responding to the objection? Under what circumstances might the other members be justified in dismissing the objections out of hand?
    2. Competing for status in a group is considered by some people to be a healthy process which causes people to work hard and strive to excel. Given your experience in groups, do you endorse competition for status? Why or why not?
    3. What changes do you foresee in the technologies that can be used by digital groups? Which of the changes do you feel most comfortable? Least comfortable? Why?
2. Application Questions
    1. How do different types of member behaviors affect a group's behavior according to circumstances? Talk to someone who's part of a group you know something about. Ask for an example of how a dominator, a recognition seeker, or a self-interest pleader helped the group and have the person explain why this positive outcome took place.
    2. What risks are associated with status in groups? Interview at least one individual from three groups that you're not a member of yourself. Ask each person to recount a situation in which the status of an individual in the group caused misunderstandings, repressed communication, or brought about other negative outcomes within the group.
    3. What are reasonable bounds of self-disclosure in a group? Ask four people to identify a group of which they are members and describe circumstances in which they have found or might find it appropriate to share information within that group about their financial, marital, religious, or political status.

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4.7: Additional Resources

Belbin Self-Perception Inventory with scoring guide: executive.development.users.btopenworld.com/media/downloads/belbin_forms.pdf

Belbin's Self-Peception Inventory with scoring guide: leadershippersonalities.wikispaces.com/file/detail/252727_BelbinSelfPerceptionInventory.doc

Belbin's Team Analysis with scoring guide: leadershippersonalities.wikispaces.com/TEAM+Analysis

Belbin Test: freespace.virgin.net/richard.clifford/BelbinTest.doc

The Theory of the Leisure Class, written by Thorstein Veblen and first published in 1899, presented the concept of "conspicuous consumption" as one way for people to display and retain their status in society. Veblen's viewpoint was somewhat acerbic, but much of what he wrote still rings true in today's world and applies to group interactions.

Alain Botton's *Status Anxiety* provides an entertaining and thought-provoking perspective on the quest for status in the 21st century.

Public Speaking Resources:

- http://www.speaking.pitt.edu/student/groups/smallgrouproles.html
- wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/1624/1663615/apxc_12.pdf

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5: INTERCULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL GROUP COMMUNICATION

5.0: Chapter Introduction

5.1: Intercultural Communication

5.2: How to Understand Intercultural Communication

5.3: Common Cultural Characteristics

5.4: Divergent Cultural Characteristics

5.5: International Communication and the Global Marketplace

5.6: Styles of Management

5.7: The International Assignment

5.8: Summary

5.9: Additional Resources

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5.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. Find a film where one person overcomes all obstacles. Make notes of your observations on how he or she approaches the world, solves problems, and rises triumphant.
2. Find a film where a group of people overcome obstacles through joint effort. Make notes of your observations on how they approach the world, solve problems, and rise triumphant.
3. Consider a culture with which you have had little interaction. Write down at least five terms to describe that culture.

We should never denigrate any other culture but rather help people to understand the relationship between their own culture and the dominant culture. When you understand another culture or language, it does not mean that you have to lose your own culture.

Edward T. Hall

I've been traveling all over the world for 25 years, performing, talking to people, studying their cultures and musical instruments, and I always come away with more questions in my head than can be answered.

Yo-Yo Ma

Getting Started

As a professional in the modern community, you need to be aware that the very concept of community is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Throughout the world's history—until recently—a community was defined by its geographic boundaries. A merchant supplied salt and sugar, and people made what they needed. The products the merchant sold were often produced locally because the cost of transportation was significant. A transcontinental railroad brought telegraph lines, shipping routes, and brought ports together from coast to coast. Shipping that once took months and years was now measured in days. A modern highway system and cheap oil products allowed for that measurement unit to be reduced to days and minutes. Just in time product delivery reduced storage costs, from renting a warehouse at the port to spoilage in transit. As products sold, bar code and RDIF tagged items instantly updated inventories and initiated orders at factories all over the world.

Communication, both oral and written, linked communities in ways that we failed to recognize until economic turmoil in one place led to job loss, in a matter of days and minutes, thousands of miles away. A system of trade and the circulation of capital and goods that once flowed relatively seamlessly has been challenged by change, misunderstanding, and conflict. People learn of political, economic, and military turmoil that is instantly translated into multiple market impacts. Integrated markets and global networks bind us together in ways we are just now learning to appreciate, anticipate, and understand. Intercultural and international communication are critical areas of study with readily apparent, real-world consequences.

Agrarian, industrial, and information ages gave way to global business, and brought the importance of communication across cultures to the forefront. The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Thomas FriedmanFriedman, T. (2005). *The world is flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. calls this new world "flat," noting how the integration of markets and community had penetrated the daily lives of nearly everyone on the planet, regardless of language or culture. While the increasing ease of telecommunications and travel have transformed our individual and group interactions, Friedman. Friedman, T. (2009). *Starred review*. Retrieved April 29, 2009, from Publishers Weekly: http://www.thomaslfriedman.com/bookshelf/the-world-is-flat argues that "the dawning 'flat world' is a jungle pitting 'lions' and 'gazelles,' where 'economic stability is not going to be a feature' and 'the weak will fall farther behind.'"Friedman, T. (2009). *Starred review*. Retrieved April 29, 2009, from Publishers Weekly: *http://www.thomaslfriedman.com/bookshelf/the-world-is-flat* Half of the world's population, who earn less than $2 U.S. a day, felt the impact of a reduction in trade and fluctuations in commodity prices even though they may not have known any of the details. Rice, for example, became an even more valuable commodity than ever, and to the individuals who could not find it, grow it, or earn enough to buy it, the hunger felt was personal and global. International trade took on a new level of importance.

Intercultural and international communication has taken on a new role for students as well as career professionals. Knowing when the European and Asian markets open has become mandatory; so has awareness of multiple time zones and their importance

in relation to trade, shipping, and the production cycle. Managing production in China from an office in Chicago has become common. Receiving technical assistance for your computer often means connecting with a well-educated English speaker in New Delhi. We compete with each other via ELance.com or oDesk.com for contracts and projects, selecting the currency of choice for each bid as we can be located anywhere on the planet. Communities are no longer linked as simply “brother” and “sister” cities in symbolic partnerships. They are linked in the daily trade of goods and services.

In this chapter, we explore this dynamic aspect of communication. If the foundation of communication is important, its application in this context is critical. As Europe once formed intercontinental alliances for the trade of metals, leading to the development of a common currency, trade zone, and new concept of nation-state, now North and South America are following with increased integration. Major corporations are no longer affiliated with only one country, or one country’s interests, but perceive the integrated market as team members across global trade. “Made in X” is more of a relative statement as products, from cars to appliances to garments, now come with a list of where components were made, assembled, and what percentage corresponds to each nation.



Figure 5.0.1: © Jupiter Images

Global business is more than trade between companies located in distinct countries; indeed, that concept is already outdated. Intercultural and international business focuses less on the borders that separate people and more on the communication that brings them together. Business communication values clear, concise interaction that promotes efficiency and effectiveness. Effective teams and groups are the core of this interaction. You may perceive your role as a communicator within a specific city, business or organization, but you need to be aware that your role crosses cultures, languages, value and legal systems, and borders.

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5.1: Intercultural Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Define and discuss how to facilitate intercultural communication
2. Define and discuss the effects of ethnocentrism

Communication is the sharing of understanding and meaning, Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An introduction to human communication: understanding and sharing*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. but what is intercultural communication? If you answered, "the sharing of understanding and meaning across cultures," you'd be close, but the definition requires more attention. What is a culture? Where does one culture stop and another start? How are cultures created, maintained, and dissolved? Klopf. Klopf, D. (1991). *Intercultural encounters: the fundamentals of intercultural communication* (2nd ed.). Inglewood, CA: Morton Publishing Company. described culture as "that part of the environment made by humans." From the building we erect that represents design values to the fences we install that delineate borders, our environment is a representation of culture, but it is not all that is culture.

Culture involves beliefs, attitudes, values, and traditions that are shared by a group of people. Thus, we must consider more than the clothes we wear, the movies we watch, or the video games we play, all representations of environment, as culture. Culture also involves the psychological aspects of our expectations of the communication context. For example, if we are raised in a culture where males speak while females are expected to remain silent, the context of the communication interaction governs behavior, itself a representation of culture. From the choice of words (message), to how we communicate (in person, or by email), to how we acknowledge understanding with a nod or a glance (nonverbal feedback), to the internal and external interference, all aspects of communication are influenced by culture.

In defining intercultural communication, we only have eight components of communication to work with, and yet we must bridge divergent cultures with distinct values across languages and time zones to exchange value, a representation of meaning. It may be tempting to consider only the source and receiver within a transaction as a representation of intercultural communication, but if we do that, we miss the other six components—the message, channel, feedback, context, environment, and interference—in every communicative act. Each component influences and is influenced by culture. Is culture context? Environment? Message? Culture is represented in all eight components every time we communicate. All communication is intercultural.

We may be tempted to think of intercultural communication as interaction between two people from different countries. While two distinct national passports may be artifacts, or nonverbal representations of communication, what happens when two people from two different parts of the same country communicate? From high and low Germanic dialects, to the perspective of a Southerner versus a Northerner in the United States, to the rural versus urban dynamic, our geographic, linguistic, educational, sociological, and psychological traits influence our communication.

It is not enough to say that someone from rural Southern Chile and the capital, Santiago, both speak *Castellano* (the Chilean word for the Spanish language), so that communication between them must be intracultural communication, or communication within the same culture. What is life like for the rural Southerner? For the city dweller? Were their educational experiences the same? Do they share the same vocabulary? Do they value the same things? To a city dweller, all the sheep look the same. To the rural Southerner, the sheep are distinct, with unique markings; they have value as a food source, a source of wool with which to create sweaters and socks that keep the cold winters at bay, and, in their numbers, they represent wealth. Even if both Chileans speak the same language, their socialization will influence how they communicate and what they value, and their vocabulary will reflect these differences.

Let's take this intra-national comparison one step further. Within the same family, can there be intercultural communication? If all communication is intercultural, then the answer would be yes, but we still have to prove our case. Imagine a three-generation family living in one house. The grandparents may represent another time, and different values, from the grandchildren. The parents may have a different level of education and pursue different careers from the grandparents; the schooling the children are receiving may prepare them for yet another career. From music, to food preferences, to how work is done may vary across time; Elvis Presley may seem like ancient history to the children. The communication across generations represents intercultural communication, even if only to a limited degree.

But suppose we have a group of students who are all similar in age and educational level. Do gender and the societal expectations of roles influence interaction? Of course. And so we see that, among these students, the boys and girls not only communicate

in distinct ways, but not all boys and girls are the same. With a group of sisters, there may be common characteristics, but they will still have differences, and these differences contribute to intercultural communication. We are each shaped by our upbringing and it influences our world view, what we value, and how we interact with each other. We create culture, and it creates us.

Rogers and Steinfatt. Rogers, E., & Steinfatt, T. (1999). *Intercultural communication*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. define intercultural communication as the exchange of information between individuals who are "unalike culturally." If you follow our discussion and its implications, you may arrive at the idea that ultimately we are each a "culture of one"—we are simultaneously a part of community and its culture(s), and separate from it in the unique combination that represents us as an individual. All of us are separated by a matter of degrees from each other even if we were raised on the same street, by parents of similar educational background and profession, and have many other things in common.

Communication with yourself is called intrapersonal communication, and it may also be intracultural, as you may only represent one culture, but most people belong to many groups, each with their own culture. Within our imaginary intergenerational home, how many cultures do you think we might find? If we only consider the parents, and consider work one culture, and family another, we now have two. If we were to examine the options more closely, we would find many more groups, and the complexity would grow exponentially. Does a conversation with yourself ever involve competing goals, objectives, needs, wants, or values? How did you learn of those goals, or values? Through communication within and between individuals, they themselves representatives of many cultures. We struggle with the demands of each group, and their expectations, and could consider this internal struggle intercultural conflict, or simply intercultural communication.

Culture is part of the very fabric of our thought, and we cannot separate ourselves from it, even as we leave home, defining ourselves anew in work and achievement. Every business or organization has a culture, and within what may be considered a global culture, there are many subcultures or co-cultures. For example, consider the difference between the sales and accounting departments in a corporation: we can quickly see two distinct groups, with their own symbols, vocabulary, and values. Within each group there may also be smaller groups, and each member of each department comes from a distinct background that in itself influences behavior and interaction.

Intercultural communication is a fascinating area of study within group or organizational communication, and essential to your success. One idea to keep in mind as we examine this topic is the importance of considering multiple points of view. If you tend to dismiss ideas or views that are "unalike culturally," you will find it challenging to learn about diverse cultures. If you cannot learn, how can you grow and be successful?

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view other cultures as inferior to one's own. Having pride in your culture can be healthy, but history has taught us that having a predisposition to discount other cultures simply because they are different can be hurtful, damaging, and dangerous. Ethnocentrism makes us far less likely to be able to bridge the gap with others and often increases intolerance of difference. Business and industry are no longer regional, and in your career, you will necessarily cross borders, languages, and cultures. You will need tolerance, understanding, patience, and openness to difference. A skilled communicator knows that the process of learning is never complete, and being open to new ideas is a key strategy for success.

Key Takeaways

- Intercultural communication is an aspect of all communicative interactions, and attention to your own perspective is key to your effectiveness.
- Ethnocentrism is a major obstacle to intercultural communication.

Exercise 5.1.1

1. Please list five words to describe your dominant culture. Please list five words to describe a culture with which you are not a member, have little or no contact, or have limited knowledge. Now compare and contrast the terms noting their inherent value statements.
2. Identify a country you would like to visit. Research the country and find one interesting business fact and share it with the class.
3. Write a brief summary about a city, region, state, or country you have visited that is not like where you live. Share and compare with classmates.

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5.2: How to Understand Intercultural Communication

Learning Objectives

- Describe strategies to understand intercultural communication, prejudice, and ethnocentrism

The American anthropologist Edward T. Hall is often cited as a pioneer in the field of intercultural communication. Chen, G., & Starosta, W. (2000). *Foundations of intercultural communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Born in 1914, Hall spent much of his early adulthood in the multicultural setting of the American Southwest, where Native Americans, Spanish-speakers, and descendants of pioneers came together from diverse cultural perspectives. He then traveled the globe during World War II and later served as a State Department official. Where culture had once been viewed by anthropologists as a single, distinct way of living, Hall saw how the perspective of the individual influences interaction. By focusing on interactions, rather than cultures as separate from individuals, he asked us to evaluate the many cultures we ourselves belong to or are influenced by, as well as those with whom we interact. While his view makes the study of intercultural communication far more complex, it also brings a healthy dose of reality to the discussion. Hall is generally credited with eight contributions to our study of intercultural communication: Chen, G., & Starosta, W. (2000). *Foundations of intercultural communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.' Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (1990). Notes in the history of intercultural communication: the foreign service institute and the mandate for intercultural training. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 76*, 268–281.'McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

1. Comparing cultures. Focus on the interactions versus general observations of culture.
2. Shift to local perspective. Local level versus global perspective.
3. You don't have to know everything to know something. Time, space, gestures, and gender roles can be studied, even if we lack a larger understanding of the entire culture.
4. There are rules we can learn. People create rules for themselves in each community that we can learn from, compare, and contrast.
5. Experience counts. Personal experience has value in addition to more comprehensive studies of interaction and culture.
6. Differences in perspective. Descriptive linguistics serves as a model to understand cultures, and the US Foreign Service adopted it as a base for training.
7. Application to International Business. Foreign Service trainings yielded applications to trade and commerce, and became a point of study for business majors.
8. Integration of the disciplines. Culture and communication are intertwined, and bring together many academic disciplines.

Hall, Hall, E. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. N.Y., NY: Doubleday. shows us that emphasis on a culture as a whole, and how it operates, may lead us to neglect individual differences. Individuals may hold beliefs or practice customs that do not follow their own cultural norm. When we resort to the mental shortcut of a stereotype, we lose these unique differences. Stereotypes can be defined as a generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their culture. Rogers, E., & Steinfatt, T. (1999). *Intercultural communication*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

The American psychologist Gordon Allport, Allport, G. (1958). *The nature of prejudice*. NY: Doubleday. explored how, when, and why we formulate or use stereotypes to characterize distinct groups. His results may not surprise you. Look back at Introductory Exercise #3 and examine the terms you used to describe a culture with which you are unfamiliar. Were the terms flattering, or pejorative? Did they reflect respect for the culture, or did they make unfavorable value judgments? Regardless of how you answered, you proved Allport's main point. When we do not have enough contact with people or their cultures to understand them well, we tend to resort to stereotypes.Allport, G. (1958). *The nature of prejudice*. NY: Doubleday.

As Hall, Hall, E. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. N.Y., NY: Doubleday. notes, experience has value. If you do not know a culture, you should consider learning more about it firsthand if possible. The people you interact with may not be representative of the culture as a whole, that is not to say that what you learn lacks validity. Quite the contrary; Hall asserts that you can, in fact, learn something without understanding everything, and given the dynamic nature of communication and culture, who is to say that your lessons will not serve you well? Consider a study abroad experience if that is an option for you, or learn from a classmate who comes from a foreign country or an unfamiliar culture. Be open to new ideas and experiences, and start investigating. Many have gone before you, and today, unlike in generations past, much of the information is accessible. Your experiences will allow you to learn about another culture and yourself, and help you to avoid prejudice.

Prejudice involves a negative preconceived judgment or opinion that guides conduct or social behavior.McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. As an example, imagine two people walking into a room for a job interview. You are tasked to interview both, and having read the previous section, you know that Allport rings true when he says we rely on stereotypes when encountering people or cultures with which we have had little contact. Will the way these candidates dress, their age, or gender influence your opinion of them? Will their race or ethnicity be a conscious or subconscious factor in your thinking process? Allport's work would indicate that those factors and more will make you likely to use stereotypes to guide your expectations of them and your subsequent interactions with them.

People who treat others with prejudice often make assumptions or take preconceived ideas for granted without question, about the group or communities. As Gordon Allport illustrated for us, we often assume characteristics about groups with which we have little contact. Sometimes we also assume similarity, thinking that people are all basically similar. This denies cultural, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and many other valuable, insightful differences.

Key Takeaway

- Ethnocentric tendencies, stereotyping, and assumptions of similarity can make it difficult to learn about cultural differences.

Exercise 5.2.1

1. People sometimes assume that learning about other cultures is unnecessary if we simply treat others as we would like to be treated. To test this assumption, try answering the following questions.
    1. When receiving a gift from a friend, should you open it immediately, or wait to open it in private?
    2. When grocery shopping, should you touch fruits and vegetables to evaluate their freshness?
    3. In a conversation with your instructor or your supervisor at work, should you maintain direct eye contact?

    Write down your answers before reading further. Now let's explore how these questions might be answered in various cultures.

    1. In Chile, it is good manners to open a gift immediately and express delight and thanks. But in Japan it is a traditional custom to not open a gift in the giver's presence.
    2. In the United States, shoppers typically touch, hold, and even smell fruits and vegetables before buying them. But in northern Europe this is strongly frowned upon.
    3. In mainstream North American culture, people are expected to look directly at each other when having a conversation. But a cultural norm for many Native Americans involves keeping one's eyes lowered as a sign of respect when speaking to an instructor or supervisor.

    No one can be expected to learn all the "dos and don'ts" of the world's myriad cultures; instead, the key is to keep an open mind, be sensitive to other cultures, and remember that the way you'd like to be treated is not necessarily the way others would appreciate.

2. Please write a short paragraph where your perception of someone was changed once you got to know them. Share and compare with your classmates.

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5.3: Common Cultural Characteristics

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the concept of common cultural characteristics and list several examples of such characteristics in your own life

While we may be members of many different cultures, we tend to adhere to some more than others. Perhaps you have become friendly with several of your fellow students as you've pursued your studies in college. As you take many of the same classes and share many experiences on campus, you begin to have more and more in common, in effect forming a small group culture of your own. A similar cultural formation process may happen in the workplace, where coworkers spend many hours each week sharing work experiences and getting to know each other socially in the process.

Groups come together, form cultures, and grow apart across time. How does one become a member of a community, and how do you know when you are full member? What aspects of culture do we have in common and how do they relate to communication? Researchers who have studied cultures around the world have identified certain characteristics that define a culture. These characteristics are expressed in different ways, but they tend to be present in nearly all cultures. Let's examine them.

Rites of Initiation

Cultures tend to have a ritual for becoming a new member. A newcomer starts out as a non-entity, a stranger, an unaffiliated person with no connection or even possibly awareness of the community. Later, newcomers who stay around and learn about the culture become members. Most cultures have a rite of initiation that marks the passage of the individual within the community; some of these rituals may be so informal as to be hardly noticed (e.g., the first time a coworker asks you to join the group to eat lunch together), while others may be highly formalized (e.g., the ordination of clergy in a religion). The non-member becomes a member, the new member becomes a full member, and individuals rise in terms of responsibility and influence.

Business communities are communities first because, without communication interaction, no business will occur. Even if sales and stock are processed by servers that link database platforms to flow, individuals are still involved in the maintenance, repair, and development of the system. Where there is communication, there is culture, and every business has several cultures.

Across the course of your life, you have no doubt passed several rites of initiation but may not have taken notice of them. Did you earn a driver's license? Register to vote? The permission to purchase alcohol? In North American culture, these three common markers indicate the passing from a previous stage of life to a new one, with new rights and responsibilities. As a child, you were not allowed to have a driver's license. At age 14–18, depending on your state and location (rural versus urban), you were allowed to drive a tractor, use farm equipment, operate a motor vehicle during daylight hours, or have full access to public roads. With the privilege of driving comes responsibility. It is your responsibility to learn what the signs and signals mean, and to obey traffic laws for the common safety. In order for stop signs to work, we all have to agree on the behavior associated with them and observe that behavior.

Sometimes people choose to ignore a stop sign, or accidentally miss one, and it places the public in danger. Law enforcement officials serve to help reinforce that common safety as representatives of the culture, empowered by the people themselves based on a common agreement of what a stop sign means, and what a driver is supposed to do when approaching one. Some people may argue that law enforcement serves some while prosecuting others, and this debate point may deserve consideration, but across cultures there are rules, signs, and symbols that we share.

Rites of initiation mark the transition of the role or status of the individual within the group. Your first day on the job may have been a challenge as you learned your way around the physical space, but the true challenge was to learn how the group members communicate with each other. If you graduate from college with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, you will already have passed a series of tests, learned terms and theories, and possess a symbol of accomplishment in your diploma, but that only grants you the opportunity to look for a job—to seek access to a new culture.

In every business, there are groups, power struggles, and unspoken ways that members earn their way from the role of a "newbie" to that of a full member. The newbie may get the tough account, or the office without a window, or the cubicle next to the

bathroom, denoting low status. As the new member learns to navigate the community and establish a track record of success, promotions, themselves a rite of initiation, bring new rights and responsibilities.

Over time, the person comes to be an important part of the business, a “keeper of the flame.” The “flame” may not exist in physical space or time, but it does exist in the minds of those members in the community who have invested time and effort in the business. It is not a flame to be trusted to a new person, and like trust, it can only be earned across time. Along the way there may be personality conflicts and power struggles over resources, and perceived scarcity (i.e., there is only one promotion and you want it). All of these challenges are to be expected in any culture.

Common History and Traditions

Think for a moment about the history of a business like Ford Motor Company—what are your associations with Henry Ford, the assembly line manufacturing system, or the Model T? Or the early days of McDonald’s? Do you have an emotional response to mental images of the “golden arches” logo, Ronald McDonald, or the Big Mac sandwich? Traditions form as the organization grows and expands, and many of the stories are told and retold, serving to educate new members on how business should be conducted. The history of every culture, of every corporation, influences the present. There are times when the phrase “we’ve tried that before” can become stumbling block for members of the organization as it grows and adapts to new market forces. There may be struggles between members who have weathered many storms and new members, who come armed with new educational perspectives, technological tools, or experiences that may contribute to growth.

Common Values and Principles

Cultures all hold values and principles that are shared in common and are communicated from older members to younger (or newer) ones. Time and length of commitment are associated with an awareness of these values and principles, so that new members, whether they are socialized at home, in school, or at work, may not have a thorough understanding of their importance. For example, time (fast customer service) and cleanliness are two cornerstone values of the McDonald’s corporation. A new employee may take these for granted, while a seasoned professional who inspects restaurants may see the continued need to reinforce these core values. Without reinforcement, norms may gradually change, and if this were the case it could fundamentally change the customer experience associated with McDonald’s.

Common Purpose and Sense of Mission

Cultures share a common sense of purpose and mission. Why are we here, and whom do we serve? These are fundamental questions of the human condition that philosophers and theologians the world over have pondered for centuries. In business, the answers to these questions often address purpose and mission, and they can be found in mission and vision statements of almost every organization. Individual members will be expected to acknowledge and share the mission and vision, and actualize them, or make them real through action. Without action, the mission and vision statements are simply an arrangement of words. As a guide to individual and group behavioral norms, they can serve as a powerful motivator and a call to action.

Common Symbols, Boundaries, Status, Language, and Rituals

Most of us learn early in life what a stop sign represents, but do we know what military stripes represent on a sleeve, or a 10-year service pin on a lapel, or a corner office with two windows? Cultures have common symbols that mark them as a group, and the knowledge of what a symbol stands for helps to reinforce who is a group member and who is not. You may have a brand on your arm from your fraternity, or wear a college ring—symbols that represent groups you affiliate with temporarily, while you are a student. They may or may not continue to hold meaning to you when your college experience is over. Cultural symbols include dress, such as the Western business suit and tie, the Scottish kilt, or the Islamic headscarf; symbols also include slogans or sayings, such as “You’re in good hands” or “You deserve a break today.” The slogan may serve a marketing purpose, but may also embrace a mission or purpose within the culture. Family crests and clan tartan patterns serve as symbols of affiliation, and symbols can be used to communicate rank and status within the group.

Space is another common cultural characteristic; it may be one nonverbal symbol that represents status and power. In most of the world’s cultures, a person occupying superior status is entitled to a physically elevated position—a throne, a dais, a podium from which to address subordinates. Subordinates may be expected to bow, curtsy, or lower their eyes as a sign of respect. In business, the corner office may offer the best view with the most space. Movement from a cubicle to a private office may also be a symbol

of transition within an organization, involving increased responsibility as well as power. Parking spaces, what kind of vehicle you drive, and what your transportation allowance is may also serve to communicate symbolic meaning within an organization.

The office serves our discussion on the second point concerning boundaries. Would you sit on your boss's desk, or sit in his or her chair with your feet up on the desk, in your boss's presence? Most people indicate they would not, because to do so would communicate a lack of respect, violate normative space expectations, and invite retaliation. Still, subtle challenges to authority may arise in the workplace. A less than flattering photograph of the boss at the office party posted to the recreational room bulletin board communicates more than a lack of respect for authority. By placing the image anonymously in a public place, the prankster clearly communicates a challenge, even if it is a juvenile one. Movement from the cubicle to the broom closet may be the end result for someone who is found responsible for the prank. Again, there are no words used to communicate meaning, only symbols, but those symbols represent significant issues.

Communities have their own vocabulary and way in which they communicate. Consider the person who uses a sewing machine to create a dress and the accountant behind the desk; both are professionals and both have specialized jargon used in their field. If they were to change places, the lack of skills would present one obstacle, but the lack of understanding of terms, how they are used, and what they mean, would also severely limit their effectiveness. Those terms and how they are used are learned over time, through interaction, and while a textbook can help, it cannot demonstrate use in live interactions. Cultures are dynamic systems that reflect the communication process itself.

Cultures celebrate heroes, denigrate villains, and have specific ways of completing jobs and tasks. In business and industry the emphasis may be on effectiveness and efficiency, but the practice can often be "because that is the way we have always done it." Rituals serve to guide our performance and behavior, and may be limited to small groups or celebrated across the entire company. A pink Cadillac has a special meaning for a Mary Kay cosmetics representative. How that car is received is ritualistic, in a public ceremony, recognizing current success while honoring past performances across the company.

Rituals can serve to bind a group together, or to constrain it. Institutions tend to formalize processes and then have a hard time adapting to new circumstances. While the core values or mission statement may hold true, the method of doing things that worked in the past may not be as successful as it once was. Adaptation and change can be difficult for individuals and companies, and yet all communities, cultures, and context of communication is dynamic, or always changing. As much as we might like things to stay the same, they will always change—and we will change with (and be changed by) them.

Key Takeaway

- All cultures have characteristics such as initiations, traditions, history, values and principles, purpose, symbols, and boundaries.

Exercise 5.3.1

1. Compile a list, or group of pictures, of symbols that characterize some of the cultural groups you belong to. Share and discuss your list with your classmates.
2. Compile a list of pictures or symbols that your group or community finds offensive. Share and compare with classmates.

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5.4: Divergent Cultural Characteristics

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss divergent cultural characteristics and list several examples of such characteristics in the culture(s) you identify with

We are not created equal. We are born light or dark-skinned, to parents of education, or parents without access to education, and we grow up short or tall, and slender or stocky. Our life chances, or options, are in many ways determined by our birth. The Victorian "rags to riches" novels which Horatio Alger wrote promoted the idea that individuals can overcome all obstacles, raising themselves up by their bootstraps. Some people do have amazing stories, but even if you are quick to point out that Microsoft founder Bill Gates became fabulously successful despite his lack of a college education, know that his example is exception, not the rule. We all may use the advantages of our circumstances to improve our lives, but the type and extent of those advantages varies greatly across the planet.

Cultures reflect this inequality, this diversity, and the divergent range of values, symbols, and meanings across communities. Can you tie a knot? Perhaps you can tie your shoes, but what about a knot to secure a line to a boat, or to secure a heavy load on a cart or truck? To bundle a bale of hay? You may not be able to, but if you were raised in a culture that place a high value on knot-tying for specific purposes, you would learn that which your community values. We all have viewpoints, but they are shaped by our interactions with our communities. Let's examine several points of divergence across cultures:

Individualistic versus Collectivist Cultures

People in individualistic cultures value individual freedom and personal independence, and cultures always have stories to reflect their values. You may recall the story of Superman, or John McLean in the Diehard series, and note how one person overcomes all obstacles. Through personal ingenuity, in spite of challenges, one person rises successfully to conquer or vanquish those obstacles. Sometimes there is an assist, as in basketball or football, where another person lends a hand, but still the story repeats itself again and again, reflecting the cultural viewpoint.

The Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede explored the concepts of individualism and collectivism across diverse cultures. Hofstede, G. (1982). *Culture's consequences* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.' Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.' Hofstede, G. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: software of the mind* (Revised and expanded 2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. He found that in individualistic cultures, like the United States, people perceived their world primarily from their own viewpoint. They perceived themselves as empowered individuals, capable of making their own decisions, and able to make an impact on their own lives.

Cultural viewpoint is not an either/or dichotomy, but rather a continuum or range. You may belong to some communities that express individualistic cultural values, while others place the focus on a collective viewpoint. Collectivist cultures, Hofstede, G. (1982). *Culture's consequences* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage. including many in Asia and South America, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. Ownership and private property is one way to examine this difference. In some cultures property is almost exclusively private, while others tend toward community ownership. The collectively owned resource returns benefits to the community. Water, for example, has long been viewed as a community resource, much like air, but that has been changing as business and organizations have purchased water rights and gained control over resources. Public lands, such as parks, are often considered public, and individual exploitation of them is restricted. Copper, a metal with a variety of industrial applications, is collectively owned in Chile, with profits deposited in the general government fund. While public/private initiatives exist, the cultural viewpoint is our topic. How does someone raised in a culture that emphasizes the community interact with someone raised in a primarily individualistic culture? How could tensions be expressed, and how might interactions be influenced by this point of divergence?

Explicit Rule Cultures versus Implicit Rule Cultures

Do you know the rules of your business or organization? Did you learn them from an employee manual or by observing the conduct

of others? Your response may include both options, but not all cultures communicate rules in the same way. Carley DoddDodd, C. (1998). *Dynamics of intercultural communication* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Harper and Row. discusses this difference and has found quite a range of difference. In an explicit rule culture, where rules are clearly communicated so that everyone is aware of them, the guidelines and agenda for a meeting are announced prior to the gathering. In an implicit rule culture, where rules are often understood and communicated nonverbally, there may be no agenda. Everyone knows why they are gathered, what role each member plays, and the expectation may not be clearly stated. Power, status, and behavioral expectations may all be understood, and to the person from outside this culture it may prove a challenge to understand the rules of the context.

Outsiders often communicate their "otherness" but not knowing where to stand, when to sit, or how to initiate a conversation when the rules are not clearly stated. While it may help to know that implicit rule cultures are often more tolerant of deviation from the understood rules, the newcomer will be wise to learn by observing quietly—and to do as much research ahead of the event as possible.

Uncertainty-Accepting Cultures versus Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures

When we meet each other for the first time, we often use what we have previously learned to understand our current context. We also do this to reduce our uncertainty. Some cultures, such as the U.S. and Britain, are highly tolerant of uncertainty, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Cultures in the Arab world, for example, are high in uncertainty avoidance; they tend to be resistant to change and reluctant to take risks. Whereas a U.S. business negotiator might enthusiastically agree to try a new procedure, the Egyptian counterpart would likely refuse to get involved until all the details are worked out.

Berger and Calabrese. Berger, C., & Calabrese, R. (1975). Some explorations in initial interactions and beyond: toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research, 1*, 99–112. developed uncertainty reduction theory to examine this dynamic aspect of communication. Here are seven axioms of uncertainty:

- There is a high level of uncertainty at first. As we get to know one another, our verbal communication increases and our uncertainty begins to decrease.
- Following verbal communication, as nonverbal communication increases, uncertainty will continue to decrease, and we will express more nonverbal displays of affiliation, like nodding one's head to express agreement.
- When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, we tend to increase our information-seeking behavior, perhaps asking questions to gain more insight. As our understanding increases, uncertainty decreases, as does the information-seeking behavior.
- When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, the communication interaction is not as personal or intimate. As uncertainty is reduced, intimacy increases.
- When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, communication will feature more reciprocity, or displays of respect. As uncertainty decreases, reciprocity may diminish.
- Differences between people increase uncertainty, while similarities decrease it.
- Higher levels of uncertainty are associated with a decrease in the indication of liking the other person, while reductions in uncertainty are associated with liking the other person more.

Time Orientation

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, Hall, M. R., & Hall, E. T. (1987). *Hidden differences: doing business with the Japanese*. New York: Doubleday (Anchor Books). state that monochronic time-oriented cultures consider one thing at a time, whereas polychronic time-oriented cultures schedule many things at one time, and time is considered in a more fluid sense. In monochromatic time, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time. Even the multitasker from a monochromatic culture will, for example, recognize the value of work first before play or personal time. The United States, Germany, and Switzerland are often noted as countries that value a monochromatic time orientation.

Polychromatic time looks a little more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing. Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia are countries where one can observe this perception of time, and while business meetings may be scheduled at a fixed time, when they actually begin may be another story. Also note that the dinner invitation for 8 p.m. may, in reality, be more like 9 p.m., and if you were to show up on time, you might be the first person to arrive and find that the hosts are not quite ready to receive you.

When in doubt, always ask before the event; many people from polychromatic cultures will be used to foreigner's tendency to be punctual, even compulsive, about respecting established times for events. The skilled business communicator is aware of

this difference and takes steps to anticipate it. The value of time in different cultures is expressed in many ways, and your understanding can help you communicate more effectively.

Short-Term versus Long-Term Orientation

Do you want your reward right now, or can you dedicate yourself to a long-term goal? You may work in a culture that values immediate results, and grow impatient when those results do not materialize. Hofstede, Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.' Hofstede, G. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: software of the mind* (Revised and expanded 2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. discusses this relationship of time orientation to a culture as a "time horizon," and it underscores the perspective of the individual within a cultural context. Many countries in Asia, influenced by the teachings of Confucius, value a long-term orientation, whereas other countries, including the United States, have a more short-term approach to life and results. Native American cultures are known for holding a long-term orientation, as illustrated by the proverb attributed to the Iroquois that decisions require contemplation of their impact seven generations removed.

If you work within a culture that has a short-term orientation, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocation of greetings, gifts, and rewards. For example, if you send a thank-you note the morning after being treated to a business dinner, your host will appreciate your promptness. While there may be respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honor, a reflection of identity and integrity. Personal stability and consistency are also valued in a short-term oriented culture, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity.

Long-term orientation is often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status. A sense of shame, both personal and for the family and community, is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family, and is carried by immediate and extended family members.

Masculine versus Feminine Orientation

There was a time when many cultures and religions valued a female figurehead, and with the rise of Western cultures, we have observed a shift toward a masculine ideal. Each carries with it a set of cultural expectations and norms for gender behavior and gender roles across life, including business.

Hofstede, Hofstede, G. (2009). *Gert Hofstede™ Cultural dimensions*. Retrieved May 3, 2009, from www.geert-fofstede.com/ describes the masculine/feminine dichotomy not in terms of whether men or women hold the power in a given culture, but rather the extent to which that culture values certain traits that may be considered masculine or feminine. Thus, "the assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine.' The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values."

We can observe this difference in where people gather, how they interact, and how they dress. We can see it during business negotiations, where it may make an important difference in the success of the organizations involved. Cultural expectations precede the interaction, so someone who doesn't match those expectations may experience tension. Business in the United States has a masculine orientation—assertiveness and competition are highly valued. In other cultures, such as Sweden, business values are more attuned to modesty (lack of self-promotion) and taking care of society's weaker members. This range of difference is one aspect of intercultural communication that requires significant attention when the communicator enters a new environment.

Direct versus Indirect

In the United States, business correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. "What can I do for you?" is a common question when a business person receives a call from a stranger; it is an accepted way of asking the caller to state his or her business. In some cultures, it is quite appropriate to make a direct personal observation, such as "you've changed your hairstyle," while in others it may be observed, but never spoken of in polite company. In indirect cultures, such as those in Latin America, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, or family, or topics other than business as the partners gain a sense of each other, long before the topic of business is raised. Again, the skilled communicator researches the new environment before entering it, as a social faux pas, or error, can have a significant impact.

Materialism versus Relationships

Does the car someone drives say something about them? You may consider that many people across the planet do not own a vehicle and that a car or truck in and of itself is a statement of wealth, but beyond that, does the make and model reflect their personality? If you are from a materialistic culture, you may be inclined to say yes. If you are from a culture that values relationships rather than material objects, you may say no, or focus on how the vehicle serves the family. From rocks that display beauty and wealth—what we call jewelry—to what you eat—will it be lobster ravioli or prime rib?

Members of a materialistic culture place emphasis on external goods and services as a representation of self, of power, and social rank. If you consider the plate of food before you and consider the labor required to harvest the grain, butcher the animal, and cook the meal, you are focusing more on the relationships involved with its production rather than the foods themselves. Caviar may be a luxury, and it may communicate your ability to acquire and offer a delicacy, but it also represents an effort. Cultures differ in how they view material objects and their relationship to them, and some value people and relationships more than the objects themselves. The United States and Japan are often noted as materialistic cultures, while many Scandinavian nations feature cultures that place more emphasis on relationships.

Low versus High Power Distance

How comfortable are you with critiquing your boss's decisions? If you are from a low power distance culture, your answer might be "no problem." In low power distance cultures, according to Hofstede, Hofstede, G. (2009). *Gert Hofstede™ Cultural dimensions*. Retrieved May 3, 2009, from www.geert-fofstede.com/ people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant/subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example.

In a high power distance culture, you would probably be much less likely to challenge the decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input. If you are working with someone from a high power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve them in the discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation. They may have learned that less powerful people must accept decisions without comment, even if they have a concern or know there is a significant problem. Unless you are sensitive to cultural orientation and power distance, you may lose valuable information.

Key Takeaway

- Cultures have distinct orientations when it comes to rules, uncertainty, time and time horizon, masculinity, directness, materialism, and power distance.

Exercise 5.4.1

1. Take a business letter or a page of a business report from a U.S. organization and try rewriting it as someone from a highly indirect, relational culture might have written it. Share and discuss your result with your classmates.
2. Conduct an online search for translated movie titles. Share and compare your results with your classmates.
3. Consider the movie you noted in Introductory Exercise 1. In what ways does it exemplify this individualistic viewpoint? Share your observations with your classmates.
4. Think of a movie where one or more characters exemplify individualism. Write a brief statement and share it with classmates.
5. Think of a movie where one or more characters exemplify community-oriented values. Write a brief statement and share it with classmates.

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5.5: International Communication and the Global Marketplace

Learning Objectives

1. Describe international communication and the global marketplace, including political, legal, economic, and ethical systems

People create systems that reflect cultural values. These systems reduce uncertainty for the culture, creating and perpetuating the rules and customs, but may prove a significant challenge to the entrepreneur entering a new market. Political, legal, economic, and ethical systems vary from culture to culture, and may or may not reflect formal boundaries. For example, disputes over who controls what part of their shoreline are common and are still a matter of debate, interpretation, and negotiation in many countries.

To a large extent, a country's culture is composed of formal systems. Formal systems often direct, guide, constrain, or promote some behaviors over others. A legal system, like taxation, may favor the first-time homebuyer in the United States, and as a consequence, homeownership may be pursued instead of other investment strategies. That same legal system, via tariffs, may levy import taxes on specific goods and services, and reduce their demand as the cost increases. Each of these systems reinforces, or discourages, actions based on cultural norms, creating regulations that reflect ways that each culture, through its constituents, views the world.

In this section, we'll examine intercultural communication from the standpoint of international communication, itself a reflection of intercultural communication. International communication can be defined as communication between nations, but we recognize that nations do not exist independently of people. Inter-nation communication is typically government to government or, more accurately, governmental representatives to governmental representatives. It often involves topics and issues that relate to the nations as entities, broad issues of trade, and conflict resolution. People use political, legal, and economic systems to guide and regulate behavior, and diverse cultural viewpoints necessarily give rise to many variations. Ethical systems also guide behavior, but often in less formal, institutional ways. Together these areas form much of the basis of international communication and warrant closer examination.

Political Systems

You may be familiar with democracy, or rule by the people; and theocracy, or rule of God by his or her designates; but the world presents a diverse range of how people are governed. It is also important to note, as we examine political systems, that they are created, maintained, and changed by people. Just as people change over time, so do all systems that humans create. A political climate that was once closed to market forces, including direct and indirect investment, may change over time.

Centuries ago, China built a physical wall to keep out invaders. In the 20th century, it erected another kind of wall, a political wall that separated the country from the Western world, and its adherence to its interpretation of communism limited entrepreneurship. In the world of 2009, that closed market is now open for business. To what extent it is open may be a point of debate, but simple observation provides ample evidence of a country, and a culture, open to investment and trade. The opening and closing ceremonies for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing symbolized this openness, with symbolic representations of culture combined with notable emphasis on welcoming the world. As the nature of global trade and change transforms business, so it also transforms political systems.

Political systems are often framed in terms of how people are governed, and the extent to which they may participate. Democracy is one form of government that promotes the involvement of the individual, but even here we can observe stark differences. In the United States, people are encouraged to vote, but it is not mandatory, and voter turnout is often so low that voting minorities have great influence on the larger political systems. In Chile, voting is mandatory, so that all individuals are expected to participate, with adverse consequences if they do not. This doesn't mean there are not still voting minorities, or groups with disproportionate levels of influence and power, but it does underscore cultural values and their many representations.

Centralized rule of the people also comes in many forms. In a dictatorship, the dictator establishes and enforces the rules with

few checks and balances, if any. In a totalitarian system, one party makes the rules. The Communist states of the 20th century, although egalitarian in theory, were ruled in practice by a small central committee. In a theocracy, one religion makes the rules based on their primary documents or interpretation of them, and religious leaders hold positions of political power. In each case, political power is centralized to a small group over the many.

A third type of political system is anarchy, in which there is no government. A few places in the world, notably Somalia, may be said to exist in a state of anarchy. But even in a state of anarchy, the lack of a central government means that local warlords, elders, and others exercise a certain amount of political, military, and economic power. The lack of an established governing system itself creates the need for informal power structures that regulate behavior and conduct, set and promote ideals, and engage in commerce and trade, even if that engagement involves non-standard strategies such as the appropriation of ships via piracy. In the absence of appointed or elected leaders, emergent leaders will rise as people attempt to meet their basic needs.

Legal Systems

Legal systems also vary across the planet and come in many forms. Some legal systems promote the rule of law while others promote the rule of culture, including customs, traditions, and religions. The two most common systems are civil and common law. Civil law draws from Roman history and common law from an English tradition. In civil law, the rules are spelled out in detail, and judges are responsible for applying the law to the given case. In common law, the judge interprets the law and considers the concept of precedent, or previous decisions. Common law naturally adapts to changes in technology and modern contexts as precedents accumulate, while civil law requires new rules to be written out to reflect the new context even as the context transforms and changes. Civil law is more predictable and is practiced in the majority of countries, while common law involves more interpretation that can produce conflict with multiple views on the application of the law in question. The third type of law draws its rules from a theological base rooted in religion. This system presents unique challenges to the outsider and warrants thorough research.



Figure 5.5.1: Communication varies across cultures, including legal and economic norms and customs © Jupiter Images

Economic Systems

Economic systems vary in similar ways across cultures and again reflect the norms and customs of people. Economies are often described in the relationship between people and their government. An economy with a high degree of government intervention may prove challenging for both internal and external businesses. An economy with relatively little government oversight may be said to reflect more of the market, or markets, and to be less restricted. Along these same lines, the government may perceive its role as a representative of the common good, to protect individual consumers, and to prevent fraud and exploitation.

This continuum or range, from high to low degrees of government involvement, reflects the concept of government itself. A government may be designed to give everyone access to the market, with little supervision, in the hope that people themselves will regulate transactions based on their own needs, wants, and desires; in essence, their own self-interest. If everyone operates in their own self-interest, and word gets out that one business produces a product that fails to work as advertised, it is often believed that the market will naturally gravitate away from this faulty product to a competing product that works properly. Individual consumers, however, may have a hard time knowing which product to have faith in and may look to the government to provide that measure of safety.

Government certification of food, for example, attempts to reduce disease. Meat from unknown sources would lack the seal of certification, alerting the consumer to evaluate the product closely, or choose another product. In terms of supervision, we can see an example of this when Japan restricts the sale of U.S. beef for fear of mad cow disease. The concern may be warranted from the consumer's viewpoint, or it may be protectionist from a business standpoint, protecting the local producer over the importer.

From meat to financial products, we can see both the dangers and positive attributes of intervention, and can also acknowledge

that its application may be less than consistent. Some cultures that value the community may naturally look to their government for leadership in economic areas, while those that represent an individualistic tendency may take a more “hands-off” approach.

Ethical Systems

Ethical systems, unlike political, legal, and economic systems, are generally not formally institutionalized. This does not imply, however, that they are less influential in interactions, trade, and commerce. Ethics refers to a set of norms and principles that relate to individual and group behavior, including businesses and organizations. They may be explicit, in the form of an organization’s code of conduct; may be represented in religion, as in the Ten Commandments; or may reflect cultural values in law. What is legal and what is ethical are at times quite distinct.

For example, the question of executive bonuses was hotly debated when several U.S. financial services companies accepted taxpayer money under the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) in 2008. It was legal for TARP recipient firms to pay bonuses—indeed, some lawyers argued that failing to pay promised bonuses would violate contract law—but many taxpayers believed it was unethical.

Some cultures have systems of respect and honor that require tribute and compensation for service, while others may view payment as a form of bribe. It may be legal in one country to make a donation or support a public official in order to gain influence over a decision, but it may be unethical. In some countries, it may be both illegal and unethical. Given the complexity of human values, and their expression across behaviors, it is wise to research the legal and ethical norms of the place or community where you want to do business.

The Global Village

International trade has advantages and disadvantages, again based on your viewpoint and cultural reference. If you come from a traditional culture, with strong gender norms and codes of conduct, you may not appreciate the importation of some Western television programs that promote what you consider to be content that contradicts your cultural values. You may also take the viewpoint from a basic perspective and assert that basic goods and services that can only be obtained through trade pose a security risk. If you cannot obtain the product or service, it may put you, your business, or your community at risk.

Furthermore, “just in time” delivery methods may produce shortages when the systems break down due to weather, transportation delays, or conflict. People come to know each other through interactions, and transactions are fundamental to global trade, but cultural viewpoints may come into conflict. Some cultures may want a traditional framework to continue and will promote their traditional cultural values and norms at the expense of innovation and trade. Other cultures may come to embrace diverse cultures and trade, only to find that they have welcomed some who wish to do harm. In a modern world, transactions have a cultural dynamic that cannot be ignored.

Intercultural communication and business have been related since the first exchange of value. People, even from the same community, had to arrive at a common understanding of value. Symbols, gestures, and even language reflect these values, and attention to this central concept will enable the skilled intercultural communicator to look beyond his or her own viewpoint.

It was once the privilege of the wealthy to travel, and the merchant or explorer knew firsthand what many could only read about. Now we can take virtual tours of locations we may never travel to, and, as the cost of travel decreases, can increasingly see the world for ourselves. As global trade as developed, and time to market has decreased, the world has effectively grown smaller. While the size has not changed, our ability to navigate has been dramatically decreased. Time and distance are no longer the obstacles they once were. The Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan, a pioneer in the field of communication, predicted what we now know as the “global village.” The global village is characterized by information and transportation technologies that reduce the time and space required to interact.McLuhan, M. (1964). Understanding media: the extensions of man. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Key Takeaway

- People create political, legal, economic, and ethical systems to guide them in transacting business domestically and internationally.

Exercise 5.5.1

1. Choose one country you would like to visit and explore its political system. How is it different from the system in your own country? What are the similarities? Share your findings with your classmates.
2. Think of an ethical aspect of the economic crisis of 2008 that involved you or your family. For example, did you or a relative get laid off at work, have difficulty making mortgage or rent payments, change your spending habits, or make donations to help those less fortunate? Is there more than one interpretation of the ethics of the situation? Write a short essay about it and discuss it with your classmates.
3. Choose one country you would like to visit and explore its economic system, including type of currency and its current value in relation to the U.S. dollar. Share and compare your results with classmates.

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5.6: Styles of Management

Learning Objectives

1. Understand and discuss how various styles of management, including Theory X, Y, and Z, influence workplace culture

People and their relationships to dominant and subordinate roles are a reflection of culture and cultural viewpoint. They are communicated through experience and create expectations for how and when managers interact with employees. The three most commonly discussed management theories are often called X, Y, and Z. In this section, we'll briefly discuss them and their relationship to intercultural communication.

Theory X

In an influential book entitled *The Human Side of Enterprise*, M.I.T. management professor Douglas McGregor, McGregor, D. (1960). *The human side of enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill. described two contrasting perceptions on how and why people work, formulating Theory X and Theory Y; they are both based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper & Row.' Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harper & Row. According to this model, people are first concerned with physical needs (food, shelter) and secondly with safety. At the third level, people seek love, acceptance, and intimacy. Self-esteem, achievement, and respect are the fourth level, and finally, the fifth level embodies self-actualization.

McGregor's Theory X asserts that workers are motivated by their basic (low-level) needs and have a general disposition against labor. In this viewpoint, workers are considered lazy and predicted to avoid work if they can, giving rise to the perceived need for constant, direct supervision. A Theory X manager may be described as authoritarian or autocratic, and does not seek input or feedback from employees. The view further holds that workers are motivated by personal interest, avoid discomfort, and seek pleasure. The Theory X manager uses control and incentive programs to provide punishment and rewards. Responsibility is the domain of the manager, and the view is that employees will avoid it if at all possible, to the extent that blame is always deflected or attributed to something other than personal responsibility. Lack of training, inferior machines, or failure to provide the necessary tools are all reasons to stop working, and it is up to the manager to fix these issues.

Theory Y

In contrast to Theory X, Theory Y views employees as ambitious, self-directed, and capable of self-motivation. Employees have a choice, and they prefer to do a good job as a representation of self-actualization. The pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain are part of being human, but work is also a reward in itself, and employees take pride in their efforts. Employees want to reach their fullest potential and define themselves by their profession. A job well done is a reward in and of itself, and the employee may be a valuable source of feedback. Collaboration is viewed as normal, and the worker may need little supervision.

Theory Z

Theory X and Y may seem like two extremes across the range of management styles, but in fact, they are often combined in actual work settings. William Ouchi's Theory Z combines elements of both and draws from American and Japanese management style. It promotes worker participation and emphasizes job rotation, skills development, and loyalty to the company. Luthans, F. (1989). *Organisational Behaviour*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Workers are seen as having a high need for reinforcement, and belonging is emphasized. Theory Z workers are trusted to do their jobs with excellence and management is trusted to support them, looking out for their well-being. Massie, J., & Douglas, J. (1992). *Managing: a contemporary introduction*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Each of these theories of management features a viewpoint with assumptions about people and why they do what they do. While each has been the subject of debate, and variations on each have been introduced across organizational communication and business, they serve as a foundation for understanding management in an intercultural context.

Key Takeaway

- Management Theories X, Y, and Z are examples of distinct and divergent views on worker motivation, need for supervision, and the possibility of collaboration.

Exercise 5.6.1

1. Imagine that you are a manager in charge of approximately a dozen workers. Would you prefer to rely primarily on Theory X, Y, or Z as your management style? Why? Write a short essay defending your preference, giving some concrete examples of management decisions you would make. Discuss your essay with your classmates.
2. Describe your best boss and write a short analysis of what type of management style you perceive they used. Share and compare with classmates.
3. Describe your worst boss and write a short analysis of what type of management style you perceive they used. Share and compare with classmates.

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5.7: The International Assignment

Learning Objectives

1. Describe how to prepare for an international assignment
2. Discuss the acculturation process as an expatriate
3. Describe effective strategies for living and working abroad

Suppose you have the opportunity to work or study in a foreign country. You may find the prospect of an international assignment intriguing, or challenging, or even frightening; indeed, most professionals employed abroad will tell you they pass through all three stages at some point during the assignment. They may also share their sense of adjustment, even embrace of their host culture, and the challenges of reintegration into their native country.

An international assignment, whether as a student or a career professional, requires work and preparation, and should be given the time and consideration of any major life change. When you lose a loved one, it takes time to come to terms with the loss. When someone you love is diagnosed with a serious illness, the news may take some time to sink in. When a new baby enters your family, a period of adjustment is predictable and prolonged. All of these major life changes can stress an individual beyond their capacity to adjust. Similarly, in order to be a successful "expat," or expatriate, one needs to prepare mentally and physically for the change.

International business assignments are a reflection of increased global trade, and as trade decreases, they may become an expensive luxury. As technology allows for instant face-to-face communication, and group collaboration on documents via cloud computing and storage, the need for physical travel may be reduced. But regardless of whether your assignment involves relocation abroad, supervision of managers in another country at a distance, or supervision by a foreign manager, you will need to learn more about the language, culture, and customs that are not your own. You will need to compare and contrast, and seek experiences that lend insight, in order to communicate more effectively.

An efficient, effective manager in any country is desirable, but one with international experience even more so. You will represent your company and they will represent you, including a considerable financial investment, either by your employer (in the case of a professional assignment) or by whoever is financing your education (in the case of studying abroad). That investment should not be taken lightly. As many as 40% of foreign-assigned employees terminate their assignments early (Tu, H., & Sullivan, S. (1994). *Business horizons.* Retrieved February 6, 2009, from FindArticles.com) at a considerable cost to their employers. Of those that remain, almost 50% are less than effective (Tu, H., & Sullivan, S. (1994). *Business horizons*. Retrieved February 6, 2009, from FindArticles.com).

Preparation

With this perspective in mind, let's discuss how to prepare for the international assignment and strategies to make you a more effective professional as a stranger in a strange land. First, we'll dispel a couple of myths associated with an idealized or romantic view of living abroad. Next, we'll examine traits and skills of the successful expatriate. Finally, we'll examine culture shock and the acculturation process.

Your experience with other cultures may have come first hand, but for most, a foreign location like Paris is an idea formed from exposure to images via the mass media. Paris may be known for its art, as a place for lovers, or a great place to buy bread, but if you have only ever known about a place through the lens of a camera, you have only seen the portraits designed and portrayed by others. You will lack the multi-dimensional view of one who lives and works in Paris, and even if you are aware of its history, its economic development, or its recent changes, these are all academic observations until the moment of experience.

That is not to say that research does not form a solid foundation in preparation for an international assignment, but it does reinforce the distinction between a media-fabricated ideal and real life. Awareness of this difference is an important step as you prepare yourself for life in a foreign culture.

If the decision is yours to make, take your time. If others are involved, and family is a consideration, you should take even more care with this important decision. Residence abroad requires some knowledge of the language, an ability to adapt, and an interest

in learning about different cultures. If family members are not a part of the decision or lack the language skills or interest, the assignment may prove overwhelming and lead to failure. 64% of expatriate respondents who terminated their assignment early indicated that family concerns were the primary reason (Contreras, C. D. (2009). *Chemical Engineering Progress*. Retrieved February 06, 2009, from FindArticles.com)

Points to consider include the following:

- How flexible are you?
- Do you need everything spelled out or can you go with the flow?
- Can you adapt to new ways of doing business?
- Are you interested in the host culture, and willing to dedicate the time and put forth the effort to learn more about it?
- What has been your experience to date working with people from distinct cultures?
- What are your language skills at present, and are you interested in learning a new language?
- Is your family supportive of the assignment?
- How will it affect your children's education? Your spouse's career? Your own career?
- Will this assignment benefit your family?
- How long are you willing to commit to the assignment?
- What resources are available to help you prepare, move, and adjust?
- Can you stand being out of the loop, even if you are in daily written and oral communication with the home office?
- What is your relationship with your employer, and can it withstand the anticipated stress and tension that will result as not everything goes according to plan?
- Is the cultural framework of your assignment similar, or unlike, your own, and how ready are you to adapt to differences in such areas as time horizon, masculinity versus femininity, or direct versus indirect styles of communication?

This list of questions could continue, and feel free to add your own as you explore the idea of an international assignment. An international assignment is not like a domestic move or reassignment. Within the same country, even if there are significantly different local customs in place, similar rules, laws, and ways of doing business are present. In a foreign country, you will lose those familiar traditions and institutions and have to learn many new ways of accomplishing your given tasks. What once took a five-minute phone call may now take a dozen meetings and a month to achieve, and that may cause you some frustration. It may also cause your employer frustration as you try to communicate how things are done locally, and why results are not immediate, as they lack even your limited understanding of your current context. Your relationship with your employer will experience stress, and your ability to communicate your situation will require tact and finesse.

Successful expatriates are adaptable, open to learning new languages, cultures, and skilled at finding common ground for communication. Rather than responding with frustration, they learn the new customs and find the advantage to get the job done. They form relationships and are not afraid to ask for help when it is warranted or required. They feel secure in their place as explorer, and understand that mistakes are a given, even as they are unpredictable. Being a stranger is no easy task, but they welcome the challenge with energy and enthusiasm.

The Acculturation Process

Acculturation, or the transition to living abroad, is often described as an emotional rollercoaster (Steven Rhinesmith, Rhinesmith, S. (1984). *Returning home*. Ottawa: Canadian Bureau for International Education) provides ten steps that show the process of acculturation, including culture shock, that you may experience:

- Initial anxiety
- Initial elation
- Initial culture shock
- Superficial adjustment
- Depression-frustration
- Acceptance of host culture
- Return anxiety
- Return elation
- Re-entry shock
- Reintegration

Humans fear the unknown, and even if your tolerance for uncertainty is high, you may experience a degree of anxiety in anticipation of your arrival. At first the "honeymoon" period is observed, with a sense of elation at all the newfound wonders. You

may adjust superficially at first, learning where to get familiar foods or new ways to meet your basic needs. As you live in the new culture, divergence will become a trend and you'll notice many things that frustrate you. You won't anticipate the need for two hours at a bank for a transaction that once took five minutes, or could be handled over the internet, and find that businesses close during the mid-day, preventing you from accomplishing your goals. At this stage, you will feel that living in this new culture is simply exhausting. Many expats advise that this is the time to tough it out—if you give in to the temptation to make a visit back home, you will only prolong your difficult adjustment.

Over time, if you persevere, you will come to accept and adjust to your host culture, and learn how to accomplish your goals with less frustration and ease. You may come to appreciate several cultural values or traits, and come to embrace some aspects of your host culture. At some point, you will need to return to your first, or home, culture, but that transition will, in itself, bring a sense of anxiety. People and places change, the familiar is no longer so familiar, and you too have changed. You may once again be elated at your return and the familiar, and experience a sense of comfort in home and family, but culture shock may again be part of your adjustment. You may look at your home culture in a new way, and question why things are done a particular way that you have always considered normal. You may hold onto some of the cultural traits you adopted while living abroad, and begin the process of reintegration.

You may also begin to feel that the "grass is greener" in your host country, and long to return. Expatriates are often noted for "going native," or adopting the host culture's way of life, but even the most confirmed expats still gather to hear the familiar sound of their first language, and find community in people like themselves who have blended cultural boundaries on a personal level.



Figure 5.7.1: Monies of different currencies. (Unsplash License; Jason Leung via Unsplash)

Living and Working Abroad

In order to learn to swim, you have to get in the water, and all the research and preparation cannot take the place of direct experience. Your awareness of culture shock may help you adjust, and your preparation by learning some of the language will assist you, but know that living and working abroad take time and effort. Still, there are several guidelines that can serve you well as you start your new life in a strange land:

1. Be open and creative. People will eat foods that seem strange, or do things in a new way, and your openness and creativity can play a positive role in your adjustment. Staying close to your living quarters or surrounding yourself with similar expats can limit your exposure, and understanding, of the local cultures. While the familiar may be comfortable, and the new setting may be uncomfortable, you will learn much more about your host culture and yourself if you make the effort to be open to new experiences. Being open involves getting out of your comfort zone.
2. Self-reliance. Things that were once easy, or took little time, may now be challenging or consume your whole day. Focus on your own ability to resolve issues, learn new ways to get the job done, and be prepared to do new things.
3. Keep a balanced perspective. Your host culture isn't perfect. Humans aren't perfect, and neither was your home culture. Each location and cultural community has strengths you can learn from if you are open to them.
4. Patience is a virtue. Take your time and know a silent period is normal. The textbook language classes only provide a base

from which you will learn how people who live in the host country actually communicate. You didn't learn to walk in a day, and won't learn to successfully navigate this culture overnight either.
5. Be the student and teacher. You are learning as a new member of the community, but as a full member of your own culture, you can share your experiences as well.
6. Be an explorer. Get out and go beyond your boundaries when you feel safe and secure. Traveling to surrounding villages, or across neighboring borders, can expand your perspective and help you learn.
7. Protect yourself. Always keep all your essential documents, money, and medicines close to you, or where you know they will be safe. Trying to source a medicine in a country where you are not fluent in the language, or the names of remedies are different, can be a challenge. Your passport is essential to your safety and you need to keep it safe. You may also consider vaccination records, birth certificates, or business documents in the same way, keeping them safe and accessible. You may want to consider a "bug-out bag," with all the essentials you need, including food, water, keys, and small tools, as an essential part of planning in case of emergency.

Key Takeaways

- Preparation is key to a successful international assignment.
- Living and working abroad takes time, effort, and patience.

Exercise 5.7.1

1. Research one organization in a business or industry that relates to your major and has an international presence. Find a job announcement or similar document that discusses the business and its international activities. Share and compare with classmates.
2. Conduct a search on expat networks including online forum. Briefly describe your findings and share them with classmates.
3. What would be the hardest part of an overseas assignment for you and why? What would be the easiest part of an overseas assignment for you and why?
4. Find an advertisement for an international assignment. Note the qualifications, and share them with classmates.
5. Find an article or other first-person account of someone's experience on an international assignment. Share your results with your classmates.

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5.8: Summary

In this chapter, we explored intercultural and international communication, observing the wide range of differences across economic, legal, and management areas. It is a distinct challenge to work abroad, and we've discussed the international assignment, culture shock, and tips for success. Learning to maneuver the day to day tasks as well as trade, business, and legal issues in another country is difficult, but an awareness of the importance of group communication and its impact on our interactions is an important first step.

Review Questions

1. How would you describe a theory x manager's actions?
2. How would you describe a theory y manager's actions?
3. How would you recognize culture shock?
4. What are three steps you can take to prepare for a trip or living abroad?
5. What are the two common legal systems in the world? Please describe them.

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5.9: Additional Resources

Visit the website of culture scholar Edward T. Hall. http://www.edwardthall.com/index.html

Learn about intercultural awareness in the classroom by reading this article. Pedelty, Mark (2001). Self as other: An intercultural performance exercise. *Multicultural Education*, Spring. Accessed 5/2/09 at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3935/is_200104/ai_n8937001/.

Visit these sites to explore the history and traditions of some famous American businesses. www.ford.com/about-ford/heritage and http://www.aboutmcdonalds.com/mcd/our_company/mcd_history.html

Learn more about Geert Hofstede's research on culture by exploring his website. www.geert-hofstede.com/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml

Read advice from the U.S. Department of State on living abroad. http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/living_1243.html

Visit the blog of a young California woman who, after college graduation, accepted a job as an au pair in Germany. http://www.aupairingermany.blogspot.com/

Visit ExpatExchange: A World of Friends Abroad to learn about the opportunities, experiences, and emotions of people living and working in foreign countries and cultures worldwide. http://www.expatexchange.com/newsarchiveall.cfm

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6: IMPROVING VERBAL AND NONVERBAL GROUP INTERACTIONS

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6.5: Types of Nonverbal Communication

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6.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

___ 1. phat	A. Weird, strange, unfair or not acceptable
___ 2. dis	B. Something stupid or thoughtless, deserv
___ 3. wack	C. Excellent, together, cool
___ 4. Smack	D. Old car, generally in poor but serviceable
___ 5. down	E. Insult, put down, to dishonor, to display c
___ 6. hooptie	F. Get out or leave quickly
___ 7. my bad	G. Cool, very interesting, fantastic or amazi
___ 8. player	H. To be in agreement
___ 9. tight	I. Personal mistake
___ 10. jet	J. Person dating with multiple partners, ofte

1. Can you match the words above to their meaning?
2. Do people use the same language in all settings and contexts? Your first answer might be “sure,” but try this test. For a couple of hours or even a day, pay attention to how you speak, and how others speak: the words you say, how you say them, the pacing and timing used in each context. For example, at home in the morning, in the coffee shop before work or class, during a break at work with peers or a break between classes with classmates all count as contexts. Observe how and what language is used in each context and to what degree they are the same or different.
3. It’s not just what you say but how you say it. Choose a speech to watch. Examples may include famous speeches by historical figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. or Winston Churchill, current elected officials, or perhaps candidates for local and state office that may be televised. Other examples could be from a poetry slam, a rap performance, or a movie. Watch the presentation without sound and see what you observe. Does the speaker seem comfortable and confident? Aggressive or timid? If possible, repeat the speech a second time with the sound on. Do your perceptions change? What patterns do you observe?
4. Invasion of space. When someone “invades” your space, how do you feel? Threatened, surprised, interested, or repulsed? When can learn a lot from each other as we come to be more aware of normative space expectations and boundaries. Set aside 10 minutes where you can “people watch” in a public setting. Make a conscious effort to notice how far apart they stand from people they communicate. Record your results. Your best estimate is fine and there is no need to interrupt people, just watch and record. Consider noting if they are male or female, or focus only on same-sex conversations. When you have approximate distances for at least 20 conversations or 10 minutes have passed, add up the results and look for a pattern. Compare your findings with those of a classmate.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee and just as hard to sleep after.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

The meanings of words are not in the words; they are in us.Hayakawa, S. I. (1978). Language in thought and action. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, p. 212.

S. I. Hayakawa

The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.

Peter F. Drucker

Getting Started

Successful group communication is often associated with writing and speaking well, being articulate or proficient with words. Yet, in the quote above, the famous linguist S. I. Hayakawa wisely observes that meaning lies within us, not in the words we use. Indeed, communication in this text is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning. Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An introduction to human communication: understanding and sharing*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. When you communicate you are sharing meaning with one or more other people—this may include members of your family, your community, your work community, your school, or any group that considers itself a group.

How do you communicate? How do you think? We use language as a system to create and exchange meaning with one another, and the types of words we use influence both our perceptions and others interpretation of our meanings. What kinds of words would you use to describe your thoughts and feelings, your preferences in music, cars, food, or other things that matter to you?

Imagine that you are using written or spoken language to create a bridge over which you hope to transport meaning, much like a gift or package, to your receiver. You hope that your meaning arrives relatively intact, so that your receiver receives something like what you sent. Will the package look the same to them on the receiving end? Will they interpret the package, its wrapping and colors, the way you intended? That depends. What is certain is that they will interpret it based on their framework of experience. The package represents your words arranged in a pattern that both the source (you) and the receiver (your group) can interpret. The words as a package try to contain the meaning and deliver it intact, but they themselves are not the meaning. That lies within us. So is the package empty? Are the words we use empty? Without us to give them life and meaning, the answer is yes. Knowing what words will correspond to meanings that your group members hold within themselves will help you communicate more effectively. Professional jargon can be quite appropriate, even preferred, when everyone around the table understands the terminology. Knowing what meanings lie within you is your door to understanding yourself.

In this chapter's third Introductory Exercise, we focus on how a person presents ideas, not the ideas themselves. Have you ever been in class and found it hard to listen to the professor, not because he or she wasn't well informed or the topic wasn't interesting or important to you, but because the style of presentation didn't engage you as a listener? If your answer is yes, then you know that you want to avoid making the same mistake when you share information with your group or team. It's not always what you say, but how you say it that makes a difference. We sometimes call this "body language," or "nonverbal communication," and it is a key aspect of effective group communication.

One common concern is when to present your idea within a group setting to make sure it gets considered. Timing is an important aspect of nonverbal communication, but trying to understand what a single example of timing means is challenging. Context may make a difference. For example, if you have known the group member for years and they have always responded positively to your input, you may not have reason for concern. If their behavior doesn't match what you are familiar with, and this sudden, unexplained change in the established pattern may mean that you need to follow up. Group dynamics, like communication itself, is constantly changing.

This chapter discusses the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication. It examines how the characteristics of language interact in ways that can both improve and diminish effective group communication. We will examine how language plays a significant role in how you perceive and interact with the world, and how culture, language, education, gender, race, and ethnicity all influence this dynamic process. We will look at ways to avoid miscommunication and focus on constructive ways to improve effective group communication.

Answers

Introductory Exercises

Answers to #1:

1-C, 2-E, 3-A, 4-B, 5-H, 6-D, 7-I, 8-J, 9-G, 10-F

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6.1: Principles of Verbal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Identify and describe five key principles of verbal communication

Verbal communication is based on several basic principles. In this section, we'll examine each principle and explore how it influences everyday communication. Whether it's a simple conversation with a co-worker or a formal sales presentation to a board of directors, these principles apply to all contexts of communication.

Language Has Rules

Language is a code, a collection of symbols, letters, or words with arbitrary meanings that are arranged according to the rules of syntax and are used to communicate. Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An introduction to human communication: understanding and sharing*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, p. 54.

In this chapter's Introductory Exercise #1, were you able to successfully match the terms to their meanings? Did you find that some of the definitions did not match your understanding of the terms? The words themselves have meaning within their specific context or language community. But without a grasp of that context, "my bad" may have just sounded odd. Your familiarity with the words and phrases may have made the exercise easy for you, but it isn't an easy exercise for everyone. The words themselves only carry meaning if you know the understood meaning and have a grasp of their context to interpret them correctly.

There are three types of rules which govern or control our use of words. You may not be aware that they exist, or that they influence you, but from the moment you text a word or speak, these rules govern your communications. Think of a word that is all right to use in certain situations and not in others. Why? And how do you know?

Syntactic rules govern the order of words in a sentence. In some languages, such as German, syntax or word order is strictly prescribed. English syntax, in contrast, is relatively flexible and open to style. Still, there are definite combinations of words that are correct and incorrect in English. It is equally correct to say, "Please come to the meeting in the auditorium at 12 noon on Wednesday" or, "Please come to the meeting on Wednesday at 12 noon in the auditorium." But it would be incorrect to say, "Please to the auditorium on Wednesday in the meeting at 12 noon come."

Semantic rules govern the meaning of words and how to interpret them. Martinich, A. P. (ed.) (1996), *The philosophy of language*, 3rd edition. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press. Semantics is the study of meaning in language. It considers what words mean or are intended to mean, as opposed to their sound, spelling, grammatical function, and so on. Does a given statement refer to other statements already communicated? Is the statement true or false? Does it carry a certain intent? What does the sender or receiver need to know in order to understand its meaning? These are questions addressed by semantic rules.

Contextual rules govern meaning and word choice according to context and social custom. For example, suppose Greg is talking about his co-worker, Carol, and says, "She always meets her deadlines." This may seem like a straightforward statement that would not vary according to context or social custom. But suppose another co-worker asked Greg, "How do you like working with Carol?" and, after a long pause, Greg answered, "She always meets her deadlines." Are there factors in the context of the question, or social customs, that would influence the meaning of Greg's statement?

Even when we follow these linguistic rules, miscommunication is possible, for our cultural context or community may hold different meanings for the words used than the source intended. Words attempt to represent the ideas we want to communicate, but they are sometimes limited by factors beyond our control. They often require us to negotiate their meaning, or to explain what we mean in more than one way, in order to create a common vocabulary. You may need to state a word, define it, and provide an example in order to come to an understanding with your team about the meaning of your message.

Our Reality Is Shaped by Our Language

What would your life be like if you had been raised in a country other than the one where you grew up? Malaysia, for example?

Italy? Afghanistan? or Bolivia? Or suppose you had been born male instead of female, or vice versa. Or had been raised in the northeastern U.S. instead of the Southwest, the Midwest instead of the Southeast. In any of these cases, you would not have the same identity you have today. You would have learned another set of customs, values, traditions, other language patterns, and ways of communicating. You would be a different person who communicated in different ways.

You didn't choose your birth, customs, values, traditions, or language. You didn't even choose to learn to read this sentence or to speak with those of your community, but somehow you accomplished this challenging task. As an adult, you can choose to see things from a new or diverse perspective, but what language do you think with? It's not just the words themselves, or even how they are organized, that makes communication such a challenge. Your language itself, ever-changing and growing, in many ways, determines your reality. Whorf, B. L. (1956). Science and linguistics. In J. B. Carroll (Ed.), *Language, thought, and reality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 207–219. You can't escape your language or culture completely, and always see the world through a shade or tint of what you've been taught, learned, or experienced.

Suppose you were raised in a culture that values formality. At work, you pride yourself on being well dressed. It's part of your expectation for yourself and, whether you admit it or not, for others. Many people in your organization, however, come from less formal cultures, and they prefer "business casual" attire. You may be able to recognize the difference, and because humans are highly adaptable, you may get used to a less formal dress expectation, but it won't change your fundamental values.

Thomas Kuhn, Kuhn, T. (1996). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. makes the point that "paradigms, or a clear point of view involving theories, laws, and/or generalizations that provide a framework for understanding, tend to form and become set around key validity claims, or statements of the way things work."McLean, S. (2003). *The basics of speech communication*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, p. 50. The paradigm, or worldview, may be individual or collective. And paradigm shifts are often painful. New ideas are always suspect and usually opposed, without any other reason than because they are not already common. Ackerman, B. A. (1980). *Social justice in the liberal state*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

As an example, consider the earth-heavens paradigm. Medieval Europeans believed that the Earth was flat and that the edge was to be avoided, otherwise you might fall off. For centuries after the acceptance of a "round earth" belief, the earth was still believed to be the center of the universe, with the sun and all planets revolving around it. Eventually, someone challenged the accepted view. Over time, despite considerable resistance to protect the status quo, people came to better understand the earth and its relationship to the heavens.

In the same way, the makes of the Intel microprocessor once thought that a slight calculation error, unlikely to negatively impact 99.9% of users, was better left as is and hidden. Emery, V. (1996). The pentium chip story: A learning experience. Accessed at www.emery.com/1e/pentium.htm. Like many things in the information age, the error was discovered by a user of the product, became publicly known, and damaged Intel's credibility and sales for years. Recalls and prompt, public communication in response to similar issues are now the industry-wide protocol.

Paradigms involve premises that are taken as fact. Of course, the Earth is the center of the universe, of course, no one will ever be impacted by a mathematical error so far removed from most people's everyday use of computers, and of course, you never danced the macarena at a company party. We now can see how those facts, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas of "cool" are overturned.

How does this insight lends itself to your understanding of verbal communication? Do all people share the same paradigms, words, or ideas? Will you be presenting ideas outside of your group's frame of reference? Outside of their worldview? Just as you look back at your macarena performance, get outside of your own frame of reference and consider how to best communicate your thoughts, ideas and points to a group that may not have your same experiences or understanding of the topic.

By taking into account your group's background and experience, you can become more "other-oriented," a successful strategy to narrow the gap between you and your group members. Our experiences are like sunglasses, tinting the way we see the world. Our challenge, perhaps, is to avoid letting them function as blinders, like those worn by working horses, which create tunnel vision and limit our perspective.

Language Is Arbitrary and Symbolic

As we have discussed previously, words, by themselves, do not have any inherent meaning. Humans give meaning to them, and their meanings change across time. The arbitrary symbols, including letters, numbers, and punctuation marks, stand for concepts in our experience. We have to negotiate the meaning of the word "home," and define it, through visual images or dialogue, in order to communicate with our team or group.

Words have two types of meanings: denotative and connotative. Attention to both is necessary to reduce the possibility of misinterpretation. The denotative meaning is the common meaning, often found in the dictionary. The connotative meaning is often not found in the dictionary but in the community of users itself. It can involve an emotional association with a word, positive or negative, and can be individual or collective, but is not universal.

With a common vocabulary in both denotative and connotative terms, effective communication becomes a more distinct possibility. But what if we have to transfer meaning from one vocabulary to another? That is essentially what we are doing when we translate a message. In such cases, language and culture can sometimes make for interesting twists. *The New York Times,* Sterngold, J. (1998). Lost, and gained, in the translation. *New York Times* (November 15). noted that the title of the 1998 film *There's Something about Mary* proved difficult to translate when it was released in foreign markets. The movie was renamed to capture the idea and to adapt to local groups' frame of reference: In Poland, where blonde jokes are popular and common, the film title (translated back to English for our use) was *For the Love of a Blonde*. In France, *Mary at All Costs* communicated the idea, while in Thailand *My True Love Will Stand All Outrageous Events* dropped the reference to Mary altogether.

Capturing our ideas with words is a challenge when both conversational partners speak the same language, but across languages, cultures, and generations the complexity multiplies exponentially.

Language Is Abstract

Words represent aspects of our environment, and can play an important role in that environment. They may describe an important idea or concept, but the very act of labeling and invoking a word simplifies and distorts our concept of the thing itself. This ability to simplify concepts makes it easier to communicate, but it sometimes makes us lose track of the specific meaning we are trying to convey through abstraction. Let's look at one important part of life in America: transportation.

Take the word "car" and consider what it represents. Freedom, status, or style? Does what you drive say something about you? To describe a car as a form of transportation is to consider one of its most basic, and universal aspects. This level of abstraction means we lose individual distinctions between cars until we impose another level of labeling. We could divide cars into sedans (or saloon) and coupe (or coupé) simply by counting the number of doors (i.e., four versus two). We could also examine cost, size, engine displacement, fuel economy, and style. We might arrive at an American classic, the Mustang, and consider it for all of these factors and its legacy as an accessible American sports car. To describe it in terms of transportation only is to lose the distinctiveness of what makes a Mustang a desirable American sports car.

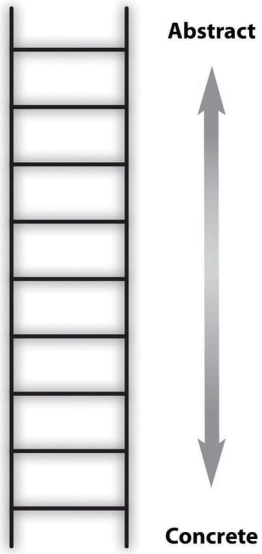


Figure 6.1.1: Abstraction Ladder; Source: Adapted from DeVito, J. (1999). *Messages: building interpersonal communication skills*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, p. 119.

We can see how, at the extreme level of abstraction, a car is like any other automobile. We can also see how, at the base level, the concept is most concrete. "Mustang," the name given to one of the best selling American sports cars, is a specific make and model, with specific markings, size, shape and coloring and a relationship with a classic design. By focusing on concrete terms and examples, you help your group grasp your content.

Language Organizes and Classifies Reality

We use language to create and express some sense of order in our world. We often group words that represent concepts by their physical proximity or their similarity to one another. For example, in biology, animals with similar traits are classified together. An ostrich may be said to be related to an emu and a nandu, but you wouldn't group an ostrich with an elephant or a salamander. Our ability to organize is useful but artificial. The systems of organization we use are not part of the natural world but an expression of our views about the natural world.

What is a doctor? A nurse? A teacher? If a male came to mind in the case of the word "doctor," but a female came to mind in reference to "nurse" or "teacher," then your habits of mind include a gender bias. There was once a time in the United States where that gender stereotype was more than just a stereotype, it was the general rule, the social custom, the norm. Now it no longer holds true. More and more men are training to serve as nurses, and *Business Week* noted in 2008 that one-third of the U.S. physician workforce was female. Arnst, C. (2005). Are there too many women doctors? As an MD shortage looms, female physicians and their flexible hours are taking some of the blame. *Business Week* (April 17).

We all use systems of classification to navigate through the world. Imagine how confusing life would be if we had no categories such as male/female, young/old, tall/short, doctor/nurse/teacher! These categories only become problematic when we use them to uphold biases and ingrained assumptions that are no longer valid. We may assume, through our biases, that elements are related when they have no relationship at all. As a result, our thinking is limited and our grasp of reality impaired. It is often easier to spot these biases in others, but it behooves us as communicators to become aware of them in ourselves. Holding them unconsciously will limit our thinking, our grasp of reality, and our ability to communicate successfully.

Key Takeaway

- Language is a system governed by rules of syntax, semantics, and context; and we use paradigms to understand the world and frame our communications.

Exercise 6.1.1

1. Write at least five examples of English sentences with correct syntax. Then rewrite each sentence, using the same words in an order that displays incorrect syntax. Compare your results with those of your classmates.
2. Think of at least five words whose denotative meaning differs from their connotative meaning. Use each word in two sentences, one employing the denotative meaning and the other employing the connotative. Compare your results with those of your classmates.
3. Do you associate meaning with the car someone drives? Does it say something about them? List five cars you observe people you know driving and discuss each one, noting whether you perceive it says something about them or not. Share and compare with classmates.

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6.2: Language Can Be an Obstacle to Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate six ways in which language can be an obstacle to communication

As you use language to make sense of your experiences, As part of our discussion you no doubt came to see that language and verbal communication can work both for you and against you. Language allows you to communicate, but it also allows you to miscommunicate and misunderstand. The same system we use to express our most intimate thoughts can be frustrating when it fails to capture our thoughts, to represent what we want to express, and to reach our group. For all its faults, though, it is the best system we have, and part of improving the communication process is the clear identification of where it breaks down. Anticipate where a word or expression may need more clarification and you will be on your way to reducing errors and improving verbal communication.

In an article titled "The Miscommunication Gap," Susan Washburn lists several undesirable results of poor communication in business: Washburn, S. (2008). The miscommunication gap. *ESI Horizons 9*:02 (February). Accessed at http://www.esi-intl.com/public/Library/html/200802HorizonsArticle1.asp?UnityID=8522516.1290.

- Damaged relationships
- Loss of productivity
- Inefficiency and rework
- Conflict
- Missed opportunities
- Schedule slippage
- Scope creep...or leap
- Wasted resources
- Unclear or unmet requirements

In this section, we discuss how words can serve either as a bridge, or a barrier, to understanding and communication of meaning. Our goals of effective and efficient group communication mean an inherent value of words and terms that keep the bridge clear and free of obstacles.

Cliché

A cliché is a once-clever word or phrase that has lost its impact through overuse. If you spoke or wrote in clichés, how would your group react? Let's try it. How do you react when you read this sentence: "A cliché is something to avoid like the plague, for it is nothing but a tired old warhorse, and if the shoe were on the other foot you too would have an axe to grind"? As you can see, the problem with clichés is that they often sound silly or boring.

Clichés are sometimes a symptom of lazy communication—the person using the cliché hasn't bothered to search for original words to convey the intended meaning. Clichés lose their impact because readers and listeners tend to gloss over them, assuming their common meaning while ignoring your specific use of them. As a result, they can be obstacles to successful communication.

Jargon

Let's pretend you've been assigned to the task of preparing a short presentation on your company's latest product for a group of potential customers. It's a big responsibility. You only have one opportunity to get it right. You will need to do extensive planning and preparation, and your effort, if done well, will produce a presentation that is smooth and confident, looking simple to the casual group member.

What words do you use to communicate information about your product? Is your group of clients familiar with your field and its specialized terms? As potential customers, they are probably somewhat knowledgeable in the field, but not to the extent that you and your co-workers are; even less so compared to the "techies" who developed the product. For your presentation to succeed,

your challenge is to walk a fine line between using too much profession-specific language on the one hand, and "talking down" to your group on the other hand.

While your potential customers may not understand all the engineering and schematic detail terms involved in the product, they do know what they and their organizations are looking for in considering a purchase. Your solution may be to focus on common ground—what you know of their past history in terms of contracting services or buying products from your company. What can you tell from their historical purchases? If your research shows that they place a high value on saving time, you can focus your presentation on the time-saving aspects of your new product and leave the technical terms to the user's manual.

Jargon is an occupation-specific language used by people in a given profession. Jargon does not necessarily imply formal education, but instead focuses on the language people in a profession use to communicate with each other. Members of the information technology department have a distinct group of terms that refer to common aspects in their field. Members of the marketing department, or advertising, or engineering, research, and development also have sets of terms they use within their professional community. People who work with sewing machines, or in automobile factories, or in agriculture also have jargon in their profession, independent of formal education.

Whether or not to use jargon is often a judgment call, and one that is easier to make in speaking than in writing. In an oral context, we may be able to use a technical term and instantly know whether or not they "got it." If they didn't, we can define it on the spot. In written language, we lack that immediate response and must attend more to the context of receiver. The more we learn about our group, company, or corporation, the better we can tailor our chosen words. If we lack information or want our document to be understood by a variety of readers, it pays to use common words and avoid jargon.

Slang

Think for a moment about the words and expressions you use when you communicate with your best friends. If a co-worker was to hang out with you and your friends, would they understand all the words you use, the music you listen to, the stories you tell and the way you tell them? Probably not, because you and your friends probably use certain words and expressions in ways that have special meaning to you.

This special form of language, which in some ways resembles jargon, is slang. Slang is the use of existing or newly invented words to take the place of standard or traditional words with the intent of adding an unconventional, non-standard, humorous or rebellious effect. It differs from jargon in that it is used in informal contexts, among friends or members of a certain age group, rather than by professionals in a certain industry.

If you say something is "phat," you may mean "cool," which is now a commonly understood slang word, but your co-worker may not know this. As word "phat" moves into the mainstream, it will be replaced and adapted by the communities that use it.

Since our emphasis in group communication is on clarity, and a slang word runs the risk of creating misinterpretation, it is generally best to avoid slang. You may see the marketing department use a slang word to target a specific, well-researched group, but for our purposes of your general presentation introducing a product or service, we will stick to clear, common words that are easily understood.

Sexist and Racist Language

Some forms of slang involve put-downs of people belonging to various groups. This type of slang often crosses the line and becomes offensive, not only to the groups that are being put down, but also to others who may hear it. In today's workplace, there is no place where sexist or racist language is appropriate. In fact, using such language can be a violation of company policies and in some cases anti-discrimination laws.

Sexist language uses gender as a discriminating factor. Referring to adult women as "girls" or using the word "man" to refer to humankind are examples of sexist language. In a more blatant example, several decades ago a woman was the first female sales representative in her company's sales force. The men resented her and were certain they could outsell her, so they held a "Beat the Broad" sales contest. Today, a contest with a name like that would be out of the question.

Racist language discriminates against members of a given race or ethnic group. While it may be obvious that racial and ethnic slurs have no place in group communication, there can also be issues with more subtle references to "*those* people" or "you know how *they* are." If race or ethnicity genuinely enters into the subject of your communication—in a drugstore, for example, there

is often an aisle for black hair care products—then naturally it makes sense to mention customers belonging to that group. The key is that mentioning racial and ethnic groups should be done with the same respect you would desire if someone else were referring to groups you belong to.

Euphemisms

In seeking to avoid offensive slang, it is important not to assume that a euphemism is the solution. A euphemism involves substituting an acceptable word for an offensive, controversial, or unacceptable one that conveys the same or similar meaning. The problem is that the group still knows what the expression means, and understands that the communicator is choosing a euphemism for the purpose of sounding more educated or genteel.

Euphemisms can also be used sarcastically or humorously—"H-E-double-hockey-sticks," for example, is a euphemism for "hell" that may be amusing in some contexts. If your friend has just gotten a new job as a janitor, you may jokingly ask, "How's my favorite sanitation engineer this morning?" But such humor is not always appreciated and can convey disrespect even when none is intended.

Euphemistic words are not always disrespectful, however. For example, when referring to a death, it is considered polite in many parts of the U.S. to say that the person "passed" or "passed away," rather than the relatively insensitive word, "died." Similarly, people say, "I need to find a bathroom" when it is well understood they are not planning to take a bath.

Still, these polite euphemisms are exceptions to the rule. Euphemisms are generally more of a hindrance than a help to understanding. In group communication the goal is clarity, and the very purpose of euphemism is to be vague. To be clear, choose words that mean what you intend to convey.

Doublespeak

Doublespeak is the deliberate use of words to disguise, obscure, or change meaning. Doublespeak is often present in bureaucratic communication, where it can serve to cast a person or an organization in a less unfavorable light than plain language would do.

When you ask a friend, "How does it feel to be downsized?" you are using a euphemism to convey humor, possibly even dark humor. Your friend's employer was likely not joking, though, when the action was announced as a "downsizing" rather than as a "layoff" or "dismissal." In military communications, "collateral damage" is often used to refer to civilian deaths, but no mention of the dead is present. You may recall the "Bailout" of the U.S. economy in 2008, which quickly came to be called the "Rescue" and finally the "Buy In" as the U.S. bought interests in nine regional and national banks. The meaning changed from saving an economic system or its institutions to investing in them. This change of terms, and the attempt to change the meaning of the actions, became common in comedy routines across the nation.

Doublespeak can be quite dangerous when it is used deliberately to obscure meaning and the listener cannot anticipate or predict consequences based on the (in)effective communication. When a medical insurance company says "we insure companies with up to 20,000 lives," is it possible to forget that those "lives" are people? Ethical issues quickly arise when humans are dehumanized and referred to as "objects" or "subjects." When genocide is referred to as "ethnic cleansing," is it any less deadly than when called by its true name?

If the meaning was successfully hidden from the group, one might argue that the doublespeak was in fact effective. But our goal continues to be clear and concise communication with a minimum of misinterpretation. Learn to recognize doublespeak by what it does not communicate as well as what it communicates.

Each of these six obstacles to communication contribute to misunderstanding and miscommunication, intentionally or unintentionally. If you recognize one of them, you can address it right away. You can redirect a question and get to essential meaning, rather than leaving with a misunderstanding that impacts the relationship. In group communication, our goal of clear and concise communication remains constant, but we can never forget that trust is the foundation for effective communication. Part of our effort must include reinforcing the relationship inherent between source and receiver, and one effective step towards that goal is to reduce obstacles to effective communication.

Key Takeaway

- To avoid obstacles to communication, avoid clichés, jargon, slang, sexist and racist language, euphemisms, and doublespeak.

Exercise 6.2.1

1. Identify at least five common clichés and look up their origins. Try to understand how and when each phrase became a cliché. Share your findings with your classmates.
2. Using your library's microfilm files or an online database, look through newspaper articles from the 1950s or earlier. Find at least one article that uses sexist or racist language. What makes it racist or sexist? How would a journalist convey the same information today? Share your findings with your class.
3. Identify one slang term and one euphemism you know is used in your community, among your friends, or where you work. Share and compare with classmates.

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6.3: Improving Verbal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate six strategies for improving verbal communication

Throughout the chapter, we have visited examples and stories that highlight the importance of verbal communication. To end the chapter, we need to consider how language can be used to enlighten or deceive, encourage or discourage, empower or destroy. By defining the terms we use and choosing precise words, we will maximize our group's understanding of our message. In addition, it is important to consider the group members, control your tone, check for understanding, and focus on results. Recognizing the power of verbal communication is the first step to understanding its role and impact on the communication process.

Define Your Terms

Even when you are careful to craft your message clearly and concisely, not everyone will understand every word you say or write. As an effective group communicator, you know it is your responsibility to give every group member every advantage in understanding your meaning. Yet your presentation would fall flat if you tried to define each and every term—you would end up sounding like a dictionary!

The solution is to be aware of any words you are using that may not be familiar to everyone in your group, and provide clues to meaning in the process of making and supporting your points. Give examples to illustrate each concept. Use parallels from everyday life. Rephrase unfamiliar terms in different words. In summary, keep your group members in mind and imagine yourself in their place. This will help you to adjust your writing level and style to their needs, maximizing the likelihood that your message will be understood.

Choose Precise Words

To increase understanding, choose precise words that paint as vivid and accurate a mental picture as possible for your group. If you use language that is vague or abstract, your meaning may be lost or misinterpreted. Your document or presentation will also be less dynamic and interesting than it could be.

Table 6.1 lists some examples of phrases that are imprecise and precise. Which one evokes a more dynamic image in your imagination?

Table 6.1 Precisely What Are You Saying?

The famous writer William Safire died in 2009; he was over 70.	The former Nixon speech writer, language authority, and New York Times columnist William Safire died of pancreatic cancer in 2009; he was 79.
Clumber spaniels are large dogs.	The Clumber Spaniel Club of America describes the breed as a "long, low, substantial dog," standing 17 to 20 inches high and weighing 55 to 80 pounds.
It is important to eat a healthy diet during pregnancy.	Eating a diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean meats, low-fat dairy products can improve your health during pregnancy and boost your chances of having a healthy baby.

We are making good progress on the project.	In the two weeks since inception, our four-member team has achieved three of the six objectives we identified for project completion; we are on track to complete the project in another three to four weeks.
For the same amount of spend, we expected more value added.	We have examined several proposals in the $10,000 range, and they all offer more features than what we see in the $12,500 system ABC Corp. is offering.
Officers were called to the scene.	Responding to a 911 call, State Police Officers Arellano and Chavez sped to the intersection of County Route 53 and State Highway 21.
The victim went down the street.	The victim ran screaming to a neighbor's house.
Several different colorways are available.	The silk jacquard fabric is available in ivory, moss, cinnamon, and topaz colorways.
This smartphone has more applications than customers can imagine.	At last count, the BlueBerry Tempest has more than 500 applications, many costing 99 cents or less; users can get real-time sports scores, upload videos to TwitVid, browse commuter train schedules, edit emails before forwarding, and find recipes—but so far, it doesn't do the cooking for you!
A woman was heckled when she spoke at a health care event.	On August 25, 2009, Rep. Frank Pallone (Democrat of New Jersey's 6th congressional district) hosted a "town hall" meeting on health care reform where many audience members heckled and booed a woman in a wheelchair as she spoke about the need for affordable health insurance and her fears that she might lose her home.

Consider Your Group Members

In addition to precise words and clear definitions, contextual clues are important to guide your group members as they read. If you use a jargon word, which may be appropriate for many people in your group, follow it by a common reference that clearly relates its essential meaning. With this positive strategy you will meet group member's needs with diverse backgrounds. Internal summaries tell us what we've heard and forecast what is to come. It's not just the words, but also how people hear them that counts.

If you say the magic words "in conclusion," you set in motion a set of expectations that you are about to wrap it up. If, however, you introduce a new point and continue to speak, the group will perceive an expectancy violation and hold you accountable. You said the magic words but didn't honor them. One of the best ways to display respect for your group is to not exceed the expected time in a presentation or length in a document. Your careful attention to contextual clues will demonstrate that you are clearly considering your group.

Take Control of Your Tone

Does your writing or speech sound pleasant and agreeable? Or does it come across as stuffy, formal, bloated, ironic, sarcastic, flowery, rude, or inconsiderate? Recognition may be simple, but getting a handle on how to influence tone and to make your voice match your intentions takes time and skill.

One useful tip is to read your document out loud before you deliver it, just as you would practice a presentation before you present it to your group. Sometimes hearing your own words can reveal their tone, helping you decide whether it is correct or appropriate. Another way is to listen or watch others' presentations that have been described with terms associated with tone. Martin Luther King Jr. had one style while President Barack Obama has another. You can learn from both. Don't just take the word of one critic but if several point to a speech as an example of pompous eloquence, and you don't want to come across in your presentation as pompous, you may learn what to avoid.

Check for Understanding

When we talk to each other face to face, seeing if someone understood you isn't all that difficult. Even if they really didn't get it, you can see, ask questions, and clarify right away. That gives oral communication, particularly live interaction, a distinct advantage. Use this immediacy for feedback to your advantage. Make time for feedback and plan for it. Ask clarifying questions. Share your presentation with more than one person, and choose people that have similar characteristics to your anticipated group or team.

If you were going to present to a group that you knew in advance was of a certain age, sex, or professional background, it would only make sense to connect with someone from that group prior to your actual performance to check and see if what you have created and what they expect are similar. In oral communication, feedback is core component of the communication model and we can often see it, hear it, and it takes less effort to assess it.

Be Results Oriented

At the end of the day, the assignment has to be complete. It can be a challenge to balance the need for attention to detail with the need to arrive at the end product—and its due date. Stephen Covey, Covey, S. (1989). *The seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: Simon & Schuster. suggests beginning with the end in mind as one strategy for success. If you have done your preparation, know your assignment goals, desired results, have learned about your group members and tailored the message to their expectations, then you are well on your way to completing the task. No document or presentation is perfect, but the goal itself is worthy of your continued effort for improvement.

Here the key is to know when further revision will not benefit the presentation and to shift the focus to test marketing, asking for feedback, or simply sharing it with a mentor or co-worker for a quick review. Finding balance while engaging in an activity that requires a high level of attention to detail can be challenge for any communicator, but it is helpful to keep the end in mind.

Key Takeaway

- To improve communication, define your terms, choose precise words, consider your group members, control your tone, check for understanding, and aim for results.

Exercise 6.3.1

1. Choose a piece of writing from a profession you are unfamiliar with. For example, if you are studying biology, choose an excerpt from a book on fashion design. Identify several terms you are unfamiliar with, terms that may be considered jargon. How does the writer help you understand the meaning of these terms? Could the writer make them easier to understand? Share your findings with your class.
2. In your chosen profession, identify ten jargon words, define them, and share them with the class.
3. Describe a simple process, from brushing your teeth to opening the top of a bottle, in as precise terms as possible. Present to the class.

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6.4: Principles of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate nonverbal communication and describe its role in the communication process
2. Understand and explain the principles of nonverbal communication

Nonverbal Communication Is Fluid

Chances are you have had many experiences where words were misunderstood, or where the meaning of words was unclear. When it comes to nonverbal communication, meaning is even harder to discern. We can sometimes tell what people are communicating through their nonverbal communication, but there is no foolproof "dictionary" of how to interpret nonverbal messages. Nonverbal communication is the process of conveying a message without the use of words. It can include gestures and facial expressions, tone of voice, timing, posture and where you stand as you communicate. It can help or hinder the clear understanding of your message, but it doesn't reveal (and can even mask) what you are really thinking. Nonverbal communication is far from simple, and its complexity makes our study, and our understanding, a worthy but challenging goal.

Where does a wink start and a nod end? Nonverbal communication involves the entire body, the space it occupies and dominates, the time it interacts, and not only what is not said, but how it is not said. Confused? Try to focus on just on element of nonverbal communication and it will soon get lost among all the other stimuli. Let's consider eye contact. What does it mean by itself without context, or chin position, or eyebrows to flag interest or signal a threat? Nonverbal action flows almost seamlessly from one to the next, making it a challenge to interpret one element, or even a series of elements.

We perceive time as linear, flowing along in a straight line. We did one task, we're doing another task now, and we are planning on doing something else all the time. Sometimes we place more emphasis on the future, or the past, forgetting that we are actually living in the present moment whether we focus on "the now" or not. Nonverbal communication is always in motion, as long as we are, and is never the same twice.

Nonverbal communication is irreversible. In written communication you can write a clarification, correction, or retraction. While it never makes the original statement go completely away, it does allow for correction. Unlike written communication, oral communication may allow "do-overs" on the spot: you can explain and restate, hoping to clarify your point. You can also dig the hole you are in just a little bit deeper. The old sayings "When you find yourself in a hole, stop digging" and "Open mouth, insert foot" can sometimes apply to oral communications. We've all said something we would give anything to take back, but we all know we can't. Oral communication, like written communication, allows for some correction, but it still doesn't erase the original message or its impact. Nonverbal communication takes it one step further. You can't separate one nonverbal action from the context of all the other verbal and nonverbal communication acts, and you can't take it back.

In a speech, nonverbal communication is continuous in the sense that it is always occurring, and because it is so fluid, it can be hard to determine where one nonverbal message starts and another stops. Words can be easily identified and isolated, but if we try to single out agroup member's gestures, smile, or stance without looking at how they all come together in context, we may miss the point and draw the wrong conclusion. You need to be conscious of this aspect of public speaking because, to quote another old saying, "Actions speak louder than words." This is true in the sense that people often pay more attention to your nonverbal expressions more than your words. As a result, nonverbal communication is a powerful way to contribute to (or detract from) your success in communicating your message to the group.

Nonverbal Communication Is Fast

Let's pretend you are at your computer at work. You see that an e-mail has arrived, but you are right in the middle of tallying a spreadsheet whose numbers just don't add up. You see that the e-mail is from a co-worker and you click on it. The subject line reads "pink slips." You could interpret this to mean a suggestion for a Halloween costume, or a challenge to race for each other's car ownership, but in the context of the workplace you may assume it means layoffs.

Your emotional response is immediate. If the author of the e-mail could see your face, they would know that your response was

one of disbelief and frustration, even anger, all via your nonverbal communication. Yes, when a tree falls in the forest it makes a sound, even if no one is there to hear it. In the same way, you express yourself via nonverbal communication all the time without much conscious thought at all. You may think about how to share the news with your partner, and try to display a smile and a sense of calm when you feel like anything but smiling.

Nonverbal communication gives our thoughts and feelings away before we are even aware of what we are thinking or how we feel. People may see and hear more than you ever anticipated. Your nonverbal communication includes both intentional and unintentional messages, but since it all happens so fast, the unintentional ones can contradict what you know you are supposed to say or how you are supposed to react.

Nonverbal Communication Can Add to or Replace Verbal Communication

People tend to pay more attention to how you say it than what you actually say. In presenting a speech this is particularly true. We communicate nonverbally more than we engage in verbal communication, and often use nonverbal expressions to add to, or even replace, words we might otherwise say. We use a nonverbal gesture called an illustrator to communicate our message effectively and reinforce our point. Your co-worker Andrew may ask you about “Barney’s Bar after work?” as he walks by, and you simply nod and say “yeah.” Andrew may respond with a nonverbal gesture, called an emblem, by signaling with the “OK” sign as he walks away.

In addition to illustrators or emblematic nonverbal communication, we also use regulators. “Regulators are nonverbal messages which control, maintain or discourage interaction.”McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. For example, if someone is telling you a message that is confusing or upsetting, you may hold up your hand, a commonly recognized regulator that asks the current speaker in a group to stop talking.

Let’s say you are in a meeting presenting a speech that introduces your company’s latest product. If your group members nod their heads in agreement on important points and maintain good eye contact, it is a good sign. Nonverbally, they are using regulators encouraging you to continue with your presentation. In contrast, if they look away, tap their feet, and begin drawing in the margins of their notebook, these are regulators suggesting that you had better think of a way to regain their interest or else wrap up your presentation quickly.

“Affect displays are nonverbal communication that express emotions or feelings.”McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. pp.77 An affect display that might accompany holding up your hand for silence would be to frown and shake your head from side to side. When you and Andrew are at Barney’s Bar, smiling and waving at co-workers who arrive lets them know where you are seated and welcomes them.



Figure 6.4.1: Combing your hair would be an example of a purposeful action, unlike a self-adaptive behavior © Jupiter Images

“Adaptors are displays of nonverbal communication that help you adapt to your environment and each context, helping you feel comfortable and secure.”McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. pp.77 A self-adaptor involves you meeting your need for security, by playing with your hair for example, by adapting something about yourself in way for which it was not designed or for no apparent purpose. Combing your hair would be an example of a purposeful action, unlike a self-adaptive behavior. An object-adaptor involves the use of an object in a way for which it was not designed. You may see group members tapping their pencils, chewing on them, or playing with them, while ignoring you and your presentation. Or perhaps someone pulls out a comb and repeatedly rubs a thumbnail against the comb’s teeth. They are using the comb or the pencil in a way other than its intended design, an object-adaptor that communicates a lack of engagement or enthusiasm in your speech.

Intentional nonverbal communication can complement, repeat, replace, mask or contradict what we say. When Andrew invited you to Barney's, you said "yeah" and nodded, complementing and repeating the message. You could have simply nodded, effectively replacing the "yes" with a nonverbal response. You could also have decided to say no, but did not want to hurt Andrew's feelings. Shaking your head "no" while pointing to your watch, communicating work and time issues, may mask your real thoughts or feelings. Masking involves the substitution of appropriate nonverbal communication for nonverbal communication you may want to display.McLean, S. (2003). The basics of speech communication. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. pp.77 Finally, nonverbal messages that conflict with verbal communication can confuse the listener. Table 6.2 summarizes these concepts.

Table 6.2 Some Nonverbal Expressions

Adaptors	Help us feel comfortable or indicate emotions or moods
Affect displays	Express emotions or feelings
Complementing	Reinforcing verbal communication
Contradicting	Contradicting verbal communication
Emblems	Nonverbal gestures that carry a specific meaning, and can replace or reinforce word
Illustrators	Reinforce a verbal message
Masking	Substituting more appropriate displays for less appropriate displays
Object-adaptors	Using an object for a purpose other than its intended design
Regulators	Control, encourage or discourage interaction
Repeating	Repeating verbal communication
Replacing	Replacing verbal communication
Self-adaptors	Adapting something about yourself in a way for which it was not designed or for no a

Nonverbal Communication Is Universal

Consider the many contexts in which interaction occurs during your day. In the morning, at work, after work, at home, with friends, with family, and our list could go on for quite awhile. Now consider the differences in nonverbal communication across these many contexts. When you are at work, do you jump up and down and say whatever you want? Why or why not? You may not engage in that behavior because of expectations at work, but the fact remains that from the moment you wake until you sleep, you are surrounded by nonverbal communication.

If you had been born in a different country, to different parents, perhaps even as a member of the opposite sex, your whole world would be quite different. Yet nonverbal communication would remain a universal constant. It may not look the same, or get used in the same way, but it will still be nonverbal communication in its many functions and displays.

Nonverbal Communication Is Confusing and Contextual

Nonverbal communication can be confusing. We need contextual clues to help us understand, or begin to understand, what a movement, gesture, or lack of display means. Then we have to figure it all out based on our prior knowledge (or lack thereof) of the person and hope to get it right. Talk about a challenge. Nonverbal communication is everywhere, and we all use it, but that doesn't make it simple or independent of when, where, why, or how we communicate.

Nonverbal Communication Can Be Intentional or Unintentional

Suppose you are working as a sales clerk in a retail store, and a customer communicated frustration to you. Would the nonverbal aspects of your response be intentional or unintentional? Your job is to be pleasant and courteous at all times, yet your wrinkled eyebrows or wide eyes may have been unintentional. They clearly communicate your negative feelings at that moment. Restating your wish to be helpful and displaying nonverbal gestures may communicate "No big deal," but the stress of the moment is still "written" on your face.

Can we tell when people are intentionally or unintentionally communicating nonverbally? Ask ten people this question and compare their responses. You may be surprised. It is clearly a challenge to understand nonverbal communication in action. We often assign intentional motives to nonverbal communication when in fact their display is unintentional, and often hard to interpret.

Nonverbal Messages Communicate Feelings and Attitudes

Beebe, Beebe, and Redmond, Beebe, S., Beebe, S., & Redmond, M. (2002). *Interpersonal communication relating to others* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. offer us three additional principals of interpersonal nonverbal communication that serve our discussion. One is that you often react faster than you think. Your nonverbal responses communicate your initial reaction before you can process it through language or formulate an appropriate response. If your appropriate, spoken response doesn't match your nonverbal reaction, you may give away your true feelings and attitudes.

Albert Mehrabian, Mehrabian, A. (1972). *Nonverbal communication*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Atherton. asserts that we rarely communicate emotional messages through the spoken word. According to Mehrabian, 93% of the time we communicate our emotions nonverbally, with at least 55% associated with facial gestures. Vocal cues, body position and movement, and normative space between group members can also be clues to feelings and attitudes.

Is your first emotional response always an accurate and true representation of your feelings and attitudes, or does your emotional response change across time? We are all changing all the time, and sometimes a moment of frustration or a flash of anger can signal to the receiver a feeling or emotion that existed for a moment, but has since passed. Their response to your communication will be based on that perception, even though you might already be over the issue. This is where the spoken word serves us well. You may need to articulate clearly that you were frustrated, but not anymore. The words spoken out loud can serve to clarify and invite additional discussion.

We Believe Nonverbal Communication More Than Verbal

Building on the example of responding to a situation with facial gestures associated with frustration before you even have time to think of an appropriate verbal response, let's ask the question: What would you believe, someone's actions or their words? According to Seiler and Beall, Seiler, W., & Beall, M. (2000). *Communication: making connections* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. most people tend to believe the nonverbal message over the verbal message. People will often answer "actions speak louder than words" and place a disproportionate emphasis on the nonverbal response. Humans aren't logical all the time, and they do experience feelings and attitudes that change. Still, we place more confidence in nonverbal communication, particularly when it comes to lying behaviors. According to Zuckerman, DePaulo and Rosenthal, there are several behaviors people often display when they are being deceptive:Zuckerman, M., DePaulo, D., & Rosenthal, R. (1981). Verbal and nonverbal communication of deception. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 14*, 1–59.

- Reduction in eye contact while engaged in a conversation
- Awkward pauses in conversation
- Higher pitch in voice
- Deliberate pronunciation and articulation of words
- Increased delay in response time to a question
- Increased body movements like changes in posture
- Decreased smiling
- Decreased rate of speech

If you notice one or more of the behaviors, you may want to take a closer look. Over time we learn people's patterns of speech and behavior, and form a set of expectations. Variation from their established patterns, combined with the clues above, can serve to alert you to the possibility that something deserves closer attention.

Our nonverbal responses have a connection to our physiological responses to stress, such as heart rate, blood pressure, and skin conductivity. Polygraph machines (popularly referred to as "lie detectors") focus on these physiological responses and demonstrate anomalies, or variations. While movies and TV crime shows may make polygraphs look foolproof, there is significant debate about whether they measure dishonesty with any degree of accuracy.

Can you train yourself to detect lies? It is unlikely. Our purpose in studying nonverbal communication is not to uncover dishonesty in others, but rather to help you understand how to use the nonverbal aspects of communication to increase understanding.

Nonverbal Communication Is Key in the Group Member Relationship

When we first see each other, before anyone says a word, we are already sizing each other up. Within the first few seconds, we have made judgments about each other based on what we wear, our physical characteristics, even our posture. Are these judgments accurate? That is hard to know without context, but we can say that nonverbal communication certainly affects first impressions, for better or worse. When group members first meet, nonverbal communication in terms of space, dress, and even personal characteristics can contribute to assumed expectations. The expectations might not be accurate or even fair, but it is important to recognize that they will be present. There is truth in the saying, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Since beginnings are fragile times, your attention to aspects you can control, both verbal and nonverbal, will help contribute to the first step of forming a relationship with your group. Your eye contact with group members, use of space, and degree of formality will continue to contribute to that relationship.

As a professional, your nonverbal communication is part of the message and can contribute to, or detract from, your overall goals. By being aware of them, you can learn to control them.

Key Takeaway

- Nonverbal communication is the process of conveying a message without the use of words; it relates to the dynamic process of communication, the perception process and listening, and verbal communication.
- Nonverbal communication is fluid and fast, universal, confusing and contextual. It can add to or replace verbal communication, and can be intentional or unintentional.
- Nonverbal communication communicates feelings and attitudes, and people tend to believe nonverbal messages more than verbal ones.

Exercise 6.4.1

1. Does it limit or enhance our understanding of communication to view nonverbal communication as that which is not verbal communication? Explain your answer and discuss with the class.
2. Choose a television personality you admire. What do you like about this person? Watch several minutes of this person with the sound turned off, and make notes of the nonverbal expressions you observe. Turn the sound back on and make notes of their tone of voice, timing, and other audible expressions. Discuss your results with a classmate.
3. Find a program that focuses on micro-expressions and write a brief summary of how they play a role in the program. Share and compare with classmates.
4. Create a survey that addresses the issue of which people trust more, nonverbal or verbal messages. Ask an equal number of men and women, and compare your results with those of your classmates.
5. Search for information on the reliability and admissibility of results from polygraph ("lie detector") tests. Share your findings with classmates.
6. See how long and how much you can get done during the day without the use of verbal messages.

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6.5: Types of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the similarities and differences among eight general types of nonverbal communication

Now that we have discussed the general principles that apply to nonverbal communication, let's examine eight types of nonverbal communication to further understand this challenging aspect of communication:

1. Space
2. Time
3. Physical characteristics
4. Body movements
5. Touch
6. Paralanguage
7. Artifacts
8. Environment

Space

When we discuss space in a nonverbal context, we mean the space between objects and people. Space is often associated with social rank and is an important part of group communication. Who gets the corner office? Why is the head of the table important and who gets to sit there?

People from diverse cultures may have different normative space expectations. If you are from a large urban area, having people stand close to you may be normal. If you are from a rural area, or a culture where people expect more space, someone may be standing "too close" for comfort and not know it.

Edward T. Hall,Hall, E. T. (1963). Proxemics: the study of man's spacial relations and boundaries. In *Man's image in medicine and anthropology* (pp. 422–445). New York, NY: International Universities Press. serving in the European and South Pacific Regions in the Corps of Engineers during World War II, traveled around the globe. As he moved from one place to another, he noticed that people in different countries kept different distances from each other. In France, they stood closer to each other than they did in England. Hall wondered why that was and began to study what he called proxemics, or the study of the human use of space and distance in communication.

In *The Hidden Dimension*, he indicated there are two main aspects of space: territory and personal space. Hall drew on anthropology to address the concepts of dominance and submission, and noted that the more powerful person often claims more space. This plays an important role in modern society, from who gets the corner office to how we negotiate space between vehicles. Road rage is increasingly common where overcrowding occurs, and as more vehicles occupy the same roads, tensions over space are predictable.

Territory is related to control. As a way of establishing control over your own room, maybe you painted it your favorite color, or put up posters that represent your interests or things you consider unique about yourself. Families or households often mark their space by putting up fences or walls around their houses. This sense of a right to control your space is implicit in territory. Territory means the space you claim as your own, are responsible for, or are willing to defend.

The second aspect Hall highlight is personal space, or the "bubble" of space surrounding each individual. As you walk down a flight of stairs, which side do you choose? We may choose the right side because we've learned that is what is expected, and people coming up the same stair choose their right, or your left. The right choice insures that personal space is not compromised. But what happens when some comes up the wrong side? They violate the understood rules of movement and often self-correct. But what happens if they don't change lanes as people move up and down the stairs? They may get dirty looks or even get bumped as people in the crowd handle the invasion of "their" space. There are no lane markers, and bubbles of space around each person move with them, allowing for the possibility of collision.

We recognize the basic need for personal space, but the normative expectations for space vary greatly by culture. You may perceive that in your home people sleep one to each bed, but in many cultures people sleep two or more to a bed and it is considered normal. If you were to share that bed you might feel uncomfortable, while someone raised with group sleeping norms might feel uncomfortable sleeping alone. From where you stand in an aerobics class in relation to others, to where you place your book bag in class, your personal expectations of space are often at variance with others.

As the context of a staircase has norms for nonverbal behavior, so group interactions. In North America, eye contact is expected. Big movements and gestures are not generally expected and can be distracting. The speaking group member occupies a space on the "stage," when they have the "floor" (or it is their turn to speak), even if there are co-workers on either side. When you occupy that space, the group will expect to behave in certain ways. If you talk to the laptop screen in front of you, the group may perceive that you are not really paying attention to them. They also might think you need to read your own report, a less than confident position. Group members are expected to pay attention to, and interact with, each other, even if in the feedback is primarily nonverbal. Your movements should coordinate to tone, rhythm, and content of your message. Tapping your pen, keeping your hands in your pockets or your arms crossed may communicate nervousness, or even defensiveness, and detract from your message.

As a general rule, try to act naturally, as if you were telling a friend a story, and your body will relax and your nonverbal gestures will come more naturally. Practice is key to your level of comfort, and the more practice you get, the more comfortable and less intimidating it will seem to you.

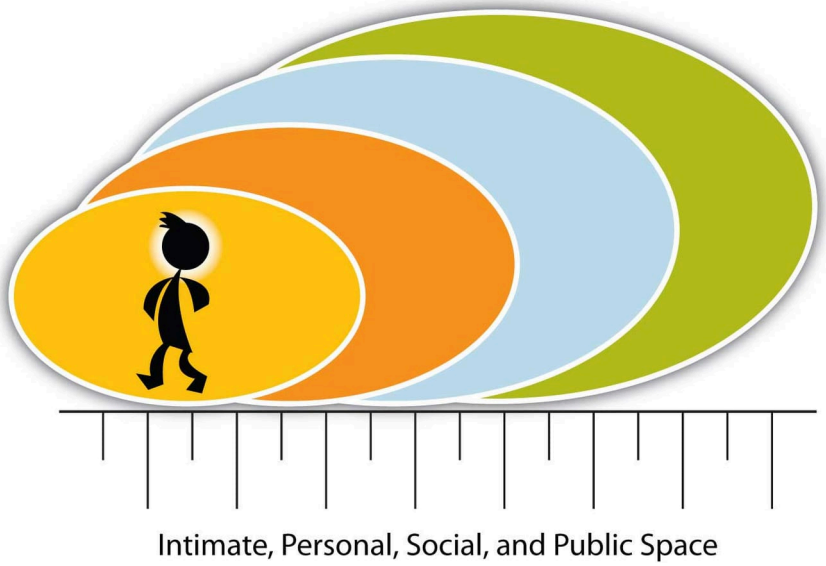


Figure 6.5.1: SPACE, Hall, Hall, E. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. N.Y., NY: Doubleday. articulated four main categories of distance used in communication

Time

Do you know what time it is? How aware you are of time varies by culture and normative expectations of adherence (or ignorance) of time. Some people, and the communities and cultures they represent, are very time-oriented. The Eurorail Trains in Germany are famous for departing and arriving according to the schedule. In contrast, if you take the train in Argentina and you'll find that the schedule is more of an approximation of when the train will leave or arrive.

"Time is money" is a common saying across many cultures, and reveals a high value for time. In social contexts, it often reveals social status and power. Who are you willing to wait for? A doctor for an office visit when you are sick? A potential employer for a job interview? Your significant other, or children? Sometimes we get impatient, and our impatience underscores our value for time.

When you give a presentation to your team or group, does your group have to wait for you? Time is a relevant factor in the communication process in your speech. The best way to show your group respect is to honor the time expectation associated with your speech. Always try to stop speaking before the group stops listening; if the members perceive that you have "gone over time," they will be less willing to listen. This in turn will have a negative impact on your ability to communicate your message.

Suppose you are presenting a speech to your team that has three main points. Your group will look to you to regulate the time and attention to each point, but if you spend all your time on the first two points and rush through the third, your presentation won't be balanced and will lose rhythm. The speaker occupies a position of some power, but it is the group that gives them that position. Your team is counting on you to make a difference, and to not waste their time. By displaying respect and maintaining balance, you will move through your points more effectively.

Chronemics is the study of how we refer to and perceive time. Tom Bruneau at Radford University has spent a lifetime investigating how time interacts in communication and culture.Bruneau, T. (1974). Time and nonverbal communication. *Journal of Poplular Culture , 8*, 658–666.'Bruneau, T. (1990). Chronemics: the study of time in human interaction. In J. DeVito, & M. Hecht (Eds.), *The nonverbal reader* (pp. 301–311). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland press.' Bruneau, T., & Ishii, S. (1988). Communicative silence: east and west. *World Communication, 17*, 1–33. As he notes, across western society, time is often considered the equivalent of money. The value of speed is highly prized in some societies.Schwartz, T. (1989, January/February). Acceleration syndrome: does everyone live in the fast lane? *Utne Reader*, 36–43. In others, there is a great respect for slowing down and taking a long-term view of time.

When you order a meal at a "fast food" restaurant, what are your expectations for how long you will have to wait? When you order a pizza online for delivery, when do you expect it will arrive? If you order cable service for your home, when do you expect it might be delivered? In the first case you might measure the delivery of a hamburger in a matter of seconds or minutes, and perhaps 30 minutes for pizza delivery, but you may measure the time from your order to working cable in days or even weeks. You may even have to be at your home from 8 A.M. to noon waiting for its installation. The expectations vary by context, and we often grow frustrated in a time-sensitive culture when the delivery does not match our expectations.

In the same way, how long should it take to respond to a customer's request for assistance or information? If they call on the phone, how long should they wait on hold? How soon should they expect a response to an e-mail? As a skilled group communicator, you will know to anticipate normative expectations and do your best to meet those expectations more quickly than anticipated. Your prompt reply or offer of help in response to a request, even if you cannot solve the issue on the spot, is often regarded positively, contributing to the formation of positive communication interactions.

Across cultures the value of time may vary. Some Mexican-American friends may invite you to a barbecue at 8 P.M., but when you arrive you are the first guest, because it is understood that the gathering actually doesn't start until after 9 P.M. In France, similarly, an 8 P.M. party invitation would be understood to indicate you should arrive around 8:30, but in Sweden 8 P.M. means 8 P.M., and latecomers may not be welcome. Some Native Americans, particularly elders, speak in well-measured phrases and take long pauses between phrases. They do not hurry their speech or compete for their turn, knowing no one will interrupt them.McLean, S. (1998). Turn-taking and the extended pause: a study of interpersonal communication styles across generations on the Warm Springs Indian reservation. In K. S. Sitaram, & M. Prosser (Eds.), *Civic discourse: Multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and global communication* (pp. 213–227). Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing Company. Some Orthodox Jews observe religious days when they do not work, cook, drive, or use electricity. People around the world have different ways of expressing value for time.

Physical Characteristics

You didn't choose your birth, your eye color, the natural color of your hair, or your height, but people spend millions every year trying to change their physical characteristics. You can get colored contacts, dye your hair, and, if you are shorter than you'd like to be, buy shoes to raise your stature a couple of inches. You won't be able to change your birth, and no matter how much you stoop to appear shorter, you won't change your height until time and age gradually makes itself apparent. If you are tall, you might find the correct shoe size, pant length, or even the length of mattress a challenge, but there are rewards. Have you ever heard that taller people get paid more? Burnham, T., & Phelan, J. (2000). *Mean genes: from sex to money to food: taming our primal instincts*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing. There is some truth to that idea. There is also some truth to the notion that people prefer symmetrical faces (where both sides are equal) over asymmetrical faces (with unequal sides; like a crooked nose or having one eye or ear slightly higher than the other). Burnham, T., & Phelan, J. (2000). *Mean genes: from sex to money to food: taming our primal instincts*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

We often make judgments about a person's personality or behavior based on physical characteristics, and researchers are quick to note those judgments are often inaccurate. Wells, W., & Siegel, B. (1961). Stereotypes somatypes. *Psychological Reports, 8*, 77–78.'Cash, T., & Kilcullen, R. (1985). The eye of the beholder: susceptibility to sexism and beautyism in the evaluation of managerial applicants. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 15*, 591–605. Regardless of your eye or hair color, or even how tall you are, being comfortable with yourself is an important part of your presentation. Act naturally and consider aspects of your presentation you can control in order to maximize a positive image for the group or team.

Body Movements

The study of body movements, called kinesics, is key to understanding nonverbal communication. Since your actions will significantly contribute to the effectiveness of your group interactions, let's examine four distinct ways body movements that complement, repeat, regulate, or replace your verbal messages.

Body movements can complement the verbal message by reinforcing the main idea. For example, you may be providing an orientation presentation to a customer about a software program. As you say, "Click on this tab," you may also initiate that action. Your verbal and nonverbal messages reinforce, or complement, each other. You can also reinforce the message by repeating it. If you first say "Click on the tab," and then motion with your hand to the right, indicating that the customer should move the cursor arrow with the mouse to the tab, your repetition can help the listener understand the message.

In addition to repeating your message, body movements can also regulate conversations. Nodding your head to indicate that you are listening may encourage the customer to continue asking questions. Holding your hand up, palm out, may signal them to stop and provide a pause where you can start to answer.

Body movements also substitute or replace verbal messages. Ekman and Friesen, Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. (1967). Head and body cures in the judgment of emotions: a reformulation. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 24*, 711–724. found facial features communicate to others our feelings, but our body movements often reveal how intensely we experience those feelings. For example, if the customer makes a face of frustration while trying to use the software program, they may need assistance. If they push away from the computer and separate themselves physically from interacting with it, they may be extremely frustrated. Learning to gauge feelings and their intensity as expressed by customers takes time and patience, and your attention to them will improve your ability to facilitate positive interactions.

Touch

Touch in communication interaction is called haptics, and Seiler and Beall, Seiler, W., & Beall, M. (2000). *Communication: making connections* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. identify five distinct types of touch, from impersonal to intimate, as listed in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Types of Touch

1. Functional-professional touch	Medical exami
2. Social-polite touch	Handshake
3. Friendship-warmth touch	Hug
4. Love-intimacy touch	Kiss between f
5. Sexual-arousal touch	Sexual caressi

Before giving your presentation, you may interact with people by shaking hands and making casual conversation. This interaction can help establish trust before you take the stage. While speaking in groups we do not often touch people on the team, but we do interact with visual aids, our note cards, and other objects. How we handle them can communicate our comfort level. It's always a good idea to practice using the technology, visual aids or note cards we'll use in a speech in a practice setting. Using the technology correctly by clicking the right button on the mouse or pressing the right switch on the overhead project can contribute to, or detract from, your credibility.

Paralanguage

Paralanguage is the exception to the definition of nonverbal communication. You may recall that we defined nonverbal communication as not involving words, but paralanguage exists when we are speaking, using words. Paralanguage involves verbal and nonverbal aspects of speech that influence meaning, including tone, intensity, pausing, and even silence.

Perhaps you've also heard of a pregnant pause, a silence between verbal messages that is full of meaning. The meaning itself may be hard to understand or decipher, but it is there nonetheless. For example, your co-worker Jan comes back from a sales meeting speechless with a ghost-white complexion. You may ask if the meeting went all right. "Well, ahh..." may be the only response you

get. The pause speaks volumes. Something happened, though you may not know what. It could be personal if Jan's report was not well received, or it could more systemic, like the news that sales figures are off by 40% and pink slips may not be far behind.

Silence or vocal pauses can communicate hesitation, indicate the need to gather thought, or serve as a sign of respect. Keith Basso, Basso, K. A. (1970). To give up on words: silence in western Apache culture. In *Cultural communication and intercultural contact* (pp. 301–318). Hillsdale, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum. quotes an anonymous source as stating, "it is not the case that a man who is silent says nothing." Sometimes we learn just as much, or even more, from what a person does not say as what they do say. In addition, both Basso and Susan Philips, Philips, S. (1983). *The invisible culture: communication in the classroom and community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation*. Chicago, IL: Waveland Press. found that traditional speech among Native Americans places a special emphasis on silence.

Artifacts

Do you cover your tattoos when you are at work? Do you know someone who does? Or perhaps you know someone who has a tattoo and does not need to cover it up on their job? Expectations vary a great deal, but body art or tattoos are still controversial in the workplace. According to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*: Kinsman, M. (2001, August 20). Tattoos and nose rings. *San Diego Union-Tribune*, p. C1.

- 20% of workers indicated their body art had been held against them on the job.
- 42% of employers said the presence of visible body art lowered their opinion of workers.
- 44% of managers surveyed have body art.
- 52% of workers surveyed have body art.
- 67% of workers who have body art or piercings cover or remove them during work hours.

In your line of work, a tattoo might be an important visual aid or might detract from your effectiveness. Piercings may express individuality, but you need to consider how they will be interpreted by employers and customers.

Artifacts are forms of decorative ornamentation that are chosen to represent self-concept. They can include rings and tattoos, but may also include brand names and logos. From clothes to cars, watches, briefcases, purses, and even eyeglasses, what we choose to surround ourselves with communicates something about our sense of self. They may project gender, role or position, class or status, personality and group membership or affiliation. Paying attention to a customer's artifacts can give you a sense of the self they want to communicate, and may allow you to more accurately adapt your message to meet their needs.

Environment

Environment involves the physical and psychological aspects of the communication context. More than the tables and chairs in an office, environment is an important part of the dynamic communication process. The perception of one's environment influences one's reaction to it. For example, Google is famous for its work environment, with spaces created for physical activity and even in-house food service around the clock. The expense is no doubt considerable, but Google's actions speak volumes. The results produced in the environment, designed to facilitate creativity, interaction, and collaboration, are worth the effort.

Key Takeaway

- Nonverbal communication can be categorized into eight types: space, time, physical characteristics, body movements, touch, paralanguage, artifacts, and environment.

Exercise 6.5.1

1. Do a www.google.com search on space and culture. Share your findings with your classmates.
2. Note where people sit on the first day of class, and each class session thereafter. Do students return to the same seat? If they do not attend class, do the classmates leave their seat vacant? Compare your results.
3. What kind of value do you have for time? And what is truly important to you? Make a list of what you spend your time on, and what you value most. Do the lists match? Are you spending time on what is truly important to you? Relationships take time, and if you want them to succeed in a personal or business context you have to make them a priority.

4. To what degree is time a relevant factor in communication in the information age? Give some examples. Discuss your ideas with a classmate.
5. How many people do you know who have chosen tattoos or piercings as a representation of self and statement of individuality? Survey your friends and share your findings with your classmates.

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6.6: Summary

In this chapter, we have defined language as a code that has rules of syntax, semantics, and context. We have examined how language influences our perception of the world and the verbal principles of communication. We have seen that a message has several parts and can be interpreted on different levels. Building on each of these principles, we examined how cliché, jargon, slang, sexist and racist language, euphemisms, and doublespeak can all be impediments to successful communication. We discussed four strategies for giving emphasis to your message: visuals, signposts, internal summaries and foreshadowing, and repetition. Finally, we discussed six ways to improve communication: defining your terms, choosing precise words, considering your group, controlling your tone, checking for understanding, and focusing on results.

Review Questions

1. Interpretive Questions
    1. From your viewpoint, how do you think that thought influences the use of language?
    2. Is there ever a justifiable use for doublespeak? Why or why not? Explain your response and give some examples.
    3. What is meant by *conditioned* in the phrase “people in Western cultures do not realize the extent to which their racial attitudes have been conditioned since early childhood by the power of words to ennoble or condemn, augment or detract, glorify or demean?”Moore, R. (2003). *Racism in the English language*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
2. Application Questions
    1. How does language change over time? Interview someone older than you, and younger than you, and identify words that have changed. Pay special attention to jargon and slang words.
    2. How does language affect self-concept? Explore and research your answer, finding examples that can serve as case studies.
    3. Can people readily identify the barriers to communication? Survey ten individuals and see if they accurately identify at least one barrier, even if they use a different term or word.

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6.7: Additional Resources

Benjamin Lee Whorf was one of the 20th century's foremost linguists. Learn more about his theories of speech behavior by visiting this site. http://grail.cba.csuohio.edu/~somos/whorf.html

Visit InfoPlease to learn more about the eminent linguist (and U.S. senator) S. I. Hayakawa. http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0880739.html

Harvard psychology professor Steven Pinker is one of today's most innovative authorities on language. Explore reviews of books about language Pinker has published. pinker.wjh.harvard.edu/books/index.html

Reference.com offers a wealth of definitions, synonym finders, and other guides to choosing the right words. http://dictionary.reference.com/

Visit Goodreads and learn about one of the best word usage guides, Bryan Garner's *Modern American Usage*. http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/344643.Garner_s_Modern_American_Usage

Visit Goodreads and learn about one of the most widely used style manuals, the *Chicago Manual of Style*. http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/103362.The_Chicago_Manual_of_Style

The "I Have a Dream" speech by Martin Luther King Jr. is one of the most famous speeches of all time. View it on video and read the text. http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm

The Religious Communication Association, an interfaith organization, seeks to promote honest, respectful dialogue reflecting diversity of religious beliefs. www.americanrhetoric.com/rca/index.html

To learn more about being results oriented, visit the web site of Stephen Covey, author of the best seller *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. https://www.stephencovey.com/

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7: LISTENING IN GROUPS

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7.1: Listening to Understand
7.2: Types of Listening
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7.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. In order to communicate with others, you need to know yourself. Please complete a personal inventory, a simple list of what comes to mind in these five areas:
    1. Your knowledge. What is your favorite subject?
    2. Your skills. What can you do?
    3. Your experience. What has been your experience writing to date?
    4. Your interests. What do you enjoy?
    5. Your relationships. Who is important to you?
2. Term Describes the Group Accurately = 1

    Strongly Disagree = 2

    Somewhat Disagree = 3

    Neither Agree nor Disagree = 4

    Somewhat Agree = 5

    Strongly Agree = 6

Independent	Dependent
Hard working	Lazy
Progressive	Traditional
Sophisticated	Simple
Creative	Practical

3. Now consider how you know someone is listening to you. Make a list of the behaviors you observe that indicate they are listening, and understand you. Share and compare the results with classmates.

Your mind is like a parachute. It works best when it's open.

Anonymous

If speaking is silver then listening is gold.

Turkish Proverb

Getting Started

Communicating involves the translation of your thoughts and ideas to words. Speaking or writing involves sharing your perspective with others. Listening, therefore, involves making sense of what is shared with us, and can require all of our attention. A Cuban saying captures it best: "Listening looks easy, but it's not simple. In every head is a world." For us to understand each other we have to listen, and make sense of each other's perspectives. In order for us to work effectively as a group or team, we need to listen to each other, not just hear each other or wait for our turn to deliver a monologue, make our point, or convince others that we are right. Each group member brings a valuable perspective, indeed a world, to contribute to the team.

When group members interact, do you find yourself getting lost in your own thoughts. While text messages and other distractions can be powerful, the most distracting voice by far is our own internal monologue. If you silently talk to yourself, the action is a reflection of the communication process, but you play the role of audience. In your own head, you may make sense of your words

and their meaning. You may have rehearsed your “lines” or what you want to say, and completing miss the turns and contributions in the conversation. Then, when I hear what you said, what you meant may escape me. I might not “get it” because I don’t know you, your references, your perspectives, your word choices, your underlying meaning and motivation for speaking in the first place.

In this chapter we’ll discuss perspectives, and how people perceive information, as we learn how communication is an imperfect bridge to understanding each other. It requires our constant attention, maintenance, and effort. Listening is anything but simple or easy.

Sometimes people mistake hearing for listening. Hearing involves the physiological process of recognizing sounds. Your ears receive and transmit the information to your brain. Once your brain receives the signals, then it starts to make sense to you. This is the listening stage, where you create meaning based on previous experiences and contextual cues to make sense of the sounds.

Knowing your team involves understanding others, and their perspectives, to see if they understand your words, examples, or the frames of reference you use to communicate your experiences, points and conclusions. Ask yourself when was the last time you had a miscommunication with someone. No doubt it was fairly recently, as it is for most people. It’s not people’s fault that language, both verbal and nonverbal, is an imperfect system. We can, however, take responsibility for the utility and limitations of language to try to gain a better understanding of how we can communicate more effectively. We can choose to actively listen to each other, and ask clarifying questions instead of rushing to judgment or making statement.

As a communicator, consider both the role of the speaker and the group, and not only what and how you want to communicate but what and how your team needs you to communicate with them in order to present an effective message.

Take, for example, the word “love.” Yes, we recognize those four little letters all in a row, but what does it really mean? You can use it to describe the feelings and emotions associated with your mother, a partner, or perhaps your dog. Or you might say you love chocolate cake. Does your use of the word in any given context allow the audience to get any closer to what you mean by this word, “love?” The key here is context, which provides clues to how you mean the word, and what its use means to you. The context allows you to close the gap between your meaning of “love” and what the receiver, or group member, has in their range of understanding of the same word. Your experiences are certainly different, but through clues, contexts, and attempts to understand each other’s perspectives, we can often communicate more effectively.

Let’s first follow the advice given by the character Polonius in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: “to thine own self be true.” This relates to the notion that you need to know yourself, or your perspective, before you can explore ways to know others and communicate more effectively. You will examine how you perceive stimuli, choosing some information over others, organizing the information according to your frame of reference, and interpreting it, deciding what it means to you and whether you should remember it or just ignore it and move on. We can recognize that not everyone tunes into the same music, trends in clothing, or even classes, so experiences or stimuli can have different meanings. Still, we can find common ground and communicate effectively, if we only choose to listen to each other.

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7.1: Listening to Understand

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the importance of becoming an active listener and reader

As the popular author and Hollywood entrepreneur Wilson Mizner said, “A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while, he knows something.” Learning to listen to your conversational partner, customer, supplier, or supervisor is an important part of business communication. Too often, instead of listening we mentally rehearse what we want to say. Similarly, when we read, we are often trying to multitask and therefore cannot read with full attention. Inattentive listening can cause us to miss much of what the speaker is sharing with us.

Communication involves the sharing and understanding of meaning, To fully share and understand, practice active listening so that you are fully attentive, fully present in the moment of interaction. Pay attention to both the actual words and for other clues to meaning, such as tone of voice or writing style. Look for opportunities for clarification and feedback when the time comes for you to respond, not before. Remember we hear with our ears, but listen with our brain, and sometimes it is all too easy to tune out the messenger or their message.

Active Listening

You’ve probably experienced the odd sensation of driving somewhere and, having arrived, have realized you don’t remember driving. Your mind may have been filled with other issues and you drove on autopilot. It’s dangerous when you drive, and it is dangerous in communication. Choosing to listen or read attentively takes effort. People communicate with words, expressions, and even in silence, and your attention to them will make you a better communicator. From discussions on improving customer service to retaining customers in challenging economic times, the importance of listening comes up frequently as a success strategy.

Here are some tips to facilitate active listening:

- Maintain eye contact with the speaker
- Don’t interrupt
- Focus your attention on the message, not your own internal monologue
- Restate the message in your own words and ask if you understood correctly
- Ask clarifying questions to communicate interest and gain insight

When the Going Gets Tough

Our previous tips will serve you well in daily interactions, but suppose you have an especially difficult subject to discuss. In a difficult situation like this, it is worth taking extra effort to create an environment and context that will facilitate positive communication.

Here are some tips that may be helpful:

- Special time. To have the difficult conversation, set aside a special time when you will not be disturbed. Close the door and turn off the TV, music player, and instant messaging client.
- Don’t interrupt. Keep silence while you let the other person “speak their piece.” Make an effort to understand and digest the news without mental interruptions.
- Non-judgmental. Receive the message without judgment or criticism. Set aside your opinions, attitudes, and beliefs.
- Acceptance. Be open to the message being communicated, realizing that acceptance does not necessarily mean you agree with what is being said.
- Take turns. Wait until it is your turn to respond, then measure your response in proportion to the message that was delivered to you. Reciprocal turn-taking allows each person have their say.
- Acknowledge. Let the other person know that you have listened to the message or read it attentively.

- Understanding. Be certain that you understand what your partner is saying. If you don't understand, ask for clarification. Restate the message in your own words.
- Keep your cool. Speak your truth without blaming. Use "I" statements (e.g., "I felt concerned when I learned that my department is going to have a layoff") rather than "you" statements (e.g., "You want to get rid of some of our best people").

Finally, recognize that mutual respect and understanding are built one conversation at a time. Trust is difficult to gain and easy to lose. Be patient and keep the channels of communication open, as a solution may develop slowly over the course of many small interactions. Recognize that it is more valuable to maintain the relationship over the long term than to "win" in an individual transaction.

Key Takeaway

Part of being an effective communicator is learning to practice active listening.

Exercise 7.1.1

1. Pair up with a classmate and do a role-play exercise in which one person tries to deliver a message while the other person multitasks and interrupts. Then try it again while the listener practices active listening. How do the two communication experiences compare? Discuss your findings.
2. Select a news article and practice "active reading" by reading the article and summarizing each of its main points in your own words. Write a letter to the editor commenting on the article—you don't have to send it, but you may if you wish.
3. In a half-hour period of time, see if you can count how many times you are interrupted. Share and compare with your classmates.

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7.2: Types of Listening

Learning Objectives

1. Identify four preferences and four purposes of listening
2. Distinguish among the components of the "HURIER model" of listening
3. Identify foundations for good learning, including the features of "dialogic listening"
4. Identify several kinds of negative listening

I'd invited my wife to accompany me to a professional conference in Portland. Since I was going to be making a presentation there, my colleague and co-presenter Sally was with us for the trip down and back.

Driving along the Interstate, Sally and I talked shop. What about our supervisor? Yak yak yak. What about our faculty union? Yak yak yak. And our plans for next year? Yak yak yak.

After 20 minutes of chatter with Sally, I realized that what we were discussing might not mean much to my wife. Being the considerate guy that I am, I paused and looked over at her.

"Sorry we've been talking so much about work. Thanks for listening."

"I'm not listening," she replied.

—Phil Venditti

Preferences, Purposes, and Types of Listening

People speak for various reasons and with various goals in mind. Likewise, the ways we listen vary according to our preferences and purposes. Several theorists have identified types of listening which can help us understand our own behavior and that of others.

Galanes and Adams, Galanes, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective group discussion: Theory and practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill. wrote that people fall into four possible orientation categories as they listen to one another in groups. People-oriented listeners, also known as "relational listeners," direct themselves toward detecting and preserving positive emotional features of a relationship. For instance, best friends are probably people who practice nonjudgmental listening in an effort to understand and support each other. In a group, people-oriented listeners may share their feelings openly and strive to defuse anger or frustration on the part of other members.

Action-oriented listeners, by comparison, prefer to focus on tasks that they and their fellow communicators have set for themselves. (Think back to chapter 1, where we differentiated between the "task" and "relationship" sides of group interaction). Action-oriented listeners will generally retain and share details and information which they believe will keep a group moving.

Content-oriented listeners are those who care particularly about the specifics of a group's discussions. They tend to seek, provide, and analyze information that has been gathered through research. What they primarily choose to hear and to share with others, thus, is material that they consider to be factual.

Time-oriented listeners concern themselves above all with how a group's activities fit into a calendar or schedule. They may listen and watch especially for signs that other group members want to accelerate the pace of the group's activities. Their preference is usually for short, concise messages rather than extended ones.

In the real world, few people fit neatly and completely into a single category within Galanes and Adams's typology of listeners. Instead, each of us embodies a mixture of the four preferences depending on the topic a group is dealing with, the developmental stage of the group, and other factors.

Like Galanes and Adams, Waldeck, Kearney, and PlaxWaldeck, J. H., Kearney, P., & Plax, T. (2013). *Business & professional*

communication in a digital age. Boston: Wadsworth. proposed four purposes which they believe people have in mind as they listen to others. First, we may want to acquire information. Students listening to class lectures are pursuing this purpose. Second, we may listen in order to screen and evaluate what we hear. For instance, we may have the radio on continuously but listen especially for and to stories and comments which are relevant to our work or study. Third, we may listen recreationally, to relax and enjoy ourselves. Perhaps we listen to music or watch and listen to video images on a mobile device, or we might attend a concert of music we enjoy. Finally, just as Galanes and Adams indicated, we may listen because it helps other people or ourselves from the standpoint of our relationships. When we listen attentively to friends, classmates, or work colleagues, we demonstrate our interest in them and thereby develop positive feelings in them about us.

Beebe and Masterson, Beebe, S.A., & Masterson, J.T. (2006). *Communicating in small groups; Principles and practices* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson. cited Allan Glatthorn and Herbert Adams, Glatthorn, A.A., & Adams, H.R. (1984). *Listening your way to management success*. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman). as identifying the following three types of listening:

Type one: hearing. This is the simple physical act of having sound waves enter our ears and be transmitted into neural impulses sent to our brain. In 1965, Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel sang in “The Sound of Silence” about “people hearing but not listening,” and this is really what Glatthorn and Adams were referring to.

Type two: analyzing. Beyond simply receiving sound waves, listeners may employ critical judgment to ascertain the purpose behind a speaker’s message(s). In so doing, they may consider not only the content of the message, but also its stated and unstated intent, its context, and what kind of persuasive strategy the speaker may be using it as part of.

Kelly, Kelly, M.S. (2006). *Communication @ work: Ethical, effective, and expressive communication in the workplace*. Boston: Pearson. offered a helpful elaboration on this type of listening. She suggested that “analyzing” may also involve discriminating—that is, distinguishing—between information and propaganda, research and personal experience, official business and small talk, and simple information and material which requires a listener to take action.

Type three: empathizing. Empathizing requires that a listener not only discern a speaker’s intention, but also withhold judgment about that person and see things from his or her perspective. Once this is accomplished, it may be possible to respond to the speaker with acceptance.

The Listening Process

Even though listening is a natural human process, and one in which we spend most of our communication time, it may not occur to us how complex the activity really is. Many authorities have proposed models that comprise what they consider to be steps in the process. We’ll consider one such model.

Engleberg & Wynn, Engleberg, I.N., & Wynn, D. R. (2013). *Working in groups* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson. described the HURIER model, an acronym developed by Judi Brownell. Brownell, J. (2010). *Listening: Attitudes, principles, and skills* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson Allyn & Bacon. That model proposed that, in listening, people first hear; then understand; next interpret (including the emotional grounds/status of the speaker); evaluate (including whether the message is meant to persuade, and if so whether it should do so); remember; and finally respond. Among the strengths of this model for application to group settings are that its steps take a group’s goals into account and that it recognizes both the task and relationship elements of communication.

Foundations for Good Listening

Each of us can probably think of a few people whom we consider to be outstanding listeners. What makes them that way, and what attitudes and behaviors do they display in their listening that we most appreciate? Let’s consider some answers that various theorists have offered concerning the strengths of good listeners.

First, the famous educator and philosopher John Dewey, Dewey, J. (1944). *Democracy and education*. New York: Macmillan. exhorted people to show what he called “intellectual hospitality.” By this, he meant “an active disposition to welcome points of view hitherto alien.” If a person is willing to entertain perspectives outside his or her previous experience, listening can proceed on favorable ground.

Objectivity represents a related initial ingredient in good listening. As Rohlander, Rohlander, D.G. (2000, February). The well-rounded IE. *IIE Solutions*, 32 (2), 22. wrote, people should be prepared to weigh facts and emotional elements in their listening “on imaginary balanced scales.”

Stewart and Thomas, Stewart, J., & Thomas, M. (1990). Dialogic listening: Sculpting mutual meanings. In J. Stewart (Ed.), *Bridges not walls* (5th ed.) (pp. 192–210). New York: McGraw-Hill. coined the term "dialogic listening" to identify what they considered to be ideal listening behavior. They characterized dialogic listeners in these ways:

1. They are "deeply in" the transaction with those with whom they communicate.
2. They deal with present topics and concerns.
3. They consider the speaking and listening process to be a shared enterprise—"ours" rather than "yours" or "mine."
4. They see speaking and listening as being open-ended and playful.

Whatever models they propose, and whatever vocabulary they use, all the authorities who write about listening share the belief that listening needs to be active rather than passive. We'll provide specific steps later in this chapter for how to engage in active, positive listening.

Negative Kinds of Listening



Figure 7.2.1

Now for some unfortunate news. There is a rich array of ways to be a bad listener.

Adler and Towne, Adler, R.B., & Towne, N. (2002). *Looking out/looking in* (10th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. named and described several of these ways. The first is pseudo-listening. You've seen this many times in your own life, and probably you've even done it. It's the act of seeming to be listening while your mind is actually somewhere else. When you're pseudo-listening, you may nod your head and emit periodic sounds of approval, just as you would if you were really paying attention, but those actions are for show.



Figure 7.2.2

Then there's "stage-hogging," also known as "disruptive listening." This is an active behavior—but the action isn't good, since the listener attends only minimally to what the other person is saying and butts in persistently and repeatedly to insert views or express needs of his or her own.

The first panel of a "Far Side" cartoon by Gary Larson shows a man scolding his dog. He starts out by saying, "Okay, Ginger" and then goes on at length. Once or twice more in the harangue the man says Ginger's name. In the second panel, the "speech balloon" of the master is altered to show what the dog hears: "Blah blah Ginger. Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah GINGER blah blah blah blah..." In this case, the fact that Ginger is a dog means that she can only detect the sound of her own name in her master's speech. Selective listening among human beings, on the other hand, consists of listening only to the parts of someone else's communication that are personally important to us—even though we could certainly understand and respond to the rest of it if we chose to.



Figure 7.2.3

Insulated listening is, in a way, the reverse of selective listening. In this self-protective behavior, the listener takes in and responds actively to everything the speaker says *except* what's unpleasant to him or her.

Defensive listening is performed by a person when he or she interprets much or most of another person's statements as being personal attacks. A defensive listener is apt to ignore, exclude, or fail to accurately interpret parts of a speaker's comments.

Face-value listening can be described as aural nitpicking. That is to say, the face-value listener pays a great deal of attention to the terminology of someone else's message and very little to the person's intentions or feelings.

Davis, Paleg, & Fanning, Davis, M., Paleg, K., & Fanning, P. (2004). *How to communicate workbook; Powerful strategies for effective communication at work and home*. New York: MJF Books. identified three further ways to be a bad listener: rehearsing, identifying, and sparring. Rehearsing is the practice of planning a response to another person's message while the message is still being delivered. Identifying takes place when a large portion of a speaker's message triggers memories of the listener's own experiences and makes the listener want to dive into a story of his or her own. Finally, a listener who engages in sparring attends to messages only long enough to find something to disagree with and then jabs back and forth with the speaker argumentatively.

Key Takeaway

To function well in a group, people should become familiar with both positive and negative purposes and types of listening.

Exercise 7.2.1

1. Do you consider yourself to be primarily a people-oriented, action-oriented, or content-oriented listener? Describe a time when you found yourself listening with an orientation other than your primary one. What caused you to use that orientation? What was the result?
2. Think about a time when you tried unsuccessfully to share an important message with someone. How did the other person respond? What "bad kind(s)" of listening behaviors did the person display?
3. Stewart and Thomas believe that listening should be "open-ended and playful." What does this mean to you? Describe a time when you listened "playfully" and how others around you reacted.
4. Imagine that you're in a group that is assessing its members' performance and that you expect to be criticized because of a mistake you've made. What will you do to avoid defensive listening, sparring, or other bad kinds of listening?

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7.3: Group Members and Listening

Learning Objectives

1. Identify seven challenges of listening in a group as opposed to listening to one person
2. Identify two advantages of group listening as opposed to listening to one person
3. Identify pros and cons of listening in digital groups

In the beginning, God made an individual—and then He made a pair. The pair formed a group, and together they begot others and thus the group grew. Unfortunately, working in a group led to friction, and the group disintegrated in conflict. And Cain settled in the land of Nod. There has been trouble with groups ever since. Sharp, D. (2004, February 24). Workgroups that actually work. Business Times, p. 10.

Davis Sharp

I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening.

Larry King

All listening takes energy, concentration, and fortitude. To a degree that will depend on the topic and the listener's individual personality, it also requires self-sacrifice, since at least part of the time that we're listening we may need to stifle the urge to question, correct, interrupt, or even silence a speaker.

Listening in a group is especially portentous. If you do it well, you can learn a great deal, present yourself in a favorable light, and contribute to a positive atmosphere and high level of productivity on the part of the group.

Poor listening in a group, on the other hand, can lead to serious negative consequences. Take the case of a group numbering six members. For every time it has to retrace its ground for five minutes and repeat things because of poor listening, that's 30 minutes of time wasted. Furthermore, misunderstandings among group members can be spread and magnified outside the group to the point that its image and effectiveness are weakened. When we get to chapter 12 we'll examine this danger and some of the other things that can go wrong when groups of people take part in formal meetings.

Challenges of Listening in a Group

Although all of us get practice at it for years as students and eventually as employees, listening in a group isn't easy. It presents more of a challenge to each member, in fact, than does listening to one other person at a time. Why? We'll consider seven reasons, all of which stem from the inherent differences between groups and pairs of people.

First, in a typical one-on-one conversation you're probably going to listen about 50% of the time, right? Compare that to your participation in a group, in which you're likely to spend between 65% and 90% of your time listening. Steil, L.K. (1997). Listening training: The key to success in today's organizations. In M. Purdy & D. Borisoff (Eds.), *Listening in everyday life* (pp. 213–237). Landham, MD: University Press of America. If you listen with the same depth of energy and concentration in the group that you do with a single conversation partner, you're going to get tired out a lot more quickly.

Second, unless you know each of the other members of a group very well, you may not adequately gauge their knowledge and perspectives on a given topic before it's discussed. This may make you less likely to be receptive and responsive to their views on a topic, especially a contentious one. You may also have to work harder to understand their viewpoints.

Third, it may be difficult to keep up with changing levels of engagement on the part of other members of your group. People's attention and involvement may fluctuate because they're anxious about the circumstances of a discussion, about a particular message that's being sent, or even about extraneous factors in their lives that come to mind. At some moments in a group's activities, everyone may be attentive and actively involved; at others, they come and go both mentally and physically. Because all the members are rarely simultaneously "firing on all cylinders," you'll need to work particularly hard to distinguish between vital messages and routine, mundane, or irrelevant ones.

Fourth, in a group, you have less of an opportunity to influence others' thoughts and actions than you do in one-on-one communication. Deciding when to cease listening and interject your viewpoints so that they'll be most likely to be received positively by the largest possible proportion of group members is hard, especially if conversation is fast and free-wheeling.

Fifth, listening for long periods prevents you from releasing some of your own energy. Because you speak less in a group than in a one-on-one conversation, this build-up of energy may frustrate you and interfere with your ability to process what other people are saying.

Sixth, in a group, you have lots of time to daydream. People talk at about 100–150 words per minute, but your mind can process information at up to 600 words a minute. Wolvin, A., & Coakley, C.G. *Listening* (3rd ed.). Dubuque, IA: 1988. You may not be compelled or feel a need to listen actively all the time that a group is interacting, nor do you have to worry about other people's assessment of your behavior if you're not the one speaking at a particular time. Thus, you'll be able to fill in the gap between other people's talking speed and your own thinking speed with thoughts of your choice...or with thoughts that just float into and out of your consciousness. You may even be tempted to surreptitiously glance at reading material unrelated to the group's activities, or to send or receive text messages.

Seventh, it may be harder to listen in a group because of the existence of social loafing. This is the tendency for each member to devote less energy to a task than she or he would alone because it's possible to let others take responsibility for getting things done.

Advantages to Listening in a Group

Now that we've reviewed some of its challenges and pitfalls, we should note that listening in a group offers potential benefits as well. Let's consider two major kinds.

The first big advantage to listening in a group is that it embodies the possibility of taking one of the characteristics that we earlier said could be used negatively—i.e., that you have time and opportunity to think about and react to what you hear—and using it in a positive way. Rather than using that surplus time to daydream or plan a rebuttal to other group members' messages, you can try in your mind to empathetically interpret the messages and decide whether and how to respond in ways that promote the well-being of the speakers and the whole group. Here's an illustration with a cross-cultural dimension (and with the person's name changed):

Yukio Sakai was a young Japanese man enrolled in a college public speaking class. Whatever went on in class, Yukio watched and listened raptly...and silently. Often the instructor posed open-ended questions to the group as a whole, such as, "What do you think John did well in his persuasive speech?" When such questions were posed, almost anyone in class except Yukio would pipe up with an opinion. To a casual observer, Yukio would seem to be "just sitting there."

If the instructor directly asked Yukio one of the questions, however, what usually happened was that he replied without the slightest hesitation. Furthermore, his answers conveyed insight, sound reasoning, and common sense. It would have been a mistake to take his apparent lack of activity at any given moment as a sign of incapacity.

As we discovered earlier in our chapter on intercultural and international group communication, someone from a high power distance culture such as Japan's may not outwardly react to messages from an authority figure such as a college instructor. What appears to be the person's inert passivity, however, could actually be thoughtful analysis and reflection. (Of course, you don't have to be Japanese to practice those good habits).

The second advantage of listening in groups is a product of the fact that there will always be more diverse perspectives and more interaction in a group than in a dyad. People can be fascinating, can't they? And many times the product of discussion among different people, with their different backgrounds and values, is something entirely unexpected. What this means, if you're a curious person at all, is that you should find lots to keep you entertained and educated as you listen to people in a group setting.

Listening in Digital Groups

As we mentioned earlier, digital groups can communicate either synchronously or asynchronously; that is, in real-time or with delays between messages. If you use synchronous tools, such as Skype or some other form of audio or video conferencing, the same challenges and advantages apply to digital groups that we've already presented. The only difference may be that you and the other group participants aren't physically in the same place.

On the other hand, group members who exchange oral messages asynchronously may confront more intense pros and cons. Davis, M., Paleg, K., & Fanning, P. (2004). *How to communicate workbook; Powerful strategies for effective communication at work and home*. New York: MJF Books. The good news is that you'll have even more time than in a face-to-face group discussion to review and think about messages before reacting to them, which may yield wiser and calmer responses. The bad news is that the freshness and spontaneity of listening to each other's comments in real-time will be lost, which could tend to homogenize people's attitudes and make it less likely for "aha moments" to take place.

Furthermore, if other group members can't actually see you when you're communicating, you may feign attentiveness or behave in unorthodox ways. One of the authors remembers being part of a group that was conducting a phone interview with a candidate for a job at a university many years ago. When the person in charge of the interview started the exchange by saying, "We know it may be uncomfortable for you to have to do an interview without being able to see us," one of the candidates said, "That's all right. I'm sitting here on my couch naked, anyway."

Key Takeaway

Listening in a group presents significant challenges but can also pay important dividends.

Exercise 7.3.1

1. If you're enrolled in college courses, do a little measuring in one of your next class sessions. Use a stopwatch to measure exactly how long you and one or two other students actually spend speaking during the class period. Ask a classmate to do the same for the instructor. Afterward, compare the measurements. What did you learn from the results?
2. Pick two groups of which you're a member. How would you compare the level of participation of their members in group discussions? How do their members' listening practices compare? In which group do you find it harder to function as a listener? Why?
3. The next time a group you're part of meets, watch and listen for the person who says the least. Does the person appear to be listening? If you feel comfortable doing so, ask the person afterward how much of the time he or she was attending closely to the discussion. Does the person's answer fit with how you'd assessed his or her behavior?
4. "To become a leader, you need to talk; to stay a leader, you need to listen." Do you agree, or not? What examples can you give to support your viewpoint?

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7.4: Strategies to Improve Listening in Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Identify physical actions that contribute to good listening
2. Identify effective pre-listening behaviors
3. Identify what to do and what to avoid doing when listening in a group

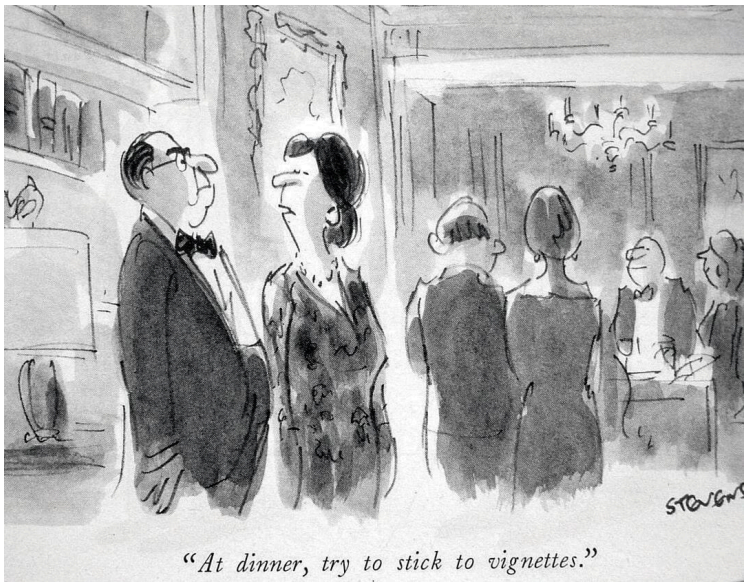


Figure 7.4.1

The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer.

Henry David Thoreau

Listening to people keeps them entertained.

Mason Cooley

First Things First

In the last few sections, we've established that listening is a vital skill in groups. Now let's review two fundamental points before we discuss specific steps for doing it well.

The first point is that before you can listen, you have to stop talking. This might seem self-evident, but in a culture like that of the United States, in which talking is highly valued, we may tend to overlook it.

The second point, though less obvious, is just as important. It is that both senders and receivers—both speakers and listeners—are responsible for effective listening. Listening actually transcends the mere reception of messages by listeners and imposes obligations on both senders and receivers in what Waldeck, Kearney, and Plax, Waldeck, J. H., Kearney, P., & Plax, T. (2013). *Business & professional communication in a digital age*. Boston: Wadsworth. called "sender-receiver reciprocity."

Senders should choose their messages according to the context or occasion. Furthermore, they should consider what media they will use to communicate them—for instance, face-to-face interaction or synchronous or asynchronous transmissions—and be mindful of the implications of their selection.



Figure 7.4.2: Image from http://www.public-domain-image.com

For their part, receivers must make an effort to listen, be prepared to provide feedback, and manage their responses to ensure relevance and civility. They should also practice what Beebe, Beebe, and IvyBeebe, S.A., Beebe, S.J., & Ivy, D.K. (2007). *Communication: Principles for a lifetime* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson. labeled "social decentering"—i.e., "stepping away from your own thoughts and attempting to experience the thoughts of others."

The Physical Side of Listening

As we've already pointed out, good listening is an active process. As such, it requires energy. In fact, listening is work—and not just mental work, either. To do the work of listening, which generally consumes the majority of your time whenever you interact with a group, you should be sure you're physically primed and ready to go. To confirm that your body is really prepared for high-quality listening, you should first check your posture. Assuming that you're seated, sit up straight and lean slightly forward. Not only does good posture allow you to remain relaxed and alert, but it makes it more likely that other people will see you as competent and confident. Burgoon, J.K., & Saine, T.J. (1978). *The unspoken dialogue: An introduction to nonverbal communication*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Next, notice your breathing. Be sure you're inhaling and exhaling deeply. Also, identify any aches or pains that may interfere with your ability to take in other people's messages. See if you can shift into a position that will allow you to remain comfortable and attentive throughout the communication process.

Pre-listening

How much time and effort you put into getting ready to listen will depend among other things on what kind of group you're in, how well you and the other members know each other, and what topics you're dealing with. Sometimes you're talking about light or superficial matters—like "Where shall we get together after we complete our project?"—and you can just dive into a conversation without any particular thought to getting ready to listen.

There will be occasions, however, when you ought to stop, consider, and plan your listening carefully. Let's say you're in a student government group considering requests for activity fee money, for instance, or a screening committee involved in hiring a new person to join your business. In cases like these, when careful, accurate listening will be at a premium, you should probably take some or all of these preparatory steps:

Assign listening tasks to people. Because social loafing is more likely when members aren't held accountable for their behavior, Thompson, L. (2008). *Organizational behavior today*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education. you may want to ask individuals to listen for different kinds of information or divide a long period of listening into segments, each of which has a designated "major listener."

Confirm (or reconfirm) your group's norms with respect to listening. Remind yourselves about how you plan to take turns speaking.

Identify any potential contextual barriers to listening. Kelly, M.S. (2006). *Communication @ work: Ethical, effective, and expressive communication in the workplace*. Boston: Pearson. Such barriers may include the location in which you're communicating, the cultural identity of group members, and the mixture of genders represented in the group.

Remind the members of the group that they should recognize their own biases, including their tendency to interpret information in the light of their beliefs. Hybels, S., & Weaver, R.L. (1998). *Communicating effectively* (5th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill. Perhaps note that each group members is tuned in to a special mental radio station, "WII-FM," which stands for "What's in it for me?"

Decide whether it's all right for group members to take notes or make audio recordings during the upcoming communication. If it is, decide whether you'd like to name one or more members "primary note-takers" or recorders.

Determine how often and when you plan to take breaks. Remember that "the mind can absorb only what the seat can endure." Even though parts of a lengthy discussion may be engrossing, when the time for a scheduled break comes your listening ability will probably be rejuvenated if you pause at least long enough for people to stand and stretch for 30–60 seconds before proceeding.

Listening Itself

All right. Let's say the members of your group have physically and mentally readied themselves to listen, and you've begun a discussion. What do you need to do as the process unfolds? Here are some important dos and don'ts:

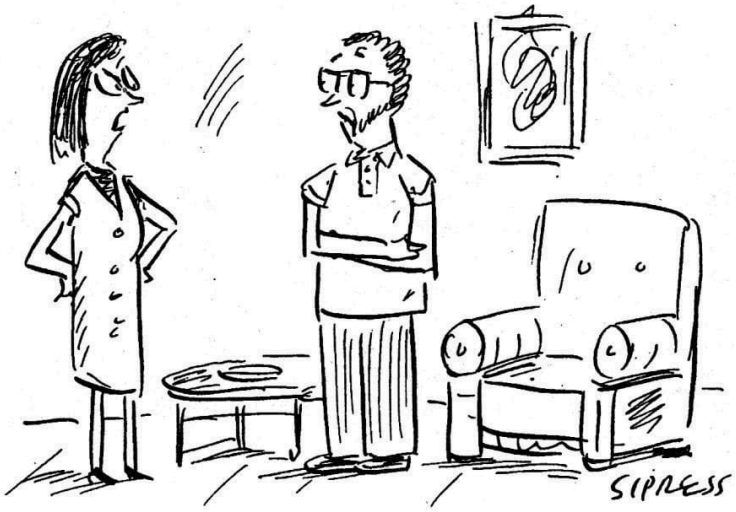
In listening, do...

1. Determine your purpose in listening, and keep it in mind. Thinking back to earlier in this chapter, are you listening to acquire information, to evaluate messages, to relax and enjoy ourselves, or to demonstrate empathy?
2. Identify the levels at which group members are communicating their messages—e.g., emotional, political, or intellectual.
3. Assess the relative significance of people's comments and listen for main ideas rather than trying to take in everything on an equal plane. To help you do this, you may want from time to time to mentally summarize the message(s) you're listening to.
4. When possible and appropriate, urge other members of the group to speak, especially those who are less dominant. Say things like "Please go on"; "Tell me more"; "Care to expand on that?" Remember that each person has a unique perspective that can add to the group's ability to consider ideas and make decisions.
5. "Listen with your eyes." Observe people's body language and other nonverbal cues carefully, since those physical manifestations may add to or sometimes contradict their spoken words.
6. Show interest in others' messages through your own nonverbal actions. Establish and maintain eye contact. Smile. Adopt an open posture. Avoid fidgeting or slouching.
7. Use "interactive questioning".Lumsden, G., & Lumsden, D. (2004). *Communicating in groups and teams; Sharing leadership* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson. Ask open-minded and open-ended questions to clarify ideas & information; to probe a speaker's reasoning and evidence; and to expand incomplete information. Use and ask for examples so that the speaker can connect your questions with his or her own world of experiences.
8. Use tentative clarifying/confirming statements: e.g., "It sounds like..."; "You seem to think that..."; "As I get it, you..."
9. Make polite, "targeted" interruptionsLumsden, G., & Lumsden, D. (2004). *Communicating in groups and teams; Sharing leadership* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson. to get answers to pressing questions, or if you'd like establish your place in line to speak next. Be judicious and infrequent with interruptions, however.
10. Paraphrase. Don't just see if you can accurately reflect what a person is saying; see if you can determine if your understanding of the person's "inner world" is accurate and whether you see things as the other person is experiencing them at the moment.
11. Respond after listening, sincerely and constructively. Focus on content, ideas, & analysis rather than on personal matters.
12. Allow for, and be careful how you interpret, silence. Keep in mind that people may have many reasons, positive or otherwise, for not speaking at a particular time.

In listening, don't...

1. Let listening be a dead end, in which you receive messages and don't react at all.
2. Allow the listening behavior of others to sway your own. If they're inattentive, don't lose your own focus; if they're especially positive or negative, don't lose your objectivity or critical ability.
3. Cut off or put down a speaker.
4. Interrupt excessively.

5. Pose “counterfeit questions”—belligerent statements masquerading as questions simply because they end with question marks.
6. Allow the tone of someone’s message, or how agreeable you find the person to be, to color your interpretation or reactions to it.
7. Express your interpretations of other people’s messages excessively. Why not? First of all, your interpretation may be wrong. Second, even if you’re right, you may arouse a defensive reaction that in turn leads to unproductive argumentation.



“Why do you always get defensive whenever I attack you?”

Figure 7.4.3

No matter how often you listen to people, and no matter how many groups you may be part of, each new listening situation will be unique. It’s your responsibility, shared with your fellow group members, to see that in each new conversation or discussion you exercise proper practices and skills in your listening.

Key Takeaway

To listen well in a group, it’s important to prepare properly and heed several dos and don’ts.

Exercise 7.4.1

1. Observe a televised, recorded, or live group discussion. Identify the listening processes which furthered understanding and those which impeded it. What suggestions would you make to the members of the group to improve their listening? Which person in the discussion listened most effectively, and how did she or he accomplish that?
2. Visit the website of the International Listening Association (http://www.listen.org) and read an article in one of the Association’s online publications. What discoveries did you make in your reading? How will you apply the discoveries to your future group interactions?
3. Who’s the best listener you know? What does the person do (or not do) that makes him/her so effective? Give an example of how the person has listened well.

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7.5: Summary

We discussed many ways to gain a better understanding of your group members. To begin, it is important to understand yourself: your attitudes, beliefs, and values. It is also helpful to understand the processes that influence perception and listening. There are many individual differences in the ways people perceive things. Demographic traits such as age, gender, and employment can determine people's interests, needs, and goals. Effective communication involves recognizing these differences in perception and practicing fairness in delivering your message to your group or team. Finally, an important dimension of group communication is the ability to receive messages from others through active listening.

Chapter Review Questions

1. Interpretive Questions
    1. How does listening limit or expand our view?
    2. How does our internal monologue influence our listening?
    3. In what ways, if any, are all group members the same?
2. Application Questions
    1. What are some of the ways people demonstrate listening among people you know? Identify a target sample size (20 is a good number), and ask members of your family, friends, and peers about they know someone is listening to them. Compare your results with those of your classmates.
    2. What impact does technology and specifically the cell phone have on listening? Investigate the issue and share your findings.
    3. Investigate two ways to learn more about your group members and share them with your classmates.

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7.6: Additional Resources

Explore the website of the National Association for Self-Esteem. www.self-esteem-nase.org/

Forum Network offers a wealth of audio and video files of speeches on various topics. Listen to a lecture titled “Selective Attention: Neuroscience and the Art Museum” by Barbara Stafford, Professor of Art History, University of Chicago. forum-network.org/lecture/selective-attention-neuroscience-and-art-museum

Explore the website of the journal *Perception*. www.perceptionweb.com/

Visit this About.com site to learn more about the Gestalt principles of perception. http://psychology.about.com/od/sensationandperception/ss/gestaltlaws_4.htm

Visit About.com to read an article by Kendra Van Wagner on the Gestalt Laws of Perceptual Organization. http://psychology.about.com/od/sensationandperception/ss/gestaltlaws.htm

Visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s site to read about demographic traits and their relationship to environmental issues. www.epa.gov/greenkit/traits.htm

Philosophe.com offers a collection of articles about understanding your audience when you design a website. http://philosophe.com/understanding_users/

Read more about active listening on this MindTools page. http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/ActiveListening.htm

Consider these academic survival tips provided by Chicago State University. www.csu.edu/engineeringstudies/acadsurvivaltips.htm

A collection of articles and other resources to assist in improving listening and other communication skills. http://conflict911.com/resources/Communication/Listening

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8: GROUP LEADERSHIP

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8.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. Please indicate your favorite superhero, movie star, or inspirational leader that you perceive has qualities worthy of learning from to apply in your own life. What traits or behaviors to they possess or exhibit that inspire you and why? Please share your results with your classmates.
2. Please list five facts, points, or things about you that you would want an audience to know about you as a professional. Post your results and compare with classmates.
3. Name of Student: _____

   Name of Person Interviewed: _____

   What is leadership? Do you think leadership is the same now as in the past, or will change in the future?

Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.

Peter Drucker, economist, management guru, author (1909–2005)

A good leader inspires others with confidence; a great leader inspires them with confidence in themselves.

Unknown

Getting Started

Leadership in groups and organization can be an opportunity and a challenge. How we approach it can make all the difference. In this chapter, we explore what leadership is, how we become leaders, the role of teamwork and interdependence in leadership, and finally diverse forms and representations of leadership in action.

Leadership is a complicated and mystery thing. Is it a behavior or set of actions? Is it a talent, that some are born with while others are not? Is it an ability to communicate clearly and effectively with contagious enthusiasm? These are some of the questions we'll address in this chapter but first let's be clear: There is no universal definition of leadership. Across cultures what we consider leadership varies greatly, and yet we know it when we see it. We are not born with it, but our experiences can influence our ability to act when the context demands action.

Communication is learned, not innate, and how we learn to follow, and to lead, is a reflection of that process. We can learn to lead in more effective ways. We can solve new challenges in collaborative ways. We can respond to a crisis with skill and expertise, learned from drill and practice. We can make a difference in the groups in which we participate, as leaders or followers. In this chapter, we explore the many fascinating aspects of leadership.

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8.1: What is Leadership?

Learning Objectives

1. Define and describe leadership

When you hear the word “leadership” what comes to mind? Is it Superman, with amazing abilities to overcome almost all obstacles combined with altruism and his concern for humanity? Is it Lara Croft, the fictional video game character who solves all her own problems and doesn’t need anyone to save her as she is no “damsel in distress?” Is it the action movie hero, alone against all odds, the rises from the ashes victorious? Is it the person who, observing that someone is choking and cannot breathes, performs the Heimlich maneuver, dislodging the obstruction and saving someone’s life? Or finally, is the person who gets up every morning, helps others at their tasks and on their way, who juggles two jobs and more responsibilities than they can count, and still remains accessible, helpful, and caring day after day? You might answer all of the above and to a certain extent you would be correct, but we need to examine these distinct expressions of leadership to learn from each one.

Superman represents the ideal hero for some, with a combination of strength and virtue. Natural born leaders have been discussed, explored, and investigated time and time again across history. It was once thought that a leader was born, not made, but the evidence indicates otherwise. What makes a leader is complicated and not easy to define. Across cultures leadership is considered many things, and requires many different, if not opposing, behaviors. There is no universal standard, trait, or quality that makes a leader, but still people sometimes look to a strong leader to solve their problems. Some cultures have embraced a single person’s leadership without checks or balances, like Stalin or Hitler, only to learn devastating lessons that cost millions of lives. There is no superman.

Therefore, what does make a leader? Is it a combination of talents (that you are born with) and skills (that you learn in life)? Ligon, Hunter, and MumfordLigon, G.S., Hunter, S.T. & Mumford, M.D. (2008). Development of outstanding leadership: A life narrative approach. *The Leadership Quarterly, 19* (3) 312–334. explore exceptional leaders in *Development of outstanding leadership: A life narrative approach*. Their goal was to further understanding of how different childhood and young adult experiences may impact leadership, searching for identifiable patterns in predicting different types of leadership. Their conclusion may surprise you: what makes a leader across contexts are individuals who, in the presence of a crisis or challenge, can formulate and implement a plan of action. Leadership, therefore, is the ability to effectively formulate and implement a plan of action based on the context. The person who calls 911 when someone appears to have a heart attack has observed and assessed the situation, and creates a rational plan to address the current crisis. What might be normally considered a simple phone call, in this context, becomes of paramount importance. The ability to provide a location or street address, or describe observations, or even perform CPR while emergency services are in route are all examples of leadership in action. Even if the person doesn’t know CPR, the act of asking people in the area if anyone knows CPR and can help is matching needs to skill sets, an important aspect of leadership. Leadership can be demonstrated in your own life or can involve teams and groups.

There is no universal definition of leadership. Across cultures what we consider leadership varies greatly, and yet we know it when we see it. We are not born with it, but our experiences can influence our ability to act when the context demands action. To state that leadership is a mystery is an understatement. We cannot define it, and yet we can recognize it. So we start to use terms to describe what we observe and arrive at a definition, and then try to explain it, predict it, and develop it.

Throughout history, many people have speculated about leadership and its nature. Howe,Howe, W. (1996). Leadership vistas: From the constraints of the behavioral sciences to emancipation through the humanities. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 3*(2), 32–69. for example, proposes the field of leadership is too narrowly viewed and challenges to be open to leadership in its many forms. This complexity makes it difficult for researchers, authors, or philosophers to arrive at a common definition of leadership. The behavioral sciences have been the home of many of these investigations, but as the field grows, leadership itself is increasingly considered a cross-disciplinary concept.

The study of leadership began with the focus on control and hierarchy, House, R. J., & Aditya, R. N. (1997). The social scientific study of leadership: Quo vadis? *Journal of Management, 23* (3), 409–4 73. but that is changing. For example, Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, and Maxneyski, Mendenhall, M., Osland, J., Bird, A., Oddou, G., & Mazneyski, M. (2008). *Global leadership: Research, practice, and development*. New York: NY: Routledge. explored global leadership and attempted to define a universal leader. They observed a shift from hierarchal leadership (the boss tells you what to do and how to do it) to a more participatory leadership (the boss discusses the task with the team as they formulate a plan). The ancient view of global leadership was one of domination,

commanding followers, and clear demonstrations of the power of a leader. This reflected a more of authoritarian style than a participative style of leadership that we observe today. According to Rajah, Song and Arvey,Rajah, R., Song, Z. & Arvey, R., A., (2011). Emotionality and leadership: Taking stock of the past decade of research. *Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 1107–1119. there a current shift from the perceptive of a leaders' controlling perspective to one of the followers' participatory perspective. Across fields, leadership is increasing perceived as a dynamic relationship involving leader-follower behaviors. Today, issues such as diversity, gender, culture, and ethics are increasingly considered relevant, even critical, elements of leadership. Day and Antonakis, Day, D., & Antonakis, J. (2012) *The nature of leadership: Second edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. suggest a new paradigm where leadership is, in fact, just starting to be understood as a hybrid approach that combines insights, frameworks, strategies, and approaches across disciplines.

As globalization increases and our interconnected world becomes smaller, there is a growing appreciation for the role of an effective leader in terms of vision, success, and overall organization effectiveness. Leaders are required to possess increasingly complex skill sets and are expected to effectively communicate with individuals, groups and teams, and within and between organizations. This gives rise to the central question: how best to prepare or develop effective leaders? Avolio, Walumbwa, & WeberAvolio, B., Walumbwa, F., & Weber, T. (2009) Leadership: Current Theories, Research, Future Direction Annual Review of Psychology 60 (2009), pp. 421–449; doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.16362 provide a developmental approach, conceptualizing authentic leadership as a pattern of leadership behavior that develops from a combination of positive psychological qualities and strong ethics. Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, Avolio, B., Walumbwa, F., & Weber, T. (2009) Leadership: Current Theories, Research, Future Direction Annual Review of Psychology 60 (2009), pp. 421–449; doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.16362 also suggest that leadership is composed of four distinct but related components; self-awareness, internalized moral perspectives, balanced processing, and relational transparency.

We can observe that leadership has been investigated, and that it has many factors, but we are still challenged to fully answer our central question: what is leadership? We'll conclude with a term from the US Navy: deckplate leadership. Get out of the office and get on the deckplates. It means that, in order to get the job done an effective leader has to be on the deck of the ship, interacting and learning what are the challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities present, emphasizing both task orientation with relationship. That takes initiative, self-motivation, skills, and talent, all elements of effective leadership. You, as a student, are taking charge of your education. As we proceed in our exploration of leadership remember to get up, get out, and see the many examples of leadership all around you.

Key Takeaway

Leadership traits, situational leadership, functional leadership, and transformative leadership comprise four key approaches to leadership theory.

Exercise 8.1.1

1. What has been your experience to date as a leader? Discuss your thoughts with your classmates.
2. Describe a leader that you know or have known in the past that you perceived as skilled or effective. How did they act and what did they do that was inspirational? Write a 2–3 paragraph discussion of your experience and share it with a classmate.
3. Think of a leader you were challenged to follow or perceived as ineffective. What did they do or say that was ineffective? How would you characterize this leader's style (use descriptive terms) and why? Please share your observations with your classmates.

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8.2: Leadership Theories

Learning Objectives

1. Define and describe traits, situational, context-based, and transformative leadership theories

There are many perspectives on leadership, but they generally fall into four main categories: leadership traits, situational or context-based leadership, functional leadership, and transformational leadership. Let's examine each in turn.

The first approach we'll consider is the oldest of all: universal leadership traits, or the view that there are inherent traits, that may be part of a person from birth as in talents, or acquired skills that express those in-born traits, that are somehow universal or constant across contexts and cultures. It is a significant challenge to even begin to consider the many contexts where leadership might be displayed, and so instead of focusing on the context, in this view, we focus on the individual and his or her traits. Some studies, Bass, B. (1981). Traits of Leadership: A follow-up to 1970. In R.M. Stogdill (ed.), *Handbook of Leadership*. New York: Free Press, pp. 73–96.' Baker, D. (1990). A qualitative and quantitative analysis of verbal style and the elimination of potential leaders in small groups. *Small Group Research*, 38, pp. 13–26. have indicated that people in leadership possess the following ten traits as shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Universal Leadership Traits

	Trait	Explanation	Example
1	Achievement Orientation	A clear focus on achievement	She consistently makes time in her busy schedule for her school work. She is focused on completing her degree.
2	Adaptability	The ability to adapt to the context, including constraints or resources, to be successful	She understands the challenges of running a household and raising children on a budget, and still makes her studies a priority.
3	Energy	The ability to devote time, concentration, and effort to a challenge	Even though she is tired in the evening she makes time, after the children have gone to bed, to complete her studies each night.
4	Intelligence	The ability to perceive, understand, formulate a response to, and implement a plan of action to solve a challenge	There are never enough hours in the day, but she understands the challenges, sets priorities, and consistently gets the job done.
5	Innovation	The ability to perceive alternate plans of action to achieve similar or improved results	She understands the challenge and finds a faster, more efficient way to get the job done.
6	Persistence	The ability to persevere, or to stick with a challenge until it is solved.	She consistently completes her work on time, has completed all of her classes to date successfully, and is on track to graduate as planned.
7	Responsibility	The ability to respond and the awareness of duty, obligation, or commitment to solve a challenge	She knows she has the ability to respond to the many challenges, recognizes the importance of a university degree to herself and her children, and completed her obligations.
8	Self-confidence	The confidence in one's ability to solve a challenge	She knows she can do it.
9	Sociability	The ability to interact with others effectively	She can work in groups effectively, even with challenging members.

	Trait	Explanation	Example
10	Verbal Communication Ability	The ability to articulate effectively, or express one's thoughts, ideas, or opinions in ways that others can understand them with minimal or no miscommunication	She can express herself effectively. People understand her when she speaks.

As we review these terms we can observe many of them in ourselves and others in daily life. Are leaders those who possess all ten traits? Are these ten traits the only traits that represent leadership? No on both counts. Leaders may possess or exhibit some or all of these traits, but not all the time in every context. In addition, what we consider leadership in one context might be considered insubordination in another. Cultures vary as to their expectations for leaders and what traits they must possess, and we learn culture from each other. We are not born with it. We learn to communicate from and with each other. We are not built with an innate ability to communicate and our surroundings, including those who model behaviors for us, influence how we communicate with ourselves and others. If we are raised in a community where people take responsibility for their challenges and work together to solve them, we are more likely to model that behavior. If we are raised in a community that looks to an institution or an individual to solve problems for them, we are more likely to expect our problems to be solved for us. Since we can see that our environment influences our communication, our culture, and these traits, let's examine alternatives as we continue to explore the concept of leadership.

Our second approach to leadership shifts the focus or attention from the individual to the context, or situation. As we discussed previously, this makes for a significant challenge. How can we assess the myriad of situation factors at any given moment in time? In reality, we cannot, but we can make the concerted effort to limit the factors we consider and explore the influence of context on our behaviors, including those associated with leadership within a specific cultural framework.

Situational leadership, or leadership in context, means that leadership itself depends on the situation at hand. In sharp contrast to the "natural born leader," "universal leadership traits" model of leadership we previously discussed, this viewpoint is relativist. Leadership is relative or varies, based on the context. There is no one "universal trait" to which we can point or principle to which we can observe in action. There is no style of leadership that is more or less effective than another unless we consider the context. Then our challenge presents itself: how to match the most effective leadership strategy with the current context?

In order to match leadership strategies and context we first need to discuss the range of strategies as well as the range of contexts. While the strategies list may not be as long as we might imagine, the context list could go on forever. If we were able to accurately describe each context, and discuss each factor, we would quickly find the task led to more questions, more information, and the complexity would increase, making an accurate description or discussion impossible. Instead, we can focus our efforts on factors that each context contains and look for patterns, or common trends, that help us make generalizations about our observations.

For example, an emergency situation may require a leader to be direct, giving specific order to each person. Since each second counts the quick thinking and actions at the direction of a leader may be the most effective strategy. To stop and discuss, vote, or check everyone's feelings on the current emergency situation may waste valuable time. That same approach applied to common governance or law-making may indicate a dictator is in charge, and that individuals and their vote are of no consequence. Instead an effective leader in a democratic process may ask questions, gather viewpoints, and seek common ground as lawmakers craft a law that applies to everyone equally.

Hersey and Blanchard, Hersey, P. and Blanchard, K. H. (1977). *Management of Organizational Behavior 3rd Edition—Utilizing Human Resources*. New Jersey/Prentice Hall. take the situational framework and apply to an organizational perspective that reflects our emphasis on group communication. They assert that, in order to be an effective manager, one needs to change their leadership style based on the context, including the maturity of the people they are leading and the task details. Hersey and BlanchardHersey, P. and Blanchard, K. H. (1977). *Management of Organizational Behavior 3rd Edition—Utilizing Human Resources*. New Jersey/Prentice Hall. focus on two key issues: tasks and relationships, and present the idea that we can to a greater or lesser degree focus on one or the other to achieve effective leadership in a given context. They offer four distinct leadership styles or strategies (abbreviated with an "S"):

1. Telling (S1). Leaders tell people what to do and how to do it.
2. Selling (S2). Leaders provide direction, information, and guidance, but sell their message to gain compliance among group members.
3. Participating (S3). Leaders focus on the relationships with group members and shares decision-making responsibilities with them.
4. Delegating (S4). Leaders focus on relationships, rely on professional expertise or group member skills, and monitor progress.

They allow group members to more directly responsible for individual decisions but may still participate in the process.

Telling and selling strategies are all about getting the task done. Participating and delegating styles are about developing relationships and empowering group members to get the job done. Each style or approach is best suited, according to Hersey and Blanchard, Hersey, P. and Blanchard, K. H. (1977). *Management of Organizational Behavior 3rd Edition—Utilizing Human Resources*. New Jersey/Prentice Hall. to a specific context. Again, assessing a context can be a challenging task but they indicate the focus should be on the maturity of the group members. It is the responsibility of the leader to assess the group members and the degree to which they possess the maturity to work independently or together effective, including whether they have the right combination of skills and abilities that the task requires. Once again, they offer us four distinct levels (abbreviated with "M" for maturity):

1. M1, or level one. This is the most basic level where group members lack the skills, prior knowledge, skills, or self-confidence to accomplish the task effectively. They need specific directions, and systems of rewards and punishment (for failure) may be featured. They will need external motivation from the leader to accomplish the task.
2. M2, or level two. At this level the group members may possess the motivation, or the skills and abilities, but not both. They may need specific, additional instructions or may require external motivation to accomplish the task.
3. M3, or level three. In this level we can observe group members who are ready to accomplish the task, are willing to participate, but may lack confidence or direct experience, requiring external reinforcement and some supervision.
4. M4, or level four. Finally, we can observe group members that are ready, prepared, willing, and confident in their ability to solve the challenge or complete the task. They require little supervision.

Now it is our task to match the style or leadership strategy to the maturity level of the group members as shown in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2 Situational Leadership: Leadership Style and Maturity Level

	Leadership Style (S)	Maturity Le
1	S1	M1
2	S2	M2
3	S3	M3
4	S4	M4

This is one approach to situational leadership that applies to our exploration of group communication, but it doesn't represent all approaches. What other factors might you consider other than style and maturity? How might we assess diversity, for example, in this approach? We might have a skilled professional who speaks English as their second language, and who comes from a culture where constant supervision is viewed as controlling or domineering, and if a leader takes a S1 approach to provide leadership, we can anticipate miscommunication and even frustration. There is no "One Size Fits All" leadership approach that works for every context, but the situational leadership viewpoint reminds us of the importance of being in the moment and assessing our surroundings, including our group members and their relative strengths and areas of emerging skill. The effective group communicator recognizes the Hersey-Blanchard, Hersey, P. and Blanchard, K. H. (1977). *Management of Organizational Behavior 3rd Edition—Utilizing Human Resources*. New Jersey/Prentice Hall. approach provides insight and possible solutions to consider, but also keeps the complexity of the context in mind when considering a course of action.

Our third approach to consider is called functional leadership, or leadership that focused on behaviors that address needs and help the group achieve its goals. Hackman, J. R., & Walton, R. E. (1986). Leading groups in organizations. In P. S. Goodman (Ed.), Designing effective work groups (pp. 72–119). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.' McGrath, J. E. (1962). Leadership behavior: Some requirements for leadership training. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Civil Service Commission.' Adair, J. (1988). Effective Leadership. London. Pan Books.' Kouzes, J. M. and Posner, B. Z. (2002). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. The leader needs to assess needs, including task, team, and individual group member needs. Balance and performance are emphasized, and the time the leader spends on a specific approach varies based on their assessment of the area of need. The highest priority is completion of the task in this approach, but it is balanced against team and individual group member needs. Each activity or approach targets each area of need, and the leader focuses on it emphasize the area, alternating their time on any given activity based on the existing needs.

Table 8.3 Functional Leadership

	Task Need	Team Need	Individual Need
1	Assessing the situation	Training	Training and Coaching
2	Understanding the task	Building team spirit	Recognizing individual skills and abilities; leveraging them on the task
3	Preparing the plan to address the task	Focus on the mission; sense of purpose	Focus on the mission; sense of purpose
4	Implementing the plan addressing the task	Motivation, praise, and rewards	Motivation, praise, and rewards
5	Allocating time and resources to the task	Focus on the tempo or pace of performance	Fostering interdependence while respecting individual performance, including roles and tasks
6	Re-evaluating the plan and making adjustments	Status recognition or performance acknowledgement	Status recognition or performance acknowledgement
7	Understanding Quality Standards	Discipline, including sanctions and punishment	Attending to personal problems
8	Quality control	Quality Control	Individual output
9	Evaluating outcomes	Redirection, review of the action plan	Individual role and task review
10	Sharing the outcomes (Communication)	Facilitating group interactions (Communication)	Individual interaction (Communication)

As we can see in Table 8.3, the functional leader focuses on the short and long term needs of the group. If the group is lost, perhaps time invested in re-evaluating the plan and making adjustments, meeting a task and a team need at the same time, might prove effective. If an individual group member is struggling, perhaps supportive coaching and even additional training might yield results. Based on the leader's assessment of the needs, they will select the appropriate action and maintain a priority order. They will also be constantly attuned to change, ready to adapt and meet the ever-changing needs of the task, team, or individual.

Our final approach to consider, called transformational leadership, emphasizes the vision, mission, motivations, and goals of a group or team and motivates them to accomplish the task or achieve the result. This model of leadership asserts that people will follow a person who inspires them, who clearly communicates their vision with passion, and helps get things done with energy and enthusiasm.

James MacGregor Burns, a presidential biographer, first introduced the concept, discussing the dynamic relationship between the leader and the followers, as they together motivate and advance towards the goal or objective. Burns, J. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper and Row. Bernard Bass, Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and Performance*. New York: Free Press. contributed to his theory, suggesting there are four key components of transformation leadership, as shown in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4 Four Key Components of Transformational Leadership

	Component of Transformational Leadership	Explanation
1	Intellectual Stimulation	Transformational leaders encourage creativity and ingenuity, challenging the status quo and encouraging followers to explore new approaches and opportunities.
2	Individualized Consideration	Transformational Leaders recognize and celebrate each follower's unique contributions to the group.
3	Inspirational Motivation	Transformational Leaders communicate a clear vision, helping followers understand the individual steps necessary to accomplish the task or objective while sharing in the anticipation of completion.
4	Idealized Influence	Transformational Leaders serve as role models, demonstrating expertise, skills, and talent that others seek to emulate, inspiring positive actions while reinforcing trust and respect.

The leader conveys the group's goals and aspirations, displays passion for the challenge that lies ahead, and demonstrates a contagious enthusiasm that motivates group members to succeed. This approach focuses on the positive changes that need to occur in order for the group to be successful, and requires the leader to be energetic and involved with the process, even helping individual members complete their respective roles or tasks.

In this section, we have discussed leadership traits, situational leadership, functional leadership, and finally transformative leadership theories. We can recognize that there are no universal traits associated with leadership, but there are traits that are associated with it that we develop across time through our experiences. We can also recognize that the context or situation makes a significant impact on leadership, and matching the situation to the leadership approach requires skill and expertise. Every challenge is unique in some way, and the effective leader can recognize that aligning their actions and support with the needs of the group makes sense. The functional perspective requires a leader to assess task needs, group needs, and individual needs, and then devote time, energy, and resources to them in priority order. Finally, a transformative leadership approach involves an articulate leader with a clear vision that is shared with energy and enthusiasm with followers, encouraging them to embrace the steps required as well as the end goal, objective, or mission result. Each approach offers us a viewpoint to consider as we approach leadership in teams, and all serve as important insights into how to better lead an effective group.

Key Takeaway

Leadership traits, situational leadership, functional leadership, and transformative leadership comprise four key approaches to leadership theory.

Exercise 8.2.1

1. Do you think natural leaders exist? Why or why not? Discuss your thoughts with your classmates.
2. Describe a transformative leader that you know or have known in the past. How did they act and what did they do that was inspirational? Write a 2–3 paragraph discussion of your experience and share it with a classmate.
3. Think of a leader you admire and respect. Which approach do they best represent (traits, situational, functional, or transformative) and why? How would you characterize this leader's style and why? Please share your observations with your classmates.

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8.3: Becoming a Leader

Learning Objectives

1. Describe three ways group members become leaders

Whether or not there is a "natural leader," born with a combination of talents and traits that enable a person to lead others, has been a subject of debate across time. In a modern context, we have come to recognize that leadership comes in many form and representations. Once it was thought that someone with presence of mind, innate intelligence, and an engaging personality was destined for leadership, but modern research and experience shows us otherwise. Just as a successful heart surgeon has a series of skill sets, so does a dynamic leader. A television producer must both direct and provide space for talent to create, balancing control with confidence and trust. This awareness of various leadership styles serves our discussion as groups and teams often have leaders, and they may not always be the person who holds the title, status, or role.

Leaders take on the role because they are appointed, elected, or emerge into the role. The group members play an important role in this process. An appointed leader is designated by an authority to serve in that capacity, irrespective of the thoughts or wishes of the group. They may serve as the leader and accomplish all the designated tasks, but if the group does not accept their role as leader, it can prove to be a challenge. As TuckmanTuckman, B. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin, 63*, 384–399. notes, "storming" occurs as group members come to know each other and communicate more freely, and an appointed leader who lacks the endorsement of the group may experience challenges to his or her authority.

A democratic leader is elected or chosen by the group, but may also face serious challenges. If individual group members or constituent groups feel neglected or ignored, they may assert that the democratic leader does not represent their interests. The democratic leader involves the group in the decision-making process, and insures group ownership of the resulting decisions and actions as a result. Open and free discussions are representative of this process, and the democratic leader acknowledges this diversity of opinion.

An emergent leader contrasts the first two paths to the role by growing into the role, often out of necessity. The appointed leader may know little about the topic or content, and group members will naturally look to the senior member with the most experience for leadership. If the democratic leader fails to bring the group together, or does not represent the whole group, subgroups may form, each with an informal leader serving as spokesperson.

So if we take for granted that you have been elected, appointed, or emerged as a leader in a group or team you may be interested in learning a bit about how to lead. While we've discussed several theories on what makes a leader, and even examined several common approaches, we still need to answer the all-important question: how does one become an effective leader? There is no easy answer, but we will also take for granted that you recognize that a title, a badge, or a corner office does not make one an effective leader. Just because the boss says you are the leader of your work group doesn't mean those members of the workgroup regard you as a leader, look to you to solve problems, or rely on you to inform, persuade, motivate, or promote group success.

"Research on leadership indicates that 50–75% of organizations are currently managed by people sorely lacking in leadership competence. Hogan, R. (2003). *Leadership in Organizations*. Paper presented at The Second International Positive Psychology Summit, Washington, D.C. October 2–5. They are hired or promoted based on technical competence, business knowledge and politics—not on leadership skill. Such managers often manage by crisis, are poor communicators, are insensitive to moral issues, are mistrustful, over-controlling and micro-managing, fail to follow through on commitments they've made and are easily excitable and explosive. The result is low morale, alienated employees, and costly attrition.Ostrow, E. (2008). *20 ways to become an effective leader*. Retrieved on September 9, 2012, at: www.emergingleader.com/article31.shtml

Deckplate leadership is a US Navy approach to leadership that is applied and practical, and effectively serves our discussion. It means you need to get out of the office and get on the deckplates, the deck of the ship, or where the action is occurring. If you are in manufacturing it might be on the assembly line floor. If you are in sales, it might mean out where sales actually occur. Deckplate leadership means that, in order to get the job done an effective leader has to be on the deck of the ship, interacting and learning what are the challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities present, emphasizing both task orientation with relationship. Jeff Wuorio, Wuorio, J. (2011). 8 tips for becoming a true leader. Microsoft Business for Small and Midsize Companies. Retrieved on September 9, 2012, from: www.microsoft.com/business/en-us/resources/management/leadership-training/8-tips-for-becoming-a-true-leader.aspx?fbid=L-7CgraXG7d of Microsoft Business for Small and Midsize Companies, offers an excellent

list of suggestions, attributes, on how to become an effective leader that we've adapted in Table 8.5.

Table 8.5 How to Become an Effective Leader

	Attributes	Explanation
1	Real leadership means leading yourself	This is where it all starts. People respect you when you respect yourself, and one way to address this attribute is to meet your personal goals. Get up early, learn the skills and procedures, and be the meaningful, contributing member of a team or group. People will naturally look to you for solutions when your self-discipline combined with your skills allows them to accomplish their tasks or goals.
2	No dictators allowed.	Sitting on a throne will not improve your leadership skills, gain you new, useful information, or develop you as a leader. Get on the deckplate, the assembly line floor, our out with the customer service representative to learn what is happening right now and be a resource for team members to solve problems.
3	Be open to new ways of doing things.	One size does not fit all. What motivates one team member may not motivate the rest. You will need to be open to new approaches to achieve similar, or improved, results. The status quo, or the way we have always done it, is not an effective approach to produce improvements. While we may want to stick with what works, we have to keep in mind that as conditions and contexts change, those who adapt, thrive. Those who do not adapt become obsolete.
4	Value diversity	Diversity in its many forms means more than race, gender, or even class distinctions. It means diverse perspectives that bring unique and often promising approaches to a challenge. Take advantage of this important aspect of teams and groups to produce outstanding results for everyone.
5	Establish and display a genuine sense of commitment.	To be an effective leader you need to be committed to the mission, vision, or goal, and you need to display it clearly, communicating contagious enthusiasm and energy to team or group members. Slogans and programs that lack commitment will only be seen as meaningless, empty words. Bring the vision to life in action and deed.
6	Be results-oriented	Stephen Covey (1989)Covey, Stephen R. (1989) "The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People." New York: Fireside promotes the approach of "begin with the end in mind" and here it clearly applies. We need to achieve results, and celebrate incremental steps towards the goal, in order to achieve it. As a leader, you have to be results-oriented in today's world, and be engaged with the process to observe, and highlight, incremental gains.
7	Demonstrate genuine appreciation	A slap on the back or a handshake can be meaningful, but it is often not enough to celebrate success or motivate team members. Know your team well enough to know how each member prefers recognition and communicate it with respect. Your genuine efforts to acknowledge incremental progress will help your group members stay engaged, and help address fatigue or attrition.
8	Remember that leaders learn	Once you have it all figured out, it is time to recognize that you've lost your way. Contexts and conditions are constantly changing, and as in any dynamic system, so are we. If you are not renewing as a leader, learning new skills that can make a positive difference, then you become stale, detached, and obsolete. Change is an ever-present part of group dynamics.
9	An effective leader has, and shares, a plan	A plan of action, clearly communicated and embraced by team members, can make all the difference. Being proactive means the leader needs to identify potential problems before they happen and providing solutions before they escalate into a crisis. Being reactive means addressing the challenge after it is already an issue, hardly an effective plan. While the ability to respond to an emergency is key, the effective leader anticipates challenges, and shares that awareness and understanding with team members.
10	Leaders know roles and responsibilities, and share them with the team	An effective leader knows team members, their roles and responsibilities, and shares them with the group, promoting interdependence and peer recognition while remaining alert to the need for individual coaching, training, or reinforcement.

As we consider these attributes we can see the importance of communication throughout each one. The effective leader is engaged, practices active listening, and is open to learn as well as to instruct, coach, or cheer.

Developing Virtual Leadership

In order to be most effective, groups or teams need a sense of community. A community can be defined as a physical or virtual space where people seeking interaction and shared interest come together to pursue their mutual goals, objectives, and shared values. Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning communities in Cyberspace: Effective strategies for the online classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. For our purposes, the setting or space can be anywhere, at any time, but includes group or team members and, as you might have guessed, a leader. The need for clear expectations is key to the effective community, and it is never more true than in an online environment where asynchronous communication is the norm and physical interaction is limited or non-existent. Increasingly we manage teams from a distance, outsource services to professionals across the country, and interact across video and voice chats on a daily basis. The effective leader understands this and leverages the tools and technology to maximize group and team performance.

Through interaction in groups and teams, we meet many of our basic human needs, including the need to feel included, and the need for love and appreciation. Shutz, W. (1966). *The Interpersonal Underworld*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, pp. 13–20. From the opening post, welcome letter, or virtual meeting, the need to perceive acknowledgment and belonging is present, and the degree to which we can reinforce these messages will contribute to higher levels of interaction, better engagement across the project, retention throughout the mission, and successful completion of the goal or task. Online communities can have a positive effect by reducing the group member's feeling of isolation through extending leader-to-team member and team member-to-team member interaction. Fostering and developing a positive group sense of community is a challenge, but the effective leader recognizes it as an important, if not critical, element of success.

Given the diversity of our teams and groups, there are many ways to design and implement task-oriented communities. Across this diversity, communication and the importance of positive interactions in each group is common ground. The following are five "best practices" for developing an effective online community as part of a support and interaction system for your team or group:

1. Clear expectations—The plan is the central guiding document for your project. It outlines the project information, expectations, deadlines, and often how communication will occur in the group. Much like a syllabus guides a course, a plan of action, from a business plan to a marketing plan, can serve as an important map for group or team members. With key benchmarks, quality standards, and proactive words of caution on anticipated challenges, the plan of action can be an important resource that contributes to team success.
2. Effective organization—Organization may first bring to mind the tasks, roles, and job assignments and their respective directions but consider: Where do we interact? What are the resources available? When do we collaborate? All these questions should be clearly spelled out to help team members know when and where to communicate.
3. Prompt and meaningful responses—Effective leaders are prompt. They understand that when Germans are waking up, the Chinese are tucking their children into bed. They know when people will be available and juggle time zones and contact information with ease. Same-day responses to team members are often the norm, and if you anticipate longer periods of time before responding, consider a brief email or text to that effect. The online community is fragile and requires a leader to help facilitate effective communication.
4. A positive tone in interaction and feedback—Constructive criticism will no doubt be a part of your communication with team members, but by demonstrating respect, offering praise as well as criticism, and by communicating in a positive tone, you'll be contributing to a positive community. One simple rule of thumb is to offer two comments of praise for every one of criticism. Of course, you may adapt your message for your own needs, but as we've discussed previously, trust is the foundation of the relationship and the student needs to perceive you are supportive of their success.

How Do I Build an Effective Online Team?

In order for people to perceive a sense of community or feel like they belong to a team, they need group socialization. Group socialization is the development of interpersonal relationships within a group context. Group success is built on the foundation of the relationships that form as a part of group development. You can emphasize activities and environments that create a supportive group climate, paying attention to relationship messages as well as content messages. Palloff and Pratt, Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning communities in Cyberspace: Effective strategies for the online classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. recommend seven steps for building a successful team.

- Clearly define the purpose of the community
- Create a clear, distinct place for the group to gather
- Promote effective leadership from within the community
- Define norms and a clear code of conduct

- Allow for a range of member roles
- Allow for leadership and facilitating of subgroups
- Allow members to resolve their own disputes, while adhering to class established norms

Palloff and Pratt, Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning communities in Cyberspace: Effective strategies for the online classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. caution that it is possible to develop a community that has strong social connections between the team members but where very little performance actually takes place. Here is where the leader plays a central role. The leader needs to be visibly present and actively engaged in the process, encouraging learners focus their energies on the social aspect to the detriment of the learning goals of the project and the community. Palloff and Pratt, Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning communities in Cyberspace: Effective strategies for the online classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. suggest:

- Engaging team members with subject matter and related resources
- Visibly accounting for attendance and participation
- Working individually with team members who are struggling
- Understanding the signs that indicate that a team member is in trouble
- Building online communities that accommodate personal interaction

Palloff and Pratt, Palloff, R. M., & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning communities in Cyberspace: Effective strategies for the online classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. further indicate that a leader can tell if the community is working when the following emerge:

- Active interaction
- Sharing of resources among team members rather than team member to leader
- Collaborative learning evidenced by comments directed primarily team member to team member
- Socially constructed meaning evidenced by agreement or questioning with the intent to achieve agreement on issues of meaning in order to achieve group goals or results
- Expression of support and encouragement exchanged between team members as well as willingness to critically evaluate the work of others

It is not easy to create and manage a team online, but recognizing a sense of community as well as the signs of positive interaction and productivity will help contribute to team success.

In this section, we discussed how to become a leader, from the election process, appointment, or emergence, and ways to develop our leadership skills. We discussed how leadership starts with the self, and self-discipline, and that group or team members will naturally turn to leader that can solve not only their own problems, but contribute to group member's success. When team members see that a leader can help them get their job done right the first time, it only makes sense that they will be more likely to turn to them time and time again. Leadership is a dynamic process, and change is a constant. Developing yourself as a leader requires time and effort, and recognizing that team members want a sense of community, appreciate a proactive plan, and sometimes need reinforcement or recognition, can go a longs ways towards your goal.

Key Takeaway

Group members become leaders when they are elected to the role, they emerge into the role, or through appointment.

Exercise 8.3.1

1. Do you prefer electing a leader or observing who emerges? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each process of becoming a leader? Discuss your thoughts with your classmates.
2. Describe an appointed leader that you know or have known in the past. How did they manage their new role? Were they well-received (why or why not)? Write a 2–3 paragraph discussion of your experience with an appointed leader and share it with a classmate.
3. Think of a leader you admire and respect. How did this individual become a leader—for example, by appointment, democratic selection, or emergence? How would you characterize this leader's style—is the leader autocratic or laissez-faire; a technician or a coach?

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8.4: Teamwork and Leadership

Learning Objectives

1. Define teamwork and explain how to overcome various challenges to group success
2. Describe the process of leader development
3. Describe several different leadership styles and their likely influence on followers

Two important aspects of group communication, especially in the business environment, are teamwork and leadership. You will work in a team and at some point may be called on to lead. You may emerge to that role as the group recognizes your specific skill set in relation to the task, or you may be appointed to a position of responsibility for yourself and others. Your communication skills will be your foundation for success as a member, and as a leader. Listen and seek to understand both the task and your group members as you become involved with the new effort. Have confidence in yourself and inspire the trust of others. Know that leading and following are both integral aspects of effective teamwork.

Teamwork

Teamwork is a compound word, combining team and work. Teams are a form of group normally dedicated to production or problem-solving. That leaves us with the work. This is where our previous example of problem-solving can serve us well. Each member of the team has skills, talents, experience, and education. Each is expected to contribute. Work is the activity, and while it may be fun or engaging, it also requires effort and commitment, as there is a schedule for production with individual and group responsibilities. Each member must fulfill his or her own obligations for the team to succeed, and the team, like a chain, is only as strong as its weakest member. In this context, we don't measure strength or weakness at the gym, but in terms of productivity.

Teams can often achieve higher levels of performance than individuals because of the combined energies and talents of the members. Collaboration can produce motivation and creativity that may not be present in single-contractor projects. Individuals also have a sense of belonging to the group, and the range of views and diversity can energize the process, helping address creative blocks and stalemates. By involving members of the team in decision-making, and calling upon each member's area of contribution, teams can produce positive results.

Teamwork is not without its challenges. The work itself may prove a challenge as members juggle competing assignments and personal commitments. The work may also be compromised if team members are expected to conform, and pressured to go along with a procedure, plan, or product that they themselves have not developed. Groupthink, or the tendency to accept the group's ideas and actions in spite of individual concerns, can also compromise the process and reduce efficiency. Personalities and competition can play a role in a team's failure to produce.

We can recognize that people want to belong to a successful team, and celebrating incremental gain can focus the attention on the project and its goals. Members will be more willing to express thoughts and opinions, and follow through with actions, when they perceive that they are an important part of the team. By failing to include all of the team members, valuable insights may be lost in the rush to judgment or production. Making time for planning, and giving each member time to study, reflect, and contribute can allow them to gain valuable insights from each other, and may make them more likely to contribute information that challenges the status quo. Unconventional or "devil's advocate" thinking may prove insightful and serve to challenge the process in a positive way, improving the production of the team. Respect for divergent views can encourage open discussion.

Thill and Bovee, Thill, J. V., & Bovee, C. L. (2002). *Essentials of business communication*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. provide a valuable list to consider when setting up a team, which we have adapted here for our discussion:

- Select team members wisely
- Select a responsible leader
- Promote cooperation
- Clarify goals
- Elicit commitment
- Clarify responsibilities
- Instill prompt action

- Apply technology
- Ensure technological compatibility
- Provide prompt feedback

Group dynamics involve the interactions and processes of a team, and influence the degree to which members feel a part of the goal and mission. A team with a strong identity can prove to be a powerful force, but requires time and commitment. A team that exerts too much control over individual members can run the risk or reducing creative interactions and encourage tunnel vision. A team that exerts too little control, with attention to process and areas of specific responsibility, may not be productive. The balance between motivation and encouragement, and control and influence, is challenging as team members represent diverse viewpoints and approaches to the problem. A skilled business communicator creates a positive team by first selecting members based on their areas of skill and expertise, but attention to their style of communication is also warranted. Individuals that typically work alone, or tend to be introverted, may need additional encouragement to participate. Extroverts may need to be encouraged to listen to others and not dominate the conversation. Teamwork involves teams and work, and group dynamics play an integral role in their function and production.

Types of Leaders

We can see types of leaders in action and draw on common experience for examples. The heart surgeon does not involve everyone democratically, is typically appointed to the role through earned degrees and experience, and resembles a military sergeant more than a politician. The autocratic leader is self-directed and often establishes norms and conduct for the group. In some settings, we can see that this is quite advantageous, such as open-heart surgery or during a military exercise, but it does not apply equally to all leadership opportunities.

Contrasting the autocrat is the laissez-faire leader, or “live and let live” leader. In a professional setting, such as a university, professors may bristle at the thought of an autocratic leader telling them what to do. They have earned their role through time, effort, and experience and know their job. A wise laissez-faire leader recognizes this aspect of working with professionals and may choose to focus efforts on providing the professors with the tools they need to make a positive impact. Imagine that you are in the role of a television director, and you have a vision or idea of what the successful pilot program should look like. The script is set, the lighting correct, and the cameras are in the correct position. You may tell people what to do and where to stand, but you remember that your job is to facilitate the overall process. You work with talent, and creative people are interesting on camera. If you micromanage your actors, they may perform in ways that are not creative, and that will not draw audiences. If you let them run wild through improvisation, the program may not go well at all. Balancing the need for control with the need for space is the challenge of the laissez-faire leader.

Not all leaders are autocrats or laissez-faire leaders. Harris and Sherblom, Harris, T., & Sherblom, J. (1999). *Small group and team communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. specifically, note three leadership styles that characterize the modern business or organization, and reflect our modern economy. We are not born leaders but may become them if the context or environment requires our skill set. A leader-as-technician role often occurs when we have skills that others do not. If you can fix the copy machine at the office, your leadership and ability to get it running again are prized and sought-after skills. You may instruct others on how to load the paper, or how to change the toner, and even though your pay grade may not reflect this leadership role, you are looked to by the group as a leader within that context. Technical skills, from Internet technology to facilities maintenance, may experience moments where their particular area of knowledge is required to solve a problem. Their leadership will be in demand.

The leader-as-conductor involves a central role of bringing people together for a common goal. In the common analogy, a conductor leads an orchestra and integrates the specialized skills, and sounds, of the various components the musical group comprises. In the same way, a leader who conducts may set a vision, create benchmarks, and creative collaborate with group as they interpret a set script. Whether it is a beautiful movement in music, or a group of teams that comes together to address a common challenge, the leader-as-conductor keeps the time and tempo of the group.

Coaches are often discussed in business-related books as models of leadership for good reason. A leader-as-coach combines many of the talents and skills we’ve discussed here, serving as a teacher, motivator, and keeper of the goals of the group. A coach may be autocratic at times and give pointed direction without input from the group, and they may stand on the sidelines while the players do what they’ve been trained to do and make the points. The coach may look out for the group and defend it against bad calls, and may motivate players with words of encouragement. We can recognize some of the behaviors of coaches, but what specific traits have a positive influence on the group? Peters and Austin, Peters, T., & Austin, N. (1985). *A passion for excellence: the leadership difference*. New York: Random House. identify five important traits that produce results:

- Orientation and education

- Nurturing and encouragement
- Assessment and correction
- Listening and counseling
- Establishing group emphasis

Coaches are teachers, motivators, and keepers of the goals of the group. There are times when members of the team forget that there is no “I” in the word “team.” At such times coaches serve to redirect the attention and energy of the individuals to the overall goals of the group. They conduct the group with a sense of timing and tempo, and at times relax and let the members demonstrate their talents. Through their listening skills and counseling, they come to know each member as an individual, but keep the team focus for all to see. They set an example. Coaches, however, are human and by definition are not perfect. They can and do prefer some players over others, and can display less than professional sideline behavior when they don’t agree with the referee, but the style of leadership is worthy of your consideration in its multidisciplinary approach. Coaches use more than one style of leadership and adapt to the context and environment. A skilled business communicator will recognize that this approach has its merits

Key Takeaway

Teamwork allows individuals to share their talents and energy to accomplish goals, and an effective leader facilitates this teamwork process.

Exercise 8.4.1

1. Do you prefer working in a group or team environment, or working individually? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Discuss your thoughts with your classmates.
2. Imagine that you could choose anyone you wanted to be on a team with you. Who would you choose, and why? Write a 2–3 paragraph description and share it with a classmate.
3. Think of a leader you admire and respect. What leadership traits to they display or possess? How would you characterize this leader’s style—is the leader autocratic or laissez-faire; a technician or a coach?

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8.5: Diverse Forms of Leadership

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between laissez-faire, autocratic, and democratic leadership styles
- Describe differences between transactional and transformational leadership
- Identify examples and characteristics of matriarchal leadership
- Identify differences between leadership styles associated with males and females

President Harry Truman once said he didn't want economists hedging by saying, "On the one hand" and then adding "but on the other hand." Truman said: "Bring me a one-armed economist."Godden, J. (2008, April 28). Send for a one-armed economist. Seattle Post Intelligencer. Retrieved from http://www.seattlepi.com/local/opinion/article/Send-for-a-one-armed-economist-1271762.php

Jean Godden

Leadership theory resembles economics in at least one respect. Despite the fact that leadership has been investigated intensively for decades, if not centuries, no one has come up with a definitive prescription for how to practice it in every situation. The major reasons for this failure are that every situation differs from every other situation, and every leader differs from every other leader. What is great leadership, then? It depends!

Gay and Donald Lumsden, Lumsden, G., & Lumsden, D. (2004). *Communicating in groups and teams: Sharing leadership* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning. described this situation succinctly: "This is one of those good-sense things. You can't expect one approach to work in all situations." Diverse people with diverse personalities in diverse situations call for diverse forms of leadership.

A "Goldilocks" Continuum of Leadership

Although it was perhaps simplistic even when it were proposed half a century ago, a continuum of three styles of leadership may seem at first glance to be logical. It's soothing, isn't it, to think that, like Goldilocks, we can consider and rule out possibilities that are "too this" and "too that" in favor of a choice that's just right?



Figure 8.5.1

At one end of a leadership continuum proposed in the 1960s and 1970s, White, R.K., & Lippett, R.O. (1960). *Autocracy and*

democracy. New York: Harper & Row.' Likert, R. (1967). *The human organization: Its management and value*. New York: McGraw-Hill. lies laissez-faire leadership, whose main feature is a willingness to let people in a group behave as they wish. If a group comprises skilled and competent members who willingly share responsibilities and are already motivated to work hard, this kind of leadership may be appropriate—or, at least, it may not cause harm to the group. Most individuals and groups, however, are apt to have difficulty maintaining focus and productivity under laissez-faire leadership.

At the other end of the continuum would be autocratic leadership, also known as command and control management. Zak, M.W. (1994). "It's like a prison in there": Organizational fragmentation in a demographically diversified workplace. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 8*, 281–298. An autocratic leader uses coercive power or the dispensation or withholding of rewards to control how the group operates. Some group members may appreciate, or at least accept, autocratic leadership because of the structure and definitiveness it provides. In fact, when autocratic leadership is first imposed on a group, it can increase short-term productivity. Lumsden, G., & Lumsden, D. (2004). *Communicating in groups and teams: Sharing leadership* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning. Later, however, aggressive behavior may develop under an autocratic leader, and turnover rates are likely to rise.



Figure 8.5.2

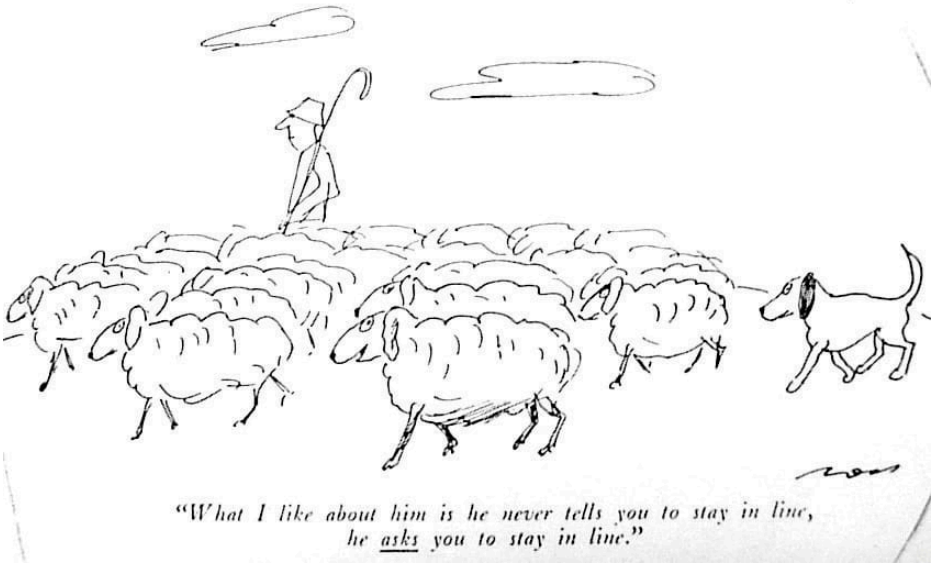


Figure 8.5.3

In the middle of the continuum, in the place that Goldilocks would presumably have considered to be just right, is democratic leadership. Sometimes called "participative leadership," this variety is characterized by distribution of responsibility among group

members; empowerment of the members to determine their activities and express their opinions freely; and assistance with (but not domination of) the group's decision-making. Under this kind of leadership, most or all of a group's members are entrusted to perform important functions and may actually sometimes exchange the roles of leader and follower. Gastil, J. (1994). A definition and illustration of democratic leadership. *Human Relations*, *47*, 953–975. Native-born Americans might consider democratic leadership to be the ideal kind, but it yields benefits in some situations more than in others. It is most advantageous when a group is first forming, and other factors that contribute to its success are breadth of talent and ideas among group members and lack of clarity about the group's goals.

Transactional and Transformational Leadership

A new movement in leadership theory, known at the time as "new leadership," first emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Among other things, its adherents drew a distinction between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Bryman, Bryman, A. (1992). *Charisma and leadership in organizations*. London: Sage. wrote that transactional leaders exchange rewards for performance. In other words, they employ what we will describe in our next chapter as a behaviorist approach to motivating group members.

Transformational leaders, by contrast, provide group members with a vision to which they can all aspire. They also work to develop a team spirit so that it becomes possible to achieve that vision.

Den Hartog, Van Muijen, & Kopman, Den Hartog, D.N., Van Muijen, J.J., & Kopman, P.L. (1997). Transactional versus transformational leadership: An analysis of the MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire). *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 70*, 19–35. distinguished clearly between these two kinds of leaders. They held that transactional leaders motivate group members to perform as expected, whereas transformational leaders inspire followers to achieve more than what is expected. Nanus, Nanus, D. (1992). *Visionary leadership: Creating a compelling sense of direction for your organization*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. wrote that transformational leaders accomplish these tasks by instilling pride and generating respect and trust; by communicating high expectations and expressing important goals in straightforward language; by promoting rational, careful problem-solving; and by devoting personal attention to group members.

Matriarchal Leadership

We've discussed in other parts of this book how gender can affect interactions in small groups. We haven't touched yet, however, on the implications of matriarchal leadership—leadership in which women exercise primary influence instead of men—on how whole societies and the groups within them function. Examples of such leadership from North America, Africa, and Europe will help us understand some of those implications.

In Native American society, women have long occupied major leadership roles. Anthony Day, Day, A. (2004, Jan 16). Book review: *The worlds of Pocahontas; Pocahontas: Medicine woman, spy, entrepreneur, diplomat*; Paula Gunn Allen; Harper San Francisco. *Los Angeles Times*, pp. 27–E.27. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/421887463?accountid=1611 noted that a book by Paula Gunn Allen made this point with reference to three Native American women known today for the guidance and support they provided to men exploring North America: Pocahontas, who saved John Smith in early Virginia and later wed Captain John Rolfe; Malinche, Hernán Cortés's lover and the mother of his son; and Sacagawea, without whose help the Lewis and Clark expedition might have ended in disaster. According to Allen, each of these women was "doing the traditional work of highborn Native American women in a matriarchal society." Furthermore, each occupied a leadership position among her own people which made it possible for her to enact change, bridge worlds, and bring about harmony among diverse groups.

Two other authorities, Tarrell Awe, A. P., & Michael, T. G. (2005). Beloved women: Nurturing the sacred fire of leadership from an American Indian perspective. *Journal of Counseling and Development: JCD, 83*(3), 284–291. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/219017519?accountid=1611 have had this to say about leadership in today's Native American tribal groups: "American Indian governance is filled not with the romantic notion of male 'chiefs' ... but with tribal councils or committees consisting of multiple leaders (male and female) holding positions of leadership, most often with a group of women holding the ultimate power for decisions that affect the entire tribe." These same writers also quoted a Mohawk Woman, Lorraine Canoe, As cited in McFadden, S. (Ed.). (1994). *The little book of Native American wisdom*. Rockport, MA: Element. as saying, "We are a matriarchal society. Even our language honors the women. It is a female language. When we dance, the men dance on the outside of the circle. The inside of the circle is to honor the women."

Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, who in 2005 became the first elected female head of state in Africa and was awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize with two other Third World women, noted that "at least 250 prominent African women leaders have made the

'history books' since Western historians took an interest in Africa, let alone those that passed unrecorded but live on in folk history."Johnson-Sirleaf, E. (2010) Africa's women have led in the past and will lead in the future. *New African*, 78–79. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/807485982?accountid=1611. According to Sirleaf-Johnson, these leaders have included chiefs, queens, ministers, prime ministers, and others. Liberia, where Sirleaf-Johnson is president, has six female cabinet ministers who hold strategic positions, including justice, foreign affairs, agriculture, and commerce.

In contemporary Europe, women occupy far fewer upper-level leadership positions in business than do men, but their numbers are greater in family-run corporations than in listed companies. According to Richard Milne, Milne, R. (2008, October 15). A matriarchal leadership. *FT.Com*. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/229232082?accountid=1611. women in European family-held businesses tend to be guided by four distinctive drives: a focus on long-term rather than short-term goals; a sense of empathy for co-workers, including subordinates; a desire to emulate their own mothers' style of organizing a family; and a powerful commitment to support the business in times of challenge.

Asia covers a vast area encompassing many diverse cultures and sociological features. It is also a fast-changing region of the world, technologically, economically, and culturally. Recent writings indicate, however, that matriarchal leadership has existed there for centuries in at least parts of China and is established also as part of Philippine culture.

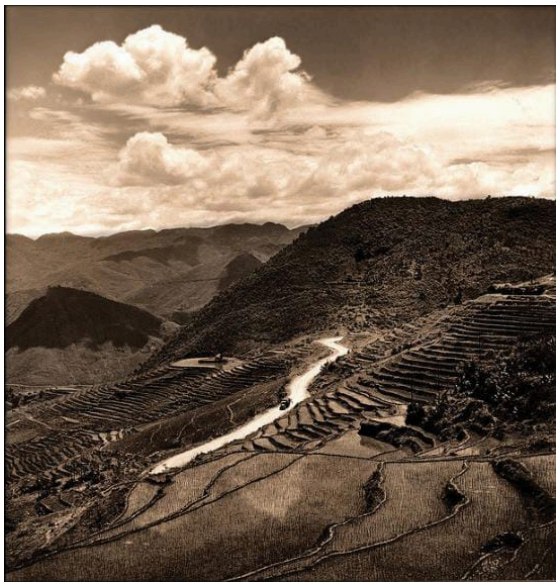


Figure 8.5.4: Source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/ralphrepo_photolog/4165081611

Among the approximately 50,000 members of the Mosuo ethnic group in remote southern China, until as recently as 15 years ago the women made all major decisions and held the purse strings. Property and names still pass from mothers to daughters in the area's agrarian villages. One man interviewed by the author of an article about the area, Farley, M. (1998, Dec 26). Saturday journal; In Lugu Lake, marriage is a ticklish affair; females call the shots as men hand over matters of life and love in remote Chinese matriarchal society. *Los Angeles Times*, pp. 1–1. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/421475684?accountid=1611 said that in his small business transactions with outside visitors "I hand the money over to my wife's mother. She gives me enough to buy cigarettes and a drink, and I do what she says." The headman of another village informed the author that he made decisions outside the village but not inside. "If I want to do something," he said, "I must get permission from my mother."

A study of women in positions of business leadership in the Philippines revealed several features related to matriarchy. Roffey, B. (2002). Beyond culture-centric and gendered models of management: Perspectives on Filipina business leadership. *Women in Management Review, 17*(7), 352–363. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/213138203?accountid=1611. First, the businesses examined in the study displayed greater interconnectedness with the women's families than is usually the case in Western male-led firms. Employees were in many instances treated as family members, even to the extent of being provided with food and accommodation. Second, the values which the women associated with effective leadership included several that are generally linked to women's perceived strengths: diplomacy, tact, "grace," "charm", "humility," and "integrity."

Male vs. Female Leadership

The "nature *versus* nurture" debate continues to rage in the social sciences. Controversy still exists over how much of human

behavior is caused by biology and how much of it results from social conditioning. The American political scientist Francis Fukuyama, Fukuyama, F. (1998). Women and the evolution of world politics. *Foreign Affairs, 77* (5), 24–40. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/214292115?accountid=1611. however, has forcefully contended that "virtually all reputable evolutionary biologists today think there are profound differences between the sexes that are genetically rather than culturally rooted, and that these differences extend beyond the body into the realm of the mind."

What might some of these differences be when it comes to leadership, and how persistent might they be? Fukuyama answered that "male tendencies to band together for competitive purposes, seek to dominate status hierarchies, and act out aggressive fantasies toward one another can be rechanneled but never eliminated." According to him, boys have been shown in hundreds of studies to be more aggressive, both verbally and physically, in their dreams, words, and actions than girls.

With respect to international relations, Fukuyama wrote that women are less likely than men to see force as a legitimate tool for resolving conflicts. Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson added that "it is the skills of cooperation and collaboration that count in a new age of interconnectedness, qualities in which women excel."Johnson-Sirleaf, E. (2010, Africa's women have led in the past, and will lead in the future. New African, 78–79. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/807485982?accountid=1611 And in the Philippine businesses studied by Roffey, the women leaders were more frequently found to demonstrate nurturance and flexible risk-taking than traits often ascribed to male leaders, such as firmness and single-mindedness.

Key Takeaway

Leadership can take many forms, including nontraditional ones such as matriarchal leadership, and the results of various forms may differ substantially.

Exercise 8.5.1

1. Think of the last several movies you've watched. Who took leadership in their stories, and how effectively? Assuming that the leadership was not matriarchal, how do you think the films would have come across differently if the leadership had featured women rather than men? How do you think men and women in the audience might have reacted differently?
2. If all their skills and authority were the same, and you were forced to choose between a woman and a man as the leader of a group you were part of, what choice would you make? Would it depend on what kind of group? If so, why? Explain your answers to a classmate.
3. Google "women heads of state" and determine how many countries in the world are currently led by women. Would you expect any common threads among the countries, or among their leaders? Why or why not?

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8.6: Summary

In this chapter, we have discussed what leadership is, examining the amazing range of behaviors, actions and traits associated with leadership across contexts and cultures. We also explored how one becomes a leader, through a democratic election, by appointment, or through a process of emerging as a leader to meet a need, address an issue, or through experience or skill. When people turn to you to help them solve their problems it is a sure sign you've become, in some respect, a leader. We explored a range of theories associated with leadership, from the idea that there are born leaders with universal traits, to the recognition that the situation or context can make a significant impact. We also discussed transformative leadership, where the leader, through energy and enthusiasm, motivates the group or team to accomplish their goals with the conclusion: "We did it!" Leadership is an important part of teams and groups, and learning to listen, to recognize skills and talents, and how to facilitate a positive team environment can make all the difference. Leaders are an important part of groups, and they use their effective communication skills to get the job done.

Chapter Review Questions

1. Interpretive Question
    1. Our world is changing rapidly in terms of technology, economics, political forces, and other features. Which of these changes, if any, do you feel may call upon outstanding leaders to behave differently than they might have in the past? What do you expect those differences to be?
2. Application Question
    1. In a small group of students, identify a task or situation which requires leadership. Now have half the group think of a male leader whom they admire and the other half identify such a female leaders. Have each half of the group write a paragraph or two describing the key behaviors it feels the leader would be likely to exhibit under the circumstances you've set forth. Compare the paragraphs and discuss whether and to what degree the gender of the leader might account for differences between the descriptions.

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8.7: Additional Resources

Read about groups and teams on the business website 1000 Ventures. http://www.1000ventures.com/business_guide/crosscuttings/team_main.html

Learn more about Tuckman's Linear Model. http://www.infed.org/thinkers/tuckman.htm

Learn more about Dewey's sequence of group problem solving on this site from Manatee Community College in Florida. http://faculty.mccfl.edu/frithl/SPC1600/handouts/Dewey.htm

Read a hands-on article about how to conduct productive meetings. http://www.articlesnatch.com/Article/How-To-Conduct-Productive-Meetings-/132050

Visit this WikiHow site to learn how to use VOIP. http://www.wikihow.com/Use-VoIP

Watch a YouTube video on cloud computing. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PNuQHUiV3Q

Read about groups and teams, and contribute to a wiki about them, on Wikibooks. http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Managing_Groups_and_Teams

How did Twitter get started? Find out. http://twitter.com/about

Take a (nonscientific) quiz to identify your leadership style. http://psychology.about.com/library/quiz/bl-leadershipquiz.htm

A review of leadership qualities in a self-assessment format. http://www.nsba.org/sbot/toolkit/LeadSA.html

Leadership Self-Assessment Activity. http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/survlead.html

The Trusted Leader Self-Assessment. http://www.thetrustedleader.com/self-assess-1.html

Personal Reflection, Hill Consulting Group Leadership Self-Assessment. http://www.hillconsultinggroup.org/assets/pdfs/leadership-assessment.pdf

The Leadership Motivation Assessment from MindTools. http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_01.htm

Leadership Self-Assessment Tool from the National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families. http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/areas-of-expertise/reflective-practice-program-development/leadership-self-assessment-tool.html

Leadership Self-Assessment, Online Form and Scoring, from McGraw-Hill. http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0070876940/student_view0/chapter6/activity_6_4.html

WikiBooks: Managing Groups and Teams/Effective Team Leadership. https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Managing_Groups_and_Teams/Effective_Team_Leadership

Successful Small Team Leadership: Manage the Group, Not the Individuals. http://knowwpcarey.com/article.cfm?aid=229

TealTrust, What makes a good team leader? http://www.teal.org.uk/et/page5.htm

About.com: 10 Ways to Become a Better Leader. http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/tp/become-a-better-leader.htm

12 Rules for Team Leadership (Transformative Model). http://www.legacee.com/Info/Leadership/TeamLeadership.html

Leadership Exercises and Tips from the University of Oregon. http://leadership.uoregon.edu/resources/exercises_tips

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9: GROUP MOTIVATION

9.0: Chapter Introduction

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9.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. Identify three things that you feel motivate you more than any others to work together with other people. Tell a classmate about a situation in which you benefited from those three things. Be as specific as you can about how each thing affected your attitude and behavior.
2. Think of a time interval during which your level of motivation to contribute to the work of a group increased or decreased dramatically. What caused the change? When you lost motivation, who or what might have prevented you from doing so?
3. What's the most challenging goal that a group you were part of ever set for itself? Did you achieve it? List several factors that contributed to your reaching it or failing to do so.
4. Think of one of the most successful groups you've been a member of. What steps did the group take regularly, if any, to check the level of its effectiveness?

Gettin' good players is easy. Gettin' 'em to play together is the hard part.

Casey Stengel

Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.

Henry Ford

A football coach was attempting to motivate his players through a difficult season. They were discouraged. Finally, the coach gathered the team together roughly and bellowed, "Did Michael Jordan ever quit?" The team yelled back, "No!" The coach then shouted, "What about the Wright brothers? Did they ever give up?" "No way!" the team yelled. "How about John Elway?" They all responded, "No!" "What about Mother Teresa?" "No! No!" they screamed. "Did Elmer Smith ever quit?" There was a long silence. Finally, one player was bold enough to ask, "Gosh, Coach, who's Elmer Smith? We never heard of him." The coach snapped back, "Of course you never heard of him—he quit!"

Introduction

In this chapter, we'll address four major questions. They are "Why do people take action at any given time, instead of remaining inert and inactive?", "Why do people choose to act in the particular ways they do?", "How can we get individuals, by themselves, to act in certain ways?", and "Once people are acting properly as individuals, how can we get them to work together for the good of a group?"

These questions are short and simple, but their answers are not. Just think of some times in your own experience when you wished you had some way to get another person, or a group you were part of, to "get off the dime" and move in a direction you felt was the right way to go! The frustration you felt has echoed through the ages; the task of motivating people has challenged human beings since at least the dawn of history. Without motivation, we flounder or stagnate.

In the pages ahead, we'll review a number of theories of motivation, ranging from complex to relatively straightforward ones, and consider factors that influence how susceptible people are to being motivated. Next, we'll list and examine two kinds of strategies: first, those which can produce motivation in people, and second, those which can lead people, once motivated, to collaborate with one another.

No matter how people act, and whether they take any action at all, the process of determining and stating whether something happened or didn't happen will always be crucial to understanding the past and preparing for the future. You can probably recall situations in your life when a person or a group seemed to be wandering about in circles, repeating statements and behaviors rather than building on them to move forward. Perhaps it was because, even though there was action going on, no one was examining what the action was leading to. To end our chapter, therefore, we'll consider the vital role that feedback and assessment play in generating and maintaining group motivation.

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9.1: Group Motivation and Collaboration

Learning Objectives

1. Identify two fundamental questions related to group motivation and collaboration
2. Identify factors that affect the ability to exercise persuasion and influence toward motivating collaborative behavior in groups

Your corn is ripe today; mine will be so tomorrow. 'Tis profitable for us both, that I should labour with you today, and that you should aid me tomorrow.

David Hume

"Let everyone sweep in front of his own door, and the whole world will be clean."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"A dark night in a city that knows how to keep its secrets, but on the 12th floor of the Acme Building, one man is still trying to find the answers to life's persistent questions: Guy Noir, Private Eye." Since 1974, Garrison KeillorKeillor, G. (2012, May 26). *Guy Noir, private eye*. Retrieved from http://prairiehome.publicradio.org/programs/2012/05/26/scripts/noir.shtml has hosted a nationally-broadcast weekly radio program called "A Prairie Home Companion." One regular feature of Keillor's show, about a bumbling detective from Minnesota, has always begun with the words we've just quoted.

The fictitious detective may not know it, but among life's persistent questions are those dealing with motivation and collaboration. As the theologian H.E. Luccock wrote, "No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it." The same goes for any other group of people: no individual can carry the whole load or produce the whole group's required outcomes.

Before we analyze motivation and collaboration in detail, let's first lay the groundwork by considering what we mean by the terms. Engleburg and Wynn, Engleberg, I.N., & Wynn, D. R. (2013). *Working in groups* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson. wrote that motivation consists of giving a person "a cause, or reason, to act." Collaboration, in turn, consists of joint expenditure of energy by two or more people in pursuit of a shared goal or aim.

Two Fundamental Questions

We can see that two fundamental questions need to be confronted by anyone who hopes to motivate a group to collaborate:

1. How can we induce any single individual to act in any particular way?
2. How can we induce many individuals to act together?

Society can function only if people are motivated to collaborate in groups. Getting people to do that, however, can be extremely difficult. As Garrison Keillor would put it, it's a persistent question, and it's one that can tire people out if they persist in trying to answer it. One of Keillor's "Guy Noir" episodes illustrates this reality.

The episode describes a field trip by a middle school band class to Washington, D.C. Ostensibly, the purpose of the field trip is to have the students produce and perform music together while enjoying the experience of visiting the capital. Once the group reaches the National Mall however, its band director gives up on any attempt to herd his students from one destination to another—to collaborate. When Guy sweetly asks one of the girls in the band why she has shaved half her head and why a boy has tattoos on his ears, she calls him a freak and tells him to mind his own business. Soon the clarinet section moves off in six different directions and the percussion section disappears entirely.

In the middle of all this, the band director is wearing earplugs to avoid having to listen to his students. "Earplugs; they're a blessing," he claims, as a noisy motorcycle nearly flattens him. "I'm going to retire in two weeks to Wyoming," he continues, where "the only horns are on the cattle and the only winds are in the trees."

As far as musical performance is concerned, the band director lets his students play three-minute concerts because he can't get them to concentrate any longer than that. (The idea of making things short by eliminating repetition is, Keillor writes, revolutionary in Washington).

People in the real world generally show better manners and are able to focus more readily than the characters in this fictional account. Still, motivating real people to collaborate is no simple matter. Garrison Keillor wrote this about the actual Washington, D.C.: "It occurred to me that most of the people I saw in Washington were special needs people, and the Congress is designed for verbally aggressive listening-impaired people, and that months go by and nothing gets done, and in an election year, less than nothing, and maybe that's what the balance of powers means."

Persuasion and Influence

Hybels & Weaver, Hybels, S., & Weaver, R.L. (1998). *Communicating effectively* (5th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill. indicated that getting people to act in a certain way requires persuasion and influence. How and where to best direct the persuasion and influence, however, will vary with time. It may be possible to motivate people to work together at certain times on certain tasks, but not at other times on other tasks. Why? Think back to those middle school students. Many factors will vary from time to time, including these:

Individuals' and groups' level of receptiveness. Sometimes we're open to suggestions and proposals; sometimes we're not. Middle school students, for instance, might be more apt to collaborate right after a good lunch than first thing in the morning or in the late afternoon.

The surrounding circumstances. We're more likely to focus our attention if we're not distracted by external noise or other sensory inputs. Putting middle school students in the middle of a bustling urban center is not likely to help them focus on a joint task.

People's physical condition. Obviously, if a group task is physically demanding, those who possess strength or stamina will be better able to participate than those who don't. If the middle school students were hot or exhausted, they'd be less likely to cooperate in getting anything done together. The wise grandmother of one of the authors of this book always used to advise other parents, "If your kids aren't cooperating, feed them."

People's attitudes toward a particular task. Getting people to do what they already want to do is no big deal; someone has written that an easy way to be a leader is to "watch where people are headed and just get out in front of them." Middle school students might not need a lot of persuasion to eat a few boxes of pizza together out on the grass by the Washington Monument. To get them to walk quietly together through an exhibit of Renaissance porcelain in the National Gallery of Art, on the other hand, would not be easy.

Lest we conclude that motivating people to collaborate is a hopeless enterprise, we can look around us any day and see that, although it isn't easy, it is possible. Tyler and Blader, Tyler, T.R., & Blader, S.L. (2000). *Cooperation in groups*. Philadelphia: Psychology Press. pointed out that intentional actions, policies, and practices can often influence people's dispositions, and through them shape cooperation. We'll consider some such actions, policies, and practices later in this chapter. Above all, we'll see that adopting a flexible attitude can help us influence people to adopt the motivation to collaborate.

Key Takeaway

Motivating people to collaborate in groups is challenging because the effectiveness of persuasion and influence depend on changeable human factors.

Exercise 9.1.1

1. If you were leading a middle-school field trip, what principles and practices would you follow to yield better results than the ones described by Garrison Keillor?
2. Think of a time when you or someone in a group with you successfully motivated the group to take action. What factors of the situation contributed favorably to the positive motivation? What factors made it difficult to motivate the group?

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9.2: Role of Motivation

Learning Objectives

1. Distinguish between content and process theories of motivation
2. Identify five content theories of motivation and four process theories
3. Identify three kinds of action that individuals or groups who are motivated may take

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.

Helen Keller

The Latin term *sine qua non* literally means "without which, not" or "that without which, nothing." In other words, if something is a *sine qua non*, it's absolutely necessary. Emerson's comment indicates that he considered enthusiasm to be the *sine qua non* of greatness. Our position in this book is that motivation is the *sine qua non* of effective group action.

As Hoy & Miskel, Hoy, W.K., & Miskel, C.G. (1982). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Random House. noted, motivation comprises "complex forces that start and maintain voluntary activity directed to achieve personal goals." In short, being motivated means having energy and wanting to put it to work.

Before we examine just what motivation accomplishes within an individual or in a group setting, we should first take a look at a number of views concerning where it comes from.

Theories of Motivation

Thinkers in business, education, psychology, and many other fields have long wondered about and performed research into the causes of motivation. Their theories fall into two major categories: content theories and process theories.

Content theories of motivation focus on the factors which motivate behavior by rewarding or reinforcing it. Process theories attempt instead to determine how factors that motivate behavior interact with each other.

Content Theories of Motivation

Several content theories of motivation were developed in the middle to late years of the 20th century. Probably the most well-known today is Maslow's need hierarchy, with its five levels, which we reviewed earlier in this book.

Another content theory from this period is Clayton Alderfer's "ERG" theory. Alderfer, C.P. (1972). *Existence, relatedness, and growth: Human needs in organizational settings*. New York: Free Press. According to Alderfer, people's needs can be broken down into the categories of existence, relatedness, and growth. Like Maslow's hierarchy, Alderfer's model portrayed people's needs in a hierarchical fashion. It differed from Maslow's hierarchy, however, both in its nomenclature for the levels in the hierarchy and in its contention that development through the hierarchy takes place in a cycle between differentiation and integration. Differentiation is a broadening of people's awareness through new and challenging experiences, whereas integration follows as an individual brings together diverse elements of his or her personality into a new and more unified form. When you decide to join a new club or organization, for instance, you first meet many people whose habits and behaviors may be new and perhaps disorienting to you. Later, however, you become more familiar with the way things work and feel consolidated and confident in your role within that group.

A third content theory is Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory. Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. (1959). *The motivation to work*. New York: Wiley. Herzberg classed rewards as either "motivators" or "hygienes." He held that motivators—including

achievement, recognition, responsibility, and the opportunity to advance within a group—are factors that contribute to satisfaction, but which when absent don't cause dissatisfaction. In other words, we appreciate them but can do without them. Hygienes, on the other hand—such as money, status, and job security—don't create satisfaction when they're present, according to Herzberg, but do lead to dissatisfaction if they're absent. In a sense, thus, they're what people consider to be basic minimal needs and can go only as far as preventing dissatisfaction.

Two more content theories of motivation have been identified by more contemporary authorities. Kenneth ThomasThomas, K.W. (2000). *Intrinsic motivation at work: Building energy and commitment*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler. drew a distinction between extrinsic rewards—those which come from the external environment—and intrinsic rewards, which come from within an individual or group.

Thomas believed that intrinsic rewards are more likely to motivate people and identified four kinds of intrinsic motivators. The first is a sense of meaningfulness, which is the idea that what a person or group is doing is worthwhile. The second is a sense of choice, which is the feeling that the person or group can make decisions about how to behave. The third is a sense of competence, which is the belief that the person or group is behaving capably. The fourth motivator is a sense of progress, which is the feeling that the person or group is actually accomplishing something.

A final content theory of motivation was put forth by Steven ReissReiss, S. (2000). *Who am I? The 16 basic desires that motivate our behavior and define our personality*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam and researchnews.osu.edu/archive/whoami.htm and developed as the outgrowth of a study involving more than 6,000 people. On the basis of statistical analysis of his results, Reiss contended that 16 basic desires motivate people's behavior: power, independence, curiosity, acceptance, order, saving, honor, idealism, social contact, family, status, vengeance, romance, eating, physical exercise, and tranquility.

Interestingly, Reiss asserted that 14 of the 16 desires are similar to those found in animals and are likely to be genetically determined. He also suggested that people's motivations differ substantially from individual to individual and group to group because each person's ranking of the 16 desires is unique.

Process Theories of Motivation

Theorists who espouse process theories of motivation are more interested in what starts, sustains, and stops behavior than they are in the things that motivate the behavior in the first place. We'll consider four kinds of process theories in this section.

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory was originated by Victor Vroom, Vroom, V. (1964). *Work and motivation*. New York: Wiley. and has been broadened and popularized since then by other authorities. Vroom's theory is complex, but its central idea is straightforward: People are most likely to be motivated in a certain way if they believe 1) that they will receive a reward, 2) that the reward they expect to receive is something they value highly, and 3) that they can do what it takes to achieve the reward.

Here's an example. If the members of a team of employees think they will receive praise from their boss if they produce a snappy PowerPoint presentation as part of a project they've been assigned, if they all care about receiving the boss's praise, and if they think they have the skills to create the presentation, then they're apt to work hard on the activity.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory holds that people's behavior is motivated by how they interpret the behavior of others around them. For instance, we may think that what's causing others to act as they do is a combination of internal, personal factors. On the other hand, we may think that their behavior is a product of environmental variables.

According to attribution theory, people might actually be motivated to convey more significant rewards for someone's failure than for success. Take the case of the team of employees working on the project. Let's say that their PowerPoint presentation has several errors in it. If the boss observes it and thinks, "Wow—they must've put a lot of time into this," he or she might be motivated to congratulate the team on its hard work and offer some kindly advice for improving the presentation. On the other hand, if the presentation is letter-perfect but the boss thinks, "I'll bet the department head down the hall showed them exactly how to do that," the boss may be motivated to offer only a routine acknowledgment that the assignment has been completed.

Goal Theory

Goal theory, Locke, E.A. (1968). Toward a theory of task motivation and incentives. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 3*, 157–189. contends that people are motivated to behave in certain ways, and to keep behaving in those ways, primarily because they intend to achieve particular goals. This sounds simple and reasonable enough, but goal theorists believe that reaching a goal actually includes seven steps. The first five steps bring behavior about, whereas the last two maintain and regulate it.

Here's what a goal-setter has to do in these seven steps: first, survey and understand his or her environment; second, evaluate which elements of the environment are of value to him or her; third, make an emotional assessment of possible courses of action; fourth, decide what is apt to happen if he or she behaves in a particular way; fifth, decide how likely it is that the results he or she desires can actually be produced; sixth, decide exactly how to behave; and seventh, take action. The authors of this book appreciate the intellectual elegance of goal theory but wonder if they, you, or anyone any of us know has ever deliberately followed all these steps!

Behaviorism

Behaviorism has probably received more attention and is better known throughout the public at large than any of the other three theories we've discussed. B.F. Skinner, Skinner, B.F. (1974). *About behaviorism*. New York: Knopf. the most prominent Western exponent of behaviorism in the last century, wrote that all human behavior is a lawful process determined and controlled in systematic and consistent ways. Furthermore, Skinner and his adherents contended that all behavior is a function of its consequences in the environment. What this means is that any action people take will depend completely on what happens afterward. If the action affects the environment in such a way that it afterward strengthens the behavior, the behavior will persist or reoccur. If what happens afterward does not strengthen the behavior, on the other hand, the behavior will eventually cease.

Unlike other theorists of motivation, behaviorists do not describe what happens inside people when they act in certain ways. They don't deny that people have feelings and thoughts, but to the degree that they deal with such phenomena at all, they consider them to be effects rather than causes of behavior.

Fruits of Motivation

We've already established that motivation is a necessary condition to the functioning of any individual or group. If we have it, we possess the capacity to take action.

So, what action might we take? Three possibilities stand out, each of them either for better or worse. First of all, we may comply with other people's wishes, rules, or expectations. We may be motivated, for instance, to obey traffic signals and "no trespassing" signs.

Second, we may produce outcomes or create resources for a group. Motivated members of a political party, for example, may prepare or distribute flyers or make phone calls supporting the party's candidates.

Third, we may decide to sacrifice some of our own comfort or security for the sake of others. The classic example of this behavior is wartime military service.

Notice that motivation, wherever it comes from, provides a capacity for action but doesn't guarantee it. In other words, it's a necessary but not a sufficient condition for getting things done. In the next section, we'll take a look at ways to both produce motivation and ensure that people take action based on it.

Key Takeaway

Content theories of motivation concentrate upon rewards and reinforcing factors, whereas process theories focus on what starts, sustains, and stops behavior in response to those rewards and reinforcers.

Exercise 9.2.1

1. Frederick Herzberg wrote that people's motivation can be maintained only if they are given responsibility and an opportunity to achieve something. Do you agree? Provide an example that supports your answer.
2. Name and rank your top five desires from Steven Reiss's list of 16 desires. Share and compare your desires with a classmate. What do the results imply with respect to how you and the other person might best become motivated in a group?
3. Expectancy theory says that people will be motivated under three conditions: if they believe they will receive a reward for doing something, if they value the reward, and if they believe they can do what it takes to achieve the reward. Describe a situation in which you were motivated to do something and explain whether and how those three conditions were met.

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9.3: Effective Motivation Strategies

Learning Objectives

1. Acknowledge the value of trust among group members
2. Identify four effective motivation strategies

No matter what accomplishments you make, somebody helped you.

Althea Gibson



Figure 9.3.1

In the first parts of this chapter, we've discussed several theories of motivation. Some of the theories laid greatest emphasis on identifying factors that attract people to become motivated, whereas others focused on how the factors interact to produce motivation. What we haven't answered yet, however, is a very important question: "How can we get a person to acquire motivation and actually act on it?"

At first glance, we might think this is a very easy question to answer. After all, we see people acting in ways that other people want them to every day. What if getting a person motivated and having the person do something on the basis of that motivation is a really simple matter? What if all we need to do is follow a few steps, like these, which are based on the behaviorist concepts of B.F. Skinner that we touched on earlier?

1. Tell the person what you want him or her to do in measurable terms. Explain specifically what you have in mind.
2. Measure the person's current level of performance. Determine whether and how well the person is doing the activity in question.
3. Let the person know what kind of reward he or she will receive if he or she does what you've asked. Be sure to make clear that the reward *will* follow if the performance goal is achieved.
4. When the person does what you've asked, give the person the reward you said you would.

In the world of business, some organizations have tried to follow exactly these four behaviorist steps to motivate employees. Burke, Burke, W.W. (2011). *Organization change* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. and KelloKello, J.E. (2008). Reflections on I-O psychology and behaviorism. In N. K. Innis (ed.), *Reflections on adaptive behavior: Essays in honor of J.E.R. Staddon* (pp. 291–313). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. wrote that in the 1970s Emery Air Freight was one of the first and most publicized examples. As it turned out, Emery found that performance by its employees increased and that costs to the company

declined by approximately $3 million over a three-year period. Schulz, D., & Schulz, S.E. (2002). *Psychology and work today* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

But things are more complicated than this in other places, aren't they? Emery Air Freight was in the business of processing packages, and that's a pretty cut-and-dried industrial procedure. College students and church members and people in community organizations or not-for-profit agencies are involved in broader, more complex activities than those that many air freight workers or other employees in commercial enterprises perform.

Requirements for Motivating Action

According to behaviorism, it's unnecessary to pay attention to people's interior states in order to motivate them to do things. Emery Air Freight's approach, with its predetermined regimen of consequences for its employees' behavior, was consistent with this belief.

Most theorists today, however, believe that people need to undergo certain mental processes and reach certain mental states in order to take any particular action. Specifically, for people to be motivated to act the way someone else wants them to, they first need to possess the skills and abilities required to accomplish the action. If they have those skills and abilities, they also need to know what the other person wants them to do, how to do it, and what will happen if they do it.

In a group, having a designated leader propose that people act in a certain way can often be helpful. This will depend on the structure and mood and purpose of the group, however.

If you're part of a team of students that has been assigned a project, for instance, you might not decide to choose a leader. Instead, you and the other members may want to motivate each other by discussing your needs and options as equals to see what ideas and directions bubble up spontaneously.

No matter who is trying to motivate whom to act, one final consideration should be taken into account. Motivation, as we noted in chapter 4, is at least partly determined by whether people trust each other.

What if you think someone's primary reason for asking you to do something in a group is that the person hopes to gain personally from what you do? If that's the case, you're not very apt to be motivated. If the person seems to care about you genuinely, on the other hand, you're more likely to go along with his or her suggestions.

Motivation Strategies

Let's take a look at four strategies for motivating people in groups. Three of the strategies are based in longstanding organizational research, whereas one is a broader approach to motivation in general.

Based on their study of research in groups, Hoy and Miskel, Hoy, W.K., & Miskel, C.G. (1982). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Random House. contended that taking the following steps will lead people to be motivated:

1. Allow all members of the group to set goals together, rather than imposing goals upon them. Research indicates that people who get to participate in developing their own goals become more satisfied during the performance of their tasks than those who don't. If your student group is supposed to deliver a presentation together, you should all meet at the start of your assignment and decide what you plan to accomplish.
2. Establish goals that are specific. Broad or unclear goals are unlikely to cause people in a group to focus their attention and energy well. Instead of saying, "Let's all pitch in and give our presentation 10 days from now," it's better to decide which person will talk about which subjects in the presentation, for how many minutes, and with how many handouts or projected images.
3. Establish the highest possible goals. You've perhaps heard the adage "Shoot for the moon; even if you miss, at least you'll hit the stars." The saying isn't astronomically accurate, of course, since the stars are a lot farther away than the moon. The principle is a good one, though, since research shows that the more difficult the goals, the more effort people will put into achieving them, as long as they accept the more difficult goals in the first place.

Hoy and Miskel contended that these three strategies tend to reinforce one another. In particular, they wrote, members of a group who are allowed to participate in setting its goals may not necessarily perform at a higher level than those who aren't, but they're

likely to set higher goals for themselves than people who have goals imposed upon them. Thus, at least indirectly, the outcomes of their work may be better for the group.

In his book *Intrinsic Motivation at Work*, Kenneth Thomas wrote about a fourth strategy for motivating people: developing rewards tentatively and being prepared to change them as circumstances dictate. Personal goals and desires may shift with time, he contended, and people also sometimes have multiple and even conflicting goals. Sometimes a person who initially was enthusiastic about working on a task might say, “My get-up-and-go got up and went.”

Students working on a team project, for example, may go through a cycle of changing personal goals. When they first get together, they may want more than anything else to minimize the time they spend on the project. Later, they might start to care much more about receiving a good grade—or about building relationships among themselves, or about something else entirely. To motivate them requires flexibility.

Key Takeaway

Allowing group members to set specific, challenging goals and being willing to modify those goals as circumstances change is likely to motivate them to act in a desired manner.

Exercise 9.3.1

1. Think of a group you’ve been a part of in which trust among its members was strong. How did you know that the trust existed? What caused it to develop? How did its presence affect the group’s motivation?
2. Some people might claim that part of leadership is to set goals for a group, not to ask people to set its goals together. If you were ever in a group whose leader established its goals, how do you feel that influenced the members’ attitudes and motivation?
3. In what ways do you feel a group’s motivation might benefit if its members operated without a designated leader? In what ways might its motivation suffer?

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9.4: Effective Collaboration Strategies

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the nature and implications of theories that assume that people collaborate for instrumental reasons
2. Identify a theory of group collaboration that emphasizes social links among group members
3. Identify five strategies for fostering group collaboration

I maintain that cooperation is good, and competition is bad, that society does not flourish by the antagonism of its atoms, but by the mutual helpfulness of human beings.

Helen Keller

In the last section, we discussed ways to motivate individuals to act in certain ways. Now we turn to a harder question: How do we get them to work together?

A Prevalent Theory

In addition to setting goals that are specific, challenging, and jointly developed, how we try to get people to work together with others depends on our view of what makes people decide to do so. A prevalent theory, which Tom TylerTyler, T.R. (2011). *Why people cooperate: The role of social motivations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. contends has been especially influential in the past few decades throughout American society, has been that people collaborate for instrumental reasons. What this means is that they weigh costs and benefits and choose what they feel will be most advantageous to themselves. Their amount and quality of participation in a group then depends on "material exchanges"—transfers of rewards back and forth between the group's members. Rusbult, C.E., & Van Lange, P.A.M. (1996). Interdependence processes. In E.T. Higgins & A.W. Kruglanski (eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 564–596). New York: Guilford. If these transfers don't favor them as individuals, they will simply abandon the group.

If we operate according to this theory, there are many implications. First, we may want to spend considerable effort to decide on incentives to offer group members. Second, we may feel we need to be continually vigilant to make sure our incentives are working. Third, we may need to watch people carefully to see who is pitching in sufficiently. And fourth, we may want to create sanctions that we can impose upon people who don't comply with the group's rules and directions.

The Role of Social Links

An alternative theory, based on recent research by Tyler, Tyler, T.R. (2006). *Why people obey the law* (2nd ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. and others, suggests that people do take their self-interest into account when they participate in groups, but that they collaborate primarily for social reasons.

According to this alternative theory, people will be best motivated to collaborate on the basis of social links. These are defined as "long-term connections based on attitudes, emotional connections, shared identities, common values, trust in the motivation of others, & joint commitment to fairness."Tyler, T.R. (2011). *Why people cooperate: The role of social motivations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Tyler's book *Why People Cooperate* presents the results of his studies in business, legal settings, and political organizations as evidence that people are often willing to give up the opportunity for personal gain in order to contribute to the welfare of a group as a whole. Specifically, Tyler's research with groups in more than 15 countries showed that "in none of the countries were people's behaviors consistent with a narrow self-interest model."Tyler, T.R. (2011). *Why people cooperate: The role of social motivations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

The proponents of this theory believe that using a combination of incentives or punishments—"carrots" and "sticks"—is not always going to produce collaborative behavior in a group. It's very possible, for instance, for group members who are treated this way to do just enough to get exactly the incentives they've been promised rather than to go beyond the call of duty for the sake of the group as a whole.

Tyler pointed out that soldiers can be forced into the military in times of war. Neither money nor legislation nor a military draft nor even the threat of severe legal actions such as courts-martial, however, can actually make them willing to lay down their lives. Something else has to be part of the picture.

Strategies to Promote Collaboration

Indeed, fighting successfully in a war requires total and complete collaboration on the part of soldiers. In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, prior to the Battle of Agincourt, King Henry rallies troops in the famous "St. Crispin's Day Speech." In the speech, he refers to "we few, we happy few, we band of brothers—for whoever sheds his blood with me today shall be my brother." As a result of his speech, the English soldiers fight valiantly, and ultimately they defeat the French and win the battle.

What can we learn from Shakespeare's account, as well as from the thoughts of modern theorists, to promote collaboration within a group? Here are several strategies which researchers now believe can be successful:

- Appeal explicitly to members' social links, including their belief in and reliance on each other, rather than only to their narrow self-interest.

  As Tyler and Blader, Tyler, T.R., & Blader, S.L. (2000). *Cooperation in groups*. Philadelphia: Psychology Press]. wrote, "Social motivations lead not only to compliance, but to voluntary deference to rules and to more general willing cooperation." We don't have to say that our fellow group members are brothers and sisters, even metaphorically, but we can remind them of their mutual reliance.

- Ensure that the group identifies and periodically revisits its values and goals by means of full participation of its members. Heath and SiasHeath, R.G., & Sias, P.M. (1999). Communicating spirit in a collaborative alliance. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 27*, 356–376. pointed out that leaving someone out of these processes at any time can weaken that person's social links with the group and thereby make it less likely for the person to work on behalf of its purposes later on.
- Besides adopting formal written agreements, create "relational contracts."Baker, G., Gibbons, R., & Murphy, K.J. (2002). Relational contracts and the theory of the firm. *Quarterly journal of economics (117)*, 39–84 These are informal statements that rest on mutual trust and describe the knowledge and other strengths that various group members will bring to bear in conducting the group's work. For instance, in a group planning a community bazaar, one person might pledge to prepare banners because he or she possesses artistic talent. This pledge would not be part of the group's initial goal-setting process. Neither would it last beyond the completion of the bazaar. Still, it would help carry the group successfully through one of its important activities.

  Because relational contracts are tied to particular situations and circumstances, they are more flexible than formal, permanent agreements. At the same time, it's important to take into account that they are also harder to enforce because of their very informality.

- Ask group members to think big and think long-term. Burke, Burke, W.W. (2011). *Organization change: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. wrote that group members should engage in "systemic thinking." He meant by this that they should regard their group as an enduring and organic totality, rather than simply as the sum of many individuals at a particular time.

  King Henry said this when he told his soldiers of the lasting importance of their combined actions:

  "This story shall the good man teach his son,

  And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by

  From this day to the ending of the world,

  But we in it shall be remembered"

  In the same spirit, Burke urged groups to build and maintain an organizational memory—a record, preferably in hard-copy or digital form, of the history of the group. Such a record will tend to promote cohesion and identity in a group. It should also help integrate new members into the group as they join it.

Celebrate Group Accomplishments

Celebrate the group's accomplishments. People are busy, and members of groups may often feel rushed to accomplish their tasks and move on to other activities. Unless they pause from time to time and take stock of their accomplishments, therefore, they may lose focus and energy.

Once a group is on the road to collaboration, its strengths can be further ensured through feedback and assessment. In the last section of this chapter, we'll consider those two final vital elements of effective motivational behavior.

Key Takeaway

Understanding the significance of social links in a group can provide the foundation for five strategies to promote collaboration.

Exercise 9.4.1

1. Think of a group of which you're a member. To what degree do you believe your fellow members are motivated to collaborate for instrumental reasons, including self-interest, and to what degree by what Tyler calls "social links"? Give examples which support your opinion.
2. When have you relinquished the opportunity to achieve personal gain in a group in order to contribute to the group as a whole? What made you do so? How did the other group members respond to your sacrifice?
3. Consider two academic groups of which you were once a part—perhaps your high school graduating class and a school club or athletic team. What efforts, if any, did each group make to maintain an organizational memory? Comparing the two groups, which one has experienced better collaboration among its members since you left it?

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9.5: Feedback and Assessment

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate between feedback and assessment
2. Identify the importance of feedback and assessment in motivating group members
3. Identify seven characteristics of feedback and assessment which motivate group members
4. Identify eight appropriate subjects of group feedback and assessment

Any old farmer in Vermont can tell you that you don't fatten your lambs by weighing them.

Jonathan Kozol

To succeed as a team is to hold all of the members accountable for their expertise.

Mitchell Caplan

Jonathan Kozol's point about lambs was that improving something requires that we do more than just check to see if it's getting better. As we've noted in the past several sections with respect to motivation and collaboration in groups, such positive change also requires hard work, concentration, persistence, patience, and a willingness to invest personal energy and time on behalf of goals.

Although he said that weighing lambs by itself will not fatten them, Kozol didn't say that weighing them isn't important at all. If a farmer does nothing but feed and tend animals, after all, how will the farmer know if the feeding and tending are working? And the same thing goes for group communication: if members of a group do nothing but work hard and concentrate intensively on pursuing their goals, how will they know if they're actually moving in the right direction?

Feeding and tending of animals are necessary for them to grow, just as tending a group is necessary for it to progress toward its goals. But for farmers, as well as for members of groups, so are feedback and assessment. As Thompson, Thompson, L. (2008). *Organizational behavior today*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education. wrote, "It is the feedback element that is the critical ingredient in producing change in behavior." Motivation, in short, depends on both feedback and assessment.

How Feedback and Assessment Differ

Feedback is a general term that simply means communicating with someone in response to a message from that person or with respect to a perception you have about him or her. In day-to-day conversations, it may be a straightforward descriptive comment about facts that happen to catch your attention, like "It looks like you just got a haircut." In a group, an example of feedback might be something like "You've completed your part of the project now."

Assessment, on the other hand, is one variety of feedback. It is an expression of judgment about the value, significance, or merit of a person's nature or behavior. Instead of just describing someone's haircut or indicating that the person has finished a project, an assessment might be more like "Your haircut looks great" or "It's about time you finished your part of the project."

When you transmit any message to other people, and particularly if you share an impression or perception about them, you're asking them to enter a communication transaction with you. They're going to have to focus on your message and use mental energy to decide how to respond. When, then, should you ask people to make this kind of effort by giving them feedback? What kind should you give? And how much? Answering these questions constitutes a normal part of everyday human life with people with whom we interact routinely, but it's a particularly challenging part of working in a group with people whom we may not know as well as we do our family or close friends. Offering assessment can be even more difficult, since it puts us at risk of making a mistake or upsetting other people.

One source of group motivation is a sense of movement and growth. Therefore, among the most useful tools in preparing to provide feedback and assessment are benchmarks. These are qualitative or quantitative descriptions of a group's initial conditions to be used later for comparative purposes. For example, a newly-formed student group might make a list of how many

and which books they have read by a particular author or on a particular assigned topic.

Effective Feedback and Assessment in a Group

Feedback and assessment should be planned and delivered carefully and intentionally. If they are to motivate people in a group, they should possess the following characteristics:

1. Relevance. The feedback or assessment should deal with actions the group has decided to take, values the group wants to embody, and especially goals the group has set for itself.
2. Frequency. People are busy and are bombarded with messages all day long, every day. In order to maintain a sense of purpose and focus with regard to their group's activities, members need to be reminded regularly of what and how they're doing.
3. Simplicity. The more direct and readily understandable the feedback and assessment, the better. In the 1960s, a whimsical bumper sticker said "Eschew obfuscation"—which means "avoid unclear communication." Keep things simple.
4. Candor. People generally appreciate honesty. In order to improve what they're doing in a group, give them forthright information about where they stand.
5. Civility. Too much candor can turn into rudeness. Politeness in feedback and assessment makes them easier to accept.
6. Specificity. Everyone in the group needs to understand the message as close to the same way as possible. Do your best, therefore, to be precise and to avoid ambiguity.
7. Eclecticism. Especially in large organizations such as schools and corporations, surveys and polls used as assessment tools can become tedious and burdensome. It's a good idea to invest time in developing creative new ways to monitor a group's stature and progress.

Subjects of Effective Feedback and Assessment

In order to assist and motivate group members, it's important to select the proper items to collect and express feedback and assessment about. Here are some possible topics about which feedback can be given:

1. Group configuration/patterns. Are the boundaries of your group clear? Have those boundaries changed, or are they the same as when the group was formed? Hartley and Dawson, Hartley, P., & Dawson, M. (2010). *Success in groupwork*. New York: St. Martin's Press. also suggested asking which members occupy positions of status at the center of the group and which members are on its edge.
2. Actions taken by the group. Does everyone agree on what the results of your group's decisions are? Have you kept track of what you've done with lists or other records?
3. Relationship of actions to goals. Which of your group's actions have been guided by its a priori goals, i.e., the ones it established intentionally and explicitly at the outset of its activities? What *ad hoc actions*, if any—that is, ones in response to specific unanticipated circumstances—have you taken since originating the group?

Other topics which your group should consider pertain to assessment, including the following:

1. Adequacy of communication processes. To what degree are your group's members satisfied with the quantity and nature of communication among yourselves? What communication practices do you especially appreciate, and which would you prefer to change?
2. Adequacy of progress toward goals. To what degree are your group's goals being met? If your group's level of progress isn't what you hoped for initially, are you nevertheless comfortable with the lesser results, perhaps because you encountered tougher-than-expected challenges along the way?
3. Group members' individual satisfaction/mood. Unhappy or disgruntled members don't add to the motivational spirit of a group. Try asking the simple question, "So, how are you feeling?" at the conclusion of every major group task. Probing individuals too often about how they're feeling about your group's activities can be distracting, and it can even cause doubts to expand. If you don't check often enough, however, small areas of disagreement or dissatisfaction can grow to damaging proportions. A plan for frequent, regular assessment will help group members feel supported rather than importuned by assessment of their satisfaction.
4. The group's satisfaction with itself. Does your group's "self-portrait" change with time? This sort of question can be posed in efficient, uncomplicated ways. In addition to asking individual members, "So, how are *you* feeling?", it's possible also to ask, "So, how do you think our group's doing?" Even fanciful questions like "What kind of animal are we?" or "What kind of plant?" can quickly help ascertain how positive your group's climate and outlook may be.
5. External views about the group. To remain motivated to collaborate, groups can benefit from asking for perspectives on their

activities from outsiders. A fresh view will often raise thoughtful new questions for your group itself to consider.

As Mitchell Caplan's quotation at the beginning of this section indicated, success in groups does depend at least in part on drawing upon the strengths of their members. Feedback and assessment make it possible to determine whether those strengths are being properly exploited and maximized for the benefit of the group.

Key Takeaway

Feedback and assessment in groups should possess definite characteristics and deal with well-thought-out subjects.

Exercise 9.5.1

1. Think of a group of which you're a part which engages in regular, frequent assessment of its activities. Who conducts the assessments? How and when are details of the assessments shared with members of the group? What, if anything, would you do to enhance the assessment process in the group?
2. Consider this feedback: "The group is doing all right, but it could improve." How would you change the message to make it more helpful in motivating members of the group? State a possible revision.
3. In some cultures, delivering direct negative feedback to others is avoided. If you worked in such a culture or with a representative of one, what measures would you take to ensure that the positive outcomes associated in mainstream American society with direct feedback and assessment could be achieved in other ways?
4. What is the most creative feedback or assessment technique you've ever seen used in a group? How effective was the technique? What might have made it even more helpful in motivating group members?

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9.6: Summary

In this chapter, we first defined motivation and collaboration. We then considered the roles that motivation play in human behavior. We identified and explained the place of strategies for bringing about motivation and collaboration. Finally, we explored the crucial role played by feedback and assessment in motivating members of a group.

Chapter Review Questions

1. Interpretive Questions
    1. What factors might cause a highly-motivated individual to lose his or her motivation abruptly?
    2. Under what circumstances might collaboration be of minor importance to members of a group?
    3. How would you rank the collaboration strategies described in section 4 of this chapter? On what basis do you feel your ranking is justified?
2. Application Questions
    1. Do motivational speakers actually cause members of their audiences to be motivated? Identify a total of at least half a dozen members of your family, friends, and peers who have heard motivational speakers and ask them how, if at all, the speakers changed their behavior or outlook.
    2. A commonly-held view of coaches in competitive sport is that they motivate athletes to achieve personal triumphs and develop productive collaboration with teammates. Investigate this issue and share your findings.
    3. Some people feel that, despite its intended purpose of increasing achievement, “high-stakes” assessment of K-12 students entails more drawbacks than advantages. Do you agree? Locate writings by three supporters and three opponents of such assessment, share the documents with classmates, and explain why you endorse or disagree with any two of them.

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9.7: Additional Resources

Many organizations employ professional speakers whose chief function is to motivate groups in business, education, and other areas of society. See what you can learn by visiting and assessing the opportunities offered by the following websites associated with organizations of this sort:

- publicspeakers4hire.com
- http://www.speaking.com/: “Speakers’ Platform”
- www.motivational-celebrity-speakers.com/ (sports figures and celebrities)
- http://premierespeakers.com/women_motivational_speaker (women)
- http://nsb.com/speakers (Canadian motivational speakers)

Warren Bennis and Patricia Biederman’s book *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration*, published in 1997 by Perseus Books, describes an impressive example of successful creative collaboration by a small group of employees in Lockheed Martin Corporation during World War II. Lockheed’s “skunkworks”—an unstructured, independent offshoot of the parent company—encouraged collaboration among engineers and others to produce innovative new products in a very short time.

The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington strives to provide its students with a fully collaborative learning environment built around “learning communities.” Visiting the college’s campus or its website (http://www.evergreen.edu) will reveal some of the principles and practices underlying Evergreen’s collaborative philosophy.

Many pairs of musicians have created famous and popular musical compositions. Read about these partnerships to see how well they were able to collaborate and what they felt made their collaboration successful:

- W.S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan
- Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein
- Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel
- John Lennon and Paul McCartney

Carolyn Wiley of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga published an article in the *International Journal of Manpower*, “What motivates employees according to over 40 years of motivation surveys” (1997—volume 18, issue 3), in which she claimed that employees overwhelmingly chose “good wages” as their top motivator. Although wages seem to be purely extrinsic, Wiley contended that they communicate what an organization values and that they affect employees’ emotional and psychological wellbeing. Reading Wiley’s article should give you a potentially new perspective on what motivates people to put forth effort in the business world.

Many theorists believe that what motivates people is culture-specific. Asians, in particular, are held to behave according to Confucian principles and collectivist motives. The chapter “The nature of achievement motivation in collectivist societies” in *Individualism and collectivism: Theory, method, and applications* (1994; Cross-cultural research and methodology series, Vol. 18; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications) offers an explanation of this viewpoint.

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10: MANAGING CONFLICT

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10.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. If you could eliminate conflict from every group's activities, would you? Why or why not?
2. Identify someone you know who is particularly skilled at operating in conflict situations. Based on your experience with the person, identify some of the person's specific effective behaviors in such situations.
3. List the headlines of stories on the first five pages of a recent newspaper. Identify which of the items describe conflict of some kind and write a brief description of three of the conflicts. What approaches do the parties to the three conflicts seem to be taking? What prospects do you feel each conflict has of being resolved? What is it that makes you see the prospects as you do?

I exhort you also to take part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict.

Plato

Introduction

In this chapter, we'll explore the nature, leadership implications, and prevalence of an enduring human reality: conflict in groups. We'll also consider a variety of styles whereby people can engage in conflict and review some strategies for managing conflict effectively. You will learn how to deal with conflict in the workplace and how to create and implement a crisis communication plan.

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10.1: What Is Conflict?

Learning Objectives

1. Define conflict
2. Identify five subjects of conflict in groups
3. Acknowledge four major dangers of group conflict

My athletes are always willing to accept my advice as long as it doesn't conflict with their views.

Lou Holtz (college and professional football coach)

Most people probably regard conflict as something to avoid, or at least not something we go looking for. Still, we'd all agree that it's a familiar, perennial, and powerful part of human interaction. For these reasons, we need to know what it is, how to identify it, what it may deal with, and what damage it may cause if it isn't handled wisely.

Definitions of Conflict

Hocker & Wilmot (2001) Hocker, J.L., & Wilmot, W.W. (2001). *Interpersonal conflict* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. defined conflict as an expressed struggle between interdependent parties over goals which they perceive as incompatible or resources which they perceive to be insufficient. Let's examine the ingredients in their definition.

First of all, conflict must be expressed. If two members of a group dislike each other or disagree with each other's viewpoints but never show those sentiments, there's no conflict.

Second, conflict takes place between or among parties who are interdependent—that is, who need each other to accomplish something. If they can get what they want without each other, they may differ in how they do so, but they won't come into conflict.

Finally, conflict involves clashes over what people want or over the means for them to achieve it. Party A wants X, whereas party B wants Y. If they either can't both have what they want at all, or they can't each have what they want to the degree that they would prefer to, conflict will arise.

When it came to Lou Holtz and the players on his football teams, it's obvious that Holtz's views of who should take the field and what plays should be run were not always the same as his players'. In a football game it's possible to attempt a pass or to execute a run, for instance, but not both on the same play. In this kind of situation, conflict is inevitable and is probably going to be constant.

Consider the case, likewise, of a small group assigned to complete a project in a biology class. One student in the group, Robin, may be a political science major with a new baby at home to attend to. Robin may be taking the course as an elective and want to devote as little time as possible to the project so as to be able to spend family time. Another member of the group, Terry, may be on the pre-med track and feel strong curiosity about the topic of the presentation. If Terry is determined to create a product which earns a high grade and helps get the professor's recommendation for a summer research internship, then Robin and Terry will experience conflict over how, when, or how hard to work on their project.



Figure 10.1.1: Source: www.flickr.com/photos/dave-goodman/2080724300/

As any conflict takes shape, each person brings a combination of perceptions, emotions, and behavior to bear on it. This combination will evolve and change with time, depending on how people interact with each other and with the forces in their environment.

We can't stop perceiving things in our surroundings. How we perceive others—whether positively or negatively—influences both how we feel about them and how we behave toward them, and *vice versa*. The perceptions we experience of ourselves and of others affect our emotional states, which in turn create new perceptions in those around us.

At the beginning of the biology course we just mentioned, Robin may perceive Terry as intelligent and as someone who can pull most of the weight in their class project. Robin may compliment and praise Terry at this point, and Terry may glow with the satisfaction of being appreciated. Their mutual perceptions are then positive, and their emotional state is favorable.

When the first deadline in the project comes along and the portion of the group's work assigned to Robin turns out to be mediocre, however, things will probably change. Terry is apt to start perceiving Robin as a laggard and as a threat to Terry's own ambitions for the class and beyond. Robin, meanwhile, may feel angry and resist Terry's pressure to put more energy into the remainder of their assigned work.

Subjects of Conflict

Beyond the setting of the biology class we've described, group conflicts may deal with many topics, needs, and elements. Marylin Kelly, Kelly, M.S. (2006). *Communication @ work: Ethical, effective, and expressive communication in the workplace*. Boston: Pearson. identified the following five subjects of conflict:

First, there are conflicts of substance. These conflicts, which relate to questions about what choices to make in a given situation, rest on differing views of the facts. If Terry thinks the biology assignment requires an annotated bibliography but Robin believes a simple list of readings will suffice, they're in a conflict of substance. Another term for this kind of conflict is "intrinsic conflict."

Conflicts of value are those in which various parties either hold totally different values or rank the same values in a significantly different order. The famous sociologist Milton RokeachRokeach, M. (1979). *Understanding human values: Individual and societal*. New York: The Free Press., for instance, found that freedom and equality constitute values in the four major political systems of the past 100 years—communism, fascism, socialism, and capitalism. What differentiated the systems, however, was the degree to which proponents of each system ranked those two key values. According to Rokeach's analysis, socialism holds both values highly; fascism holds them in low regard; communism values equality over freedom, and capitalism values freedom over equality. As we all know, conflict among proponents of these four political systems preoccupied people and governments for the better part of the twentieth century.

Conflicts of process arise when people differ over how to reach goals or pursue values which they share. How closely should they

stick to rules and timelines, for instance, and when should they let their hair down and simply brainstorm new ideas? What about when multiple topics and challenges are intertwined; how and when should the group deal with each one? Another term for these disputes is “task conflicts.”

Conflicts of misperceived differences come up when people interpret each other’s actions or emotions erroneously. You can probably think of several times in your life when you first thought you disagreed with other people but later found out that you’d just misunderstood something they said and that you actually shared a perspective with them. Or perhaps you attributed a different motive to them than what really underlay their actions. One misconception about conflict, however, is that it always arises from misunderstandings. This isn’t the case, however. Robert Doolittle, Doolittle, R.J. (1976). *Orientations to communication and conflict*. Chicago: Science Research Associates. noted that “some of the most serious conflicts occur among individuals and groups who understand each other very well but who strongly disagree.”

The first four kinds of conflict may interact with each other over time, either reinforcing or weakening each other’s impact. They may also ebb and flow according to the topics and conditions a group confronts. Even if they’re dealt with well, however, further emotional and personal kinds of conflict can occur in a group. Relationship conflicts, also known as personality clashes, often involve people’s egos and sense of self-worth. Relationship conflicts tend to be particularly difficult to cope with, since they frequently aren’t admitted for what they are. Many times, they arise in a struggle for superiority or status.

Dangers of Conflict

As we’ll see later in this chapter, conflict is a normal component of group interaction and can actually be beneficial if it is identified accurately and controlled properly. It can also be dangerous, however, in several major ways. Galanes & AdamsGalanes, G., & Adams, K. (2013). *Effective group discussion: Theory and practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill. identified three such ways.

The first danger is that individual group members may feel bad. Even when everyone’s intentions are good and they intend to be constructively critical, people who receive negative comments about their ideas or behavior may take those comments personally. If the people feel demeaned or mistreated, their level of trust in other members will probably dwindle.

The second danger is an outgrowth of the first. It is that the cohesiveness of the group can be diminished if its members have to nurse hurt feelings that have arisen through conflict. At the very least, someone who has to wonder whether he or she has the respect of someone else in the group may spend time mulling that question which could otherwise be used to contribute to the group’s work.

The third danger is that conflict can actually split a group apart. Although inertia can sustain a group for long periods of time if no threats or disruptions occur, intense conflict can cause members to decide to invest their energy somewhere else. Relationship conflicts, in particular, may lead to all kinds of unhelpful behavior: rumor-mongering; power plays; backing out on promises; playing favorites; ignoring problems or appeals for help; insulting others; innuendo; backstabbing; or dismissing suggestions without considering them seriously. You’re probably aware of at least a few groups and organizations whose origins were encouraging but which eventually disintegrated because of internal conflict.

A fourth danger is that conflict can deteriorate into physical violence. Some people in the heat of a conflict may forget this saying, which has been attributed to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.: “The right to swing my fist ends where the other man's nose begins.”

In 1997, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and HealthNational Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. (1997). Violence in the workplace. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/niosh/violfs.html. reported that more than one million workplace assaults occurred in the United States annually. More recent statistics from the Occupational Safety and Health AdministrationOccupational Safety and Health Administration. (2012). Workplace violence. Retrieved from www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/. suggest that twice that many workers may be subject to violence each year; that 506 workplace homicides were committed in 2010; and that homicide is the leading cause of death for women in American workplaces.

Key Takeaway

- Conflict, which is a struggle over goals or resources, may take many forms and lead to several kinds of harm if it is not skillfully dealt with.

Exercise 10.1.1

1. Find news online of a conflict that erupted into violence. What factors in the situation do you feel contributed to that outcome?
2. Tell a fellow student about a values conflict you've experienced in a group. Describe how you concluded that the conflict dealt with values. Did the group make the same determination at the time?
3. Identify a personality clash you believe you have observed in a group. Write 4-6 pieces of advice you think might have helped each party to that conflict.
4. If a conflict has been brought about by a combination of incompatible goals and insufficient resources, what do you believe will happen if one of the two causes is eliminated? Give an example that substantiates your viewpoint.

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10.2: Leadership and Conflict

Learning Objectives

1. Describe four roles that a leader might play with respect to conflict
2. Assess the effectiveness of leadership behavior exhibited in an illustrative academic situation

"The hope of the world is that wisdom can arrest conflict between brothers. I believe that war is the deadly harvest of arrogant and unreasoning minds."

Dwight Eisenhower

To lead a group successfully through conflict requires patience, goodwill, and determination. Robert Bolton, Bolton, R. (1979). *People skills: How to assert yourself, listen to others, and resolve conflicts*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall noted that leaders with low levels of defensiveness tend to help people in their organizations avert unnecessary strife because they are able to focus on understanding and dealing with challenges rather than on saving face or overcoming resistance from others in their groups. Bolton also wrote that employing power judiciously, displaying charisma, and employing effective communication skills can positively affect the way conflict is handled. In this section, we will examine four general roles a leader may adopt with respect to preparing for inevitable instances of conflict. We will also provide an example of how one leader adopted the fourth role in a conflict situation.

The Leader as Motivator

Just as it takes more than one person to create conflict, it generally requires more than a single individual to resolve it. A leader should, therefore, try somehow to cause other members of a group to identify benefits to themselves of engaging in productive rather than destructive conflict. Randy Komisar, a prominent Silicon Valley executive who has worked with companies such as WebTV and TiVo and co-founded Claris Corporation, had this to say about the importance of this kind motivational role as his companies grew:

"I found that the art wasn't in getting the numbers to foot, or figuring out a clever way to move something down the assembly line. It was in getting somebody else to do that and to do it better than I could ever do, in encouraging people to exceed their own expectations; in inspiring people to be great; and in getting them to do it all together, in harmony. That was the high art."Komisar, R., & Lineback, K. (2000). *The monk and the riddle: The education of a Silicon Valley entrepreneur.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press. We'll talk later about specific strategies that leaders and other group members can employ to manage conflict by means of motivation and other strategies.

The Leader as Delegator

No leader, even the leader of a handful of other people in a small team, can handle all the challenges or do all the work of a group. In fact, you've probably encountered leaders throughout your life who either exhausted themselves or alienated other group members—or both!—because they tried to do just that. Beyond accepting the sheer impossibility of shouldering all of a group's work, a leader can attempt to prevent or manage conflict by judiciously by acting as a delegator, turning over responsibility for various tasks to others.

Warren Bennis, a pioneer in the field of leadership, wrote that such delegation is a vital component of the leader's role. When it is practiced skillfully, according to Bennis, delegation may confine conflicts to the levels at which they occur and free the leader to conduct higher-level undertakings Bennis, W. (1997). *Why leaders can't lead.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The Leader as "Structuralist"

Michael Thomas, a professor for many years at the University of Texas, served as a respected consultant to numerous businesses and educational institutions. As he went from group to group, he tackled their problems primarily by reviewing their organizational

charts and tinkering with their structure. As an admired organizational theorist and structuralist, he believed that nearly any problem, tension, or conflict in a group could be solved structurally Professor emeritus Thomas, Jr., dies at 76. (2008, Nov 14). *US Fed News Service, Including US State News*. Retrieved from ProQuest Database. How people behave, he said, is largely determined by where they sit in an organization and whom they report to and supervise. If Mike saw that people in two separate sections of a group were at odds, for instance, he would propose that the sections be consolidated so that both became responsible to the same supervisor. Mike certainly used further techniques in his consultant's role, but his emphasis on structural changes stands as one kind of advice for leaders who hope to lessen the damaging effects of conflict in their groups.

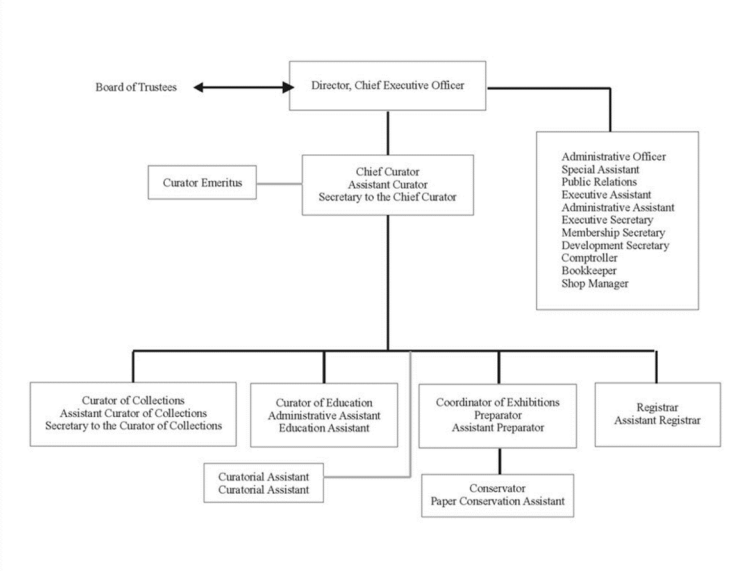


Figure 10.2.1: Organization chart for a museum. Source: www.flickr.com/photos/zerne/19747286/

Realistic Conflict Theory, or Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT), likewise stresses the importance for leaders of configuring subgroups within a larger group so that they are required to meet common goals. A classic study by social psychologist Muzafer Sherif, Sherif, M., Harvey, O.J., White, B.J., Hood, W., & Sherif, C.W. (1961). *Intergroup conflict and cooperation: The robbers cave experiment*. Norman, OK: The University Book Exchange. with 22 twelve-year-old boys in a summer camp in Oklahoma exemplifies the nature of RGCT and illustrates the concept of "leader as structuralist."

The boys were split into two groups at the start of the study, after which leaders quickly emerged in each group. The two groups were then required to compete in camp games and were rewarded on the basis of their performance. Soon conflict arose as negative attitudes and behavior developed within each group toward the other.

In the third part of the study, the structure of the camp was changed in such a way that the two antagonistic groups were called upon to share responsibility for accomplishing a variety of tasks. The outcome of this structural change was that attitudes within each group toward the other became favorable and conflict lessened dramatically. Sherif, Muzafer (1966). *In common predicament: Social psychology of intergroup conflict and cooperation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Paradoxically, a leader may also deal with conflict by separating people rather than bringing them together. If a team is experiencing internal conflict that seems to be related to intense personality differences between two individuals, for instance, the leader may decide to change the composition of the team so as to reduce their interaction. (Think about the third-grade teacher who finds two children pummeling each other during recess and sends them to opposite ends of the schoolyard).

The Leader as Promoter of "Constructive Deviation"

Civil disobedience. . . is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience...The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

Howard Zinn

I was at a conference in Jackson Hole, talking with Peter McLaren and Donaldo Macedo and David Gabbard. This guy in a herring-bone suit, all prim and proper, came over and said, "Well, Dr. Macedo, very, very interesting talk. I enjoyed it very much. Dr.

Gabbard, very interesting talk. I enjoyed it very much."

He was going around being polite. And then he turned and looked at Peter McLaren, and he said, "Mr. Mclaren..."—not "doctor"—"your discourse stretches my comfort zone just a little too much."

And before any of us could say anything, Donaldo turned to him and said, "There are millions of people born, live their entire lives, and die on this planet without ever knowing the luxury of a comfort zone."

The guy was speechless. It was a very polite way for him to say, "You know, I'm tired of hearing white men tell me that they're feeling a little oppressed by discourse."

*The guy walked away, and Peter McLaren turned to me and said, "F**k! Why didn't I say that?" But that's Macedo. Macedo is on his toes, all the time. He's never caught tongue-tied. He knows exactly how to turn it around.*

Roberto Bahruth

A deviate is someone who differs in some important way from the rest of a group. ResearchValentine, K.B., & Fisher, B.A. (1974). An interaction analysis of verbal innovative deviance in small groups. *Speech Monographs*, *41*, 413–420. indicates that interaction with deviates may account for up to a quarter of many groups' time and that such interaction may serve a positive function if it successfully causes people who hold a majority opinion to examine their views critically. In essence, dealing with deviates can keep group members on their toes and counteract the tendency to engage in groupthink. Encouraging deviates is one measure a leader can take to promote constructive conflict which brings a group to a higher level of understanding and harmony.

Of course, listening to a deviate may be disconcerting, since it may push us outside our comfort zone in the way that Peter McLaren did in the story told by Roberto Bahruth. In fact, deviates naturally have great difficulty influencing a group because of other people's resistance. For this reason, part of a leader's responsibility may sometimes consist in simply making sure that a deviate is not outright silenced by members of the majority. In other cases, it is the leader who at least at times assumes the role of deviate herself or himself.

Because deviates by their very nature call the members of the majority in a group to stop and seriously question their attitudes and behavior, which is usually disconcerting and uncomfortable, the most successful deviates are generally those who attempt to lead others in a cautious fashion and who demonstrate loyalty to their group and its goals. Thameling, C.L., & Andrews, P.H. (1992). Majority responses to opinion deviates: A communicative analysis. *Small Group Research*, *23*, 475–502. Timing can also determine whether a deviate's influence will be accepted. Waiting until a group has developed a sense of cohesiveness is most likely to be more effective, for instance, than jumping in with an unexpected or unconventional proposal during the group's formative stages.

A Leadership Example

In early 1980 the brutal Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia had just been defeated at the end of many years of fighting, and several hundred thousand Cambodian refugees flooded hastily-constructed camps in eastern Thailand. Chandler, D.P. (1992). *A history of Cambodia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Many Americans became concerned about the suffering in the refugee camps, and a group of 25 graduate students in Vermont studying international administration nearly played a direct role in the situation because their program's director was willing to speak out as a deviate.

The students were seated in a circle one morning, engaged in a discussion about human service agencies. One of them noticed that the director of the program, Walter Johnson, had been silent for some time and asked, "Walter, what do you think?"

Walter took a deep breath and replied, "I think what we're talking about is all well and good, but what I'd really like to do is call a colleague of mine at the U.N. and see if we could help the Cambodian refugees in those horrible camps in Thailand."

A stunned silence fell over the group. Someone asked, "Are you serious?"

Walter replied, "Yes, I am."

Silence returned. Finally, one of the students said, "Walter, if you believe what you're saying, go ahead and talk to your friend."

Walter left the room and returned in half an hour to say that his U.N. colleague was willing to investigate humanitarian service options in Thailand for the students. The challenge, then, was to explore whether the students themselves would consider

performing such service.

For the next two days, the whole group engaged in difficult, soul-searching discussions about what it would mean for them to go to Thailand. They quickly realized that if they made that choice they would have to abandon their curriculum at the school and might imperil their financial aid. Some of them would probably have to leave a spouse or children behind. And they might be putting themselves in danger of disease or violence. On the other hand, they could potentially be able to act according to their shared ideal of contributing to world peace in a personal, direct, and powerful manner.

Ultimately, the group realized that it was facing an “all or none” question: either every one of them would have to agree to travel to Thailand, or none of them should. Walter’s role as a constructive deviate in the Vermont group stimulated it to consider an option—the “go to Thailand option”—which in turn spurred earnest and productive conflict which most likely would not otherwise have taken place.

Key Takeaway

- To harness conflict in a positive manner and contribute to the healthy functioning of a group, a leader should play the roles of motivator, delegator, structuralist, and promoter of constructive deviation.

Exercise 10.2.1

1. Think of someone you met in a group whom you would consider to be a “deviate.” On what basis did you make that determination? To what degree did others in the group share your assessment of the person?
2. Do you share the view that any conflict What examples from your own experience support your answer? Consider a group that you’re currently part of, imagine a change in its structure which you feel could reduce its conflict, and share the information with two fellow students.
3. All other things being equal, would you prefer to address a conflict by bringing the parties together or separating them? Explain your reasons and provide an example that you believe supports them.

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10.3: Conflict is Normal

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the role of contradiction, negation, and rational unit in the thought of Friedrich Hegel
2. Identify two opposing models for characterizing conflict
3. List ways in which healthy conflict can benefit a group

That which is willed happens but rarely; in the majority of instances the numerous desired ends cross and conflict with one another, or these ends themselves are from the outset incapable of realization, or the means of attaining them are insufficient. Thus the conflicts of innumerable individual wills and individual actions in the domain of history produce a state of affairs entirely analogous to that prevailing in the realm of unconscious nature.

Friedrich Engels

I don't like that person. I'm going to have to get to know him better

Abraham Lincoln

A cartoon from the 1970s shows two women standing behind a couch where their husbands are sitting and watching a football game. One woman says to the other, "I thought they settled all that last year!" Do you suppose it would be nice if people could settle their differences once and for all, if conflict would just go away, and if everyone would just agree with each other and get along all the time?

Of course, those rosy developments aren't going to take place. Conflict seems to stubbornly retain its position as part of the human landscape; you can hardly find a group of people who aren't experiencing it right now or have never experienced it.

There's reason to believe, too, that a moderate amount of conflict can actually be a healthy and necessary part of group life if it is handled productively and ethically. Amason, A. C. (1996). Distinguishing the effects of functional and dysfunctional conflict on strategic decision making: Resolving a paradox for top management teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, *39*, 123–148. We may actually be better off, in other words, if we experience conflict than if we don't, provided that we turn it to advantage.

The 19th-century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel believed that contradiction and negation, which constitute both causes and ingredients of conflict, lead every domain of reality toward higher rational unity. He wrote that each level of interaction among human beings, including those which take place in larger social structures, preserves the contradictions of previous levels as phases and subparts Pelczynski, A.Z. (1984). 'The significance of Hegel's separation of the state and civil society. In A.Z. Pelczynski (Ed.), *The State and Civil Society* (pp. 1–13). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..

Much more recently, research by Jehn and Mannix, Jehn, K. A., & Mannix, E. A. (2001). The dynamic nature of conflict: A longitudinal study of intergroup conflict and group performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, *44*, 238–251. indicated that "effective teams over time are characterized by low but increasing levels of task conflict, low levels of relationship conflict with a rise toward the end of a project, and moderate levels of task conflict in the middle of the task timeline."

Conflict and the Hope of Social Change

Many years ago one of the authors attended a multi-day workshop in New York City on how to promote international peace and reconciliation. After hearing a presentation at the workshop about nuclear proliferation and biological weapons, a participant asked, "Human history is full of violence, bloodshed, and cruelty. What hope do we have of ever saving ourselves?"

The presenter replied, "Yes, we've had violence and bloodshed and cruelty throughout history. And as long as there are differences between people and their opinions, the danger will exist that we'll destroy ourselves, especially now that we have weapons that can wipe out our whole species. But the question isn't, 'Can we eliminate conflict?' The question is really, 'Can we accept conflict as part of the human condition and handle it so that we move forward instead of annihilating ourselves?'"

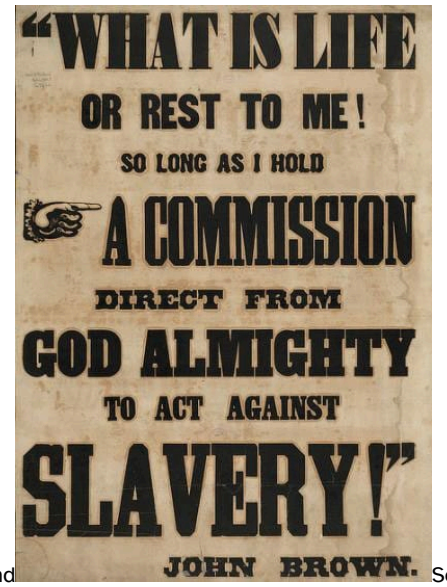


Figure \(\PageInd Source: www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/7645379730/

The presenter then offered what she said were signs of hope that groups of people can, indeed, work through even profound differences without descending into chaos or perpetual hatred. Slavery was once considered a normal part of society, she said, but no more. Child labor, too, used to be considered acceptable. And miscegenation laws existed in the United States until 1967. The presenter's point here was that, with hard work, groups can overcome past evils and deficiencies if they're willing to work through the conflict that invariably crops up when individuals are asked to change their behavior.

Two Models of Conflict

The presenter in New York went on to say that we can conceive conflict in terms of two models. The first is the cancer model, which portrays conflict as an insidious and incessantly expanding element which if left to itself will inevitably overwhelm and destroy a group. If we accept this model, conflict must either be prevented, if possible, or extirpated if it does manage to take root.

In the friction model, by contrast, conflict is seen as a natural by-product of human relations. Any machine generates waste heat simply through the interaction of its component parts, and this heat seldom threatens to halt the actions of the machine as long as people conduct preventive and ongoing maintenance—adding oil, greasing joints, and so forth. Likewise, according to this model, groups inevitably produce conflict through the interaction of their members and need not fear that it will destroy them as long as they handle it wisely. Saul Alinsky, a prominent 20th-century community organizer, wrote these words in support of the friction model of conflict: "Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict."Alinsky, S. (1971). *Rules for radicals: A pragmatic primer for realistic radicals*. New York: Random House.

Benefits of Healthy Conflict

Without conflict, life in general can easily become stagnant and tedious. When conflict is absent in a group, it often means that people are silencing themselves and holding back their opinions. If group discussions are significant, rather than merely routine, then varying opinions about the best course of action should be expected to arise. If people suppress their opinions, on the other hand, groupthink may spread and the final result may not be the best solution.

One favorable feature of healthy conflict is that people engaged in it point out difficulties or weaknesses in proposed alternatives and work together to solve them. As noted in another section, a key to keeping conflict healthy is to make sure that discussion remains focused on the task rather than upon people's personalities.

If it is properly guided and not allowed to deteriorate into damaging forms, conflict can benefit a group in several ways. Besides broadening the range of ideas which group members take into consideration, it can help people clarify their own views and those of others so that they have a better chance of sharing a common understanding of issues. It can also help group members

unearth erroneous assumptions about one another. Finally, it can actually make a group more cohesive as members realize they are surmounting difficulties together. In short, conflict is indeed normal.

Key Takeaway

- Conflict may be viewed as a pernicious and destructive element of group interaction, but considering it as a normal by-product of human relationships is a more accurate perspective.

Exercise 10.3.1

1. An adage says, “If you want an omelet, you have to break some eggs.” To what degree do you subscribe to this folk saying? What reservations, if any, do you have about how it has been or might be used with respect to social change?
2. Some conflict throughout history has spread perniciously, as the cancer model might suggest. Have you personally experienced such enlargement of conflict in a group? If so, what factors do you believe contributed to the situation? At what point did normal friction among the group’s members turn into a more harmful form of conflict?
3. Describe a situation in which you gained increased important understanding as a result of conflict in a group you were part of.

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10.4: Conflict Styles

Learning Objectives

1. List and describe a range of styles which people may use in cases of conflict
2. Distinguish between concern for self and concern for others as elements of conflict styles
3. Assess the nature and value of assertion as an ingredient in conflict



The hard and strong will fall. The soft and weak will overcome.

Lao-tzu

If you're a member of a group, you most likely want to minimize futile conflict—conflict that is unlikely to be resolved no matter what you do to address it. You also probably prefer to avoid conflicts that might weaken your group, or those whose nature or outcome is irrelevant to your goals. Once you and the other members of a group recognize that you are involved in a significant conflict whose resolution may make it more likely that you can achieve your goals, you may engage in the conflict via several styles. In this section, we'll consider "menus" of styles proposed by three groups of communication authorities.

Three Style "Menus"

All three style "menus" include a range of approaches, as represented in Table 10.1. The styles described by Linda Putnam and Charmaine Wilson, Putnam, L.L., & Wilson, C.E. (1982). Communicative strategies in organizational conflicts: Reliability and validity of a measurement scale, in M. Burgoon (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 6* (pp. 629–652). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. range from nonconfrontational to controlling and cooperative. According to Putnam and Wilson, if you adopt a nonconfrontational style, you refrain from expressing your thoughts and opinions during a conflict. This may be because you're shy or feel intimidated by the group environment or the behavior of some of its members. It may also be because you don't know how to express viewpoints constructively under the time constraints of a conflict situation or lack information about the topic of the conflict. If you adopt a controlling style, by contrast, you'll try to monopolize discussion during a conflict and make a serious effort to force others in the group to either agree with you or at least accept your proposals for how the group should act. The cooperative style of conflict, finally, involves active participation in the group's conflicts in a spirit of give and take, with the group's superordinate goals in mind.

Rahim, Antonioni, and Psenicka, Rahim, M.A., Antonioni, D., & Psenicka, C. (2001). A structural equations model of leader power, subordinates' styles of handling conflict, and job performance. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 12*(3), 191–211. enlarged upon Putnam and Wilson's three-style "menu" by adding two further options. They framed their conceptualization in terms of potential combinations of two dimensions, concern for self and concern for others. Here are the options resulting from

the combinations:

High concern for self and others (integrating style): Openness; willingness to exchange information and resolve conflict in a manner acceptable to all parties.

Low concern for self and high concern for others (obliging style): A tendency to minimize points of difference among parties to a conflict and to try to satisfy other people's needs.

High concern for self and low concern for others (dominating style): A win-lose orientation and a drive to compel others to accept one's position.

Low concern for self and low concern for others (avoiding style): Sidestepping areas of conflict, passing the buck to others, or withdrawing entirely from the conflict situation.

Intermediate concern for self and for others (compromising style): Mutual sacrifice for the sake of achieving an outcome that all members of the group can accept.

Table 10.4.1 Individual Styles of Conflict in Groups

Putnam & Wilson	Rahim, Antonioni, & Psenicka	Adler & Rodman
Nonconfrontational	Integrating	Nonassertive
	Obliging	Directly Aggressive
Controlling	Dominating	Passive Aggressive
	Avoiding	Indirectly Communicating
Cooperative	Compromising	Assertive

Adler and Rodman, Adler, R.B., & Rodman, G. (2009). *Understanding human communication* (10th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. emphasized communication elements in their listing of five conflict styles. First of all, they designated nonassertion as a style of conflict in which the group member is unable or unwilling to express him- or herself. According to these theorists, this conflict style is widely used in intimate relationships such as marriages, in which the partners may disagree with each other frequently yet decide not to provoke or prolong conflicts by voicing their differences. People in groups can display a nonassertive style by either ignoring areas of conflict, trying to change the subject when a conflict appears to be arising, physically removing themselves from a place where a conflict is taking place, or simply giving in to someone else's desires during a conflict.

Direct aggression is the second conflict style identified by Adler and Rodman. A group member who attacks someone else willfully—by saying "That's ridiculous" or "That's a crazy idea" or something else that attempts to demean the person—is engaging in direct aggression. Direct aggression need not be verbal; gestures, facial expressions, and posture can all be used to convey aggressive meaning.



Source: www.flickr.com/photos/o5com/4926088644/

Passive aggression, referred to as "crazymaking" by George Bach, Bach, G.R., & Goldberg, H. (1974). *Creative aggression.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday., is a subtle conflict style in which a person expresses hostility or resistance to others through stubbornness, resentment, procrastination, jokes with ambiguous meanings, petty annoyances, or persistent failure to fully meet expectations or responsibilities. Someone who displays this style of conflict may disavow any negative intent if confronted or questioned about his or her behavior.

Indirect communication is a style that avoids the unmistakable force of the aggressive style and which instead implies concern for the person or persons it is directed toward. Kellermann, K., & Shea, B.C. Threats, suggestions, hints, and promises: Gaining compliance efficiently and politely. *Communication quarterly, 44*, 145–165. Rather than bluntly saying, "I'd like you to get out of my office now" when a discussion is bogging down, for instance, you might yawn discreetly or comment on how much work you have to do on a big project. Indirect communication may comprise hints, suggestions, or other polite means of seeking someone else's compliance with one's desires. Sometimes it can be used to send "trial balloons" to group members—proposals that are tentative and provisional and don't have a great deal of ego investment behind them.

Assertion is the final style of communication identified by Adler and Rodman, and it is also the one that we recommend in most cases. Group members who operate according to this style express their feelings and thoughts clearly but neither coerce nor judge others while doing so. If you choose to use what Adler and Towne, Adler, R.B., & Towne, N. (2002). *Looking out/looking in* (10th ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers. called a "clear message format," you can practice assertion by following five steps in a conflict situation.



Figure 10.4.3

The first step is to offer an objective description of behavior being exhibited by those with whom you are in conflict. Don't interpret or assess the behavior; just describe it. For example, you might say, "Lee, you just rolled your eyes at me."

The second step is to present your interpretation of the behavior, but without stating the interpretation as fact. For instance, "Lee, I get the impression that you may have dismissed my proposal, because you rolled your eyes at me."

The third step is to express your feelings about the behavior you've described and interpreted. For example, "When you roll your eyes like that, I get the impression that you've dismissed my proposal, and I feel resentful."

The next step is to identify the consequences of the behavior, your interpretation, and your feelings. For instance, "Lee, I see that you rolled your eyes at me when I made my proposal. I get the impression that you've dismissed it, and I'm resentful. I don't feel like discussing the matter any further now."

The final step is to state your intentions, based on the four preceding ingredients of the situation. For example, "Lee, you rolled your eyes at me when I made my proposal. I get the impression that you've dismissed it, and I'm resentful. I don't feel like discussing the matter any further now, and if I see you act this way again I'll probably just leave the room until I calm down."

We admit that following a list of communication behaviors like one this can feel unfamiliar and perhaps overly complex. Fortunately, being responsibly assertive can sometimes be a very simple matter which immediately yields positive results. In fact, following just one or two steps from the five outlined here may be sufficient to prevent, defuse, or resolve a conflict.

A friend of ours named Gus told us about a time when he was part of an enthusiastic crowd watching a football game at Washington State University. A few rows below him in the stadium sat an elderly woman, and directly in front of her was a man many inches taller and substantially heavier than she was.

The first time the WSU team made a good play, the man leapt to his feet and screamed wildly, blocking the woman's view of the field. As the widespread cheering subsided, but with the man still standing in front of her, the woman calmly but forcefully said, "Sorry sir, but I can't see."



The man grunted roughly in response and kept standing until the rest of the crowd quieted. The next couple of times that WSU managed an impressive play—and this was one of those rare contests in which they did so on several occasions—the man jumped up again, preventing the woman from seeing the action over and over again.

Every time this happened, the woman spoke up, saying “Sir, I really can’t see” or “You’re blocking my view.” According to Gus, the effect of the woman’s assertive statements was like a series of weights being placed on the man’s shoulders. Eventually, he succumbed to the cumulative weight of her statements—the power of her assertions—and moved to an empty nearby seat.

Of course, not everyone who behaves in ways that we find objectionable will respond as positively as the oafish gentleman did to the elderly woman. Some people in the heat of a disagreement may resist even the mildest and least judgmental statements of assertion. How to deal with people who resist even responsibly assertive communication, along with other strategies to manage conflict in general, will be the subjects of our next section.

Key Takeaway

- Theorists have identified a range of conflict styles available to members of groups, including a five-step assertion approach which may offer the greatest general applicability and prospects for effectiveness because it avoids coercing or judging others.

Exercise 10.4.1

1. Consider the adage “Discretion is the better part of valor.” To what degree do you feel it corresponds to what Putnam and Wilson called a “nonconfrontational” style of conflict?
2. Think about a time when you experienced a conflict in a group that was eventually resolved. What style(s), from among those described in this section, did the parties to the conflict exhibit? Do you feel the people chose the best style for the circumstances? Why or why not?
3. What specific statements or questions would you use to attempt to communicate with someone who habitually employs passive aggression in conflicts? Provide examples of your past experiences with such behavior, if you have them.
4. Take another look at the cartoon in which the woman says “The remark you’ve just made has hurt me and I’m feeling anger toward you.” Does it seem funny to you? If so, what elements of the cartoon and its text amuse you? How would you change the drawing or the words to portray a healthful interaction between people based on responsible assertion?

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10.5: Conflict in the Work Environment

Learning Objectives

1. Understand evaluations and criticism in the workplace, and discuss several strategies for resolving workplace conflict

The word “conflict” produces a sense of anxiety for many people, but it is part of the human experience. Just because conflict is universal does not mean that we cannot improve how we handle disagreements, misunderstandings, and struggles to understand or make ourselves understood. Hocker and Wilmot, Hocker, J., & Wilmot, W. (1991). *Interpersonal conflict.* Dubuque, IA: Willam C. Brown. offer us several principles on conflict that have been adapted here for our discussion:

- Conflict is universal.
- Conflict is associated with incompatible goals
- Conflict is associated with scarce resources
- Conflict is associated with interference
- Conflict is not a sign of a poor relationship
- Conflict cannot be avoided
- Conflict cannot always be resolved
- Conflict is not always bad

Conflict is the physical or psychological struggle associated with the perception of opposing or incompatible goals, desires, demands, wants, or needs McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.. When incompatible goals, scarce resources, or interference are present, conflict is a typical result, but it doesn’t mean the relationship is poor or failing. All relationships progress through times of conflict and collaboration. How we navigate and negotiate these challenges influences, reinforces, or destroys the relationship. Conflict is universal, but how and when it occurs is open to influence and interpretation. Rather than viewing conflict from a negative frame of reference, view it as an opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship.

Conflict Management Strategies

As professional communicators, we can acknowledge and anticipate that conflict will be present in every context or environment where communication occurs, particularly in groups. To that end, we can predict, anticipate, and formulate strategies to address conflict successfully. How you choose to approach conflict influences its resolution. Joseph DeVitoDeVito, J. (2003). *Messages: builing interpersoanl skills.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. offers us several conflict management strategies that we have adapted and expanded for our use.

Avoidance

You may choose to change the subject, leave the room, or not even enter the room in the first place, but the conflict will remain and resurface when you least expect it. Your reluctance to address the conflict directly is a normal response, and one which many cultures prize. In cultures where independence is highly valued, direct confrontation is more common. In cultures where the community is emphasized over the individual, indirect strategies may be more common. Avoidance allows for more time to resolve the problem, but can also increase costs associated with problem in the first place. Your organization or business will have policies and protocols to follow regarding conflict and redress, but it is always wise to consider the position of your conversational partner or opponent and to give them, as well as yourself, time to explore alternatives.

Defensiveness Versus Supportiveness

GibbGibb, J. (1961). Defensive and supportive communication. *Journal of Communication, 11*, 141–148. discussed defensive and supportive communication interactions as part of his analysis of conflict management. Defensive communication is characterized by control, evaluation, and judgments, while supportive communication focuses on the points and not personalities. When we feel judged or criticized, our ability to listen can be diminished, and we may only hear the negative message. By choosing to focus on

the message instead of the messenger, we keep the discussion supportive and professional.

Face-Detracting and Face-Saving

Communication is not competition. Communication is the sharing of understanding and meaning, but does everyone always share equally? People struggle for control, limit access to resources and information as part of territorial displays, and otherwise use the process of communication to engage in competition. People also use communication for collaboration. Both competition and collaboration can be observed in group communication interactions, but there are two concepts central to both: face-detracting and face-saving strategies.

Face-detracting strategies involve messages or statements that take away from the respect, integrity, or credibility of a person. Face-saving strategies protect credibility and separate message from messenger. For example, you might say that "sales were down this quarter," without specifically noting who was responsible. Sales were simply down. If, however, you ask, "How does the sales manager explain the decline in sales?" you have specifically connected an individual with the negative news. While we may want to specifically connect tasks and job responsibilities to individuals and departments, in terms of language each strategy has distinct results.

Face-detracting strategies often produce a defensive communication climate, inhibit listening, and allow for little room for collaboration. To save face is to raise the issue while preserving a supportive climate, allowing room in the conversation for constructive discussions and problem-solving. By using a face-saving strategy to shift the emphasis from the individual to the issue, we avoid power struggles and personalities, providing each other space to save faceDonohue, W., & Klot, R. (1992). *Managing interpersonal conflict*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage..

In collectivist cultures, where the community well-being is promoted or valued above that of the individual, face-saving strategies are common communicative strategies. Groups are valued, and the role of the individual is de-emphasized. In Japan, for example, to confront someone directly is perceived as humiliation, a great insult. In the United States, greater emphasis is placed on individual performance, and responsibility may be more directly assessed. If our goal is to solve a problem, and preserve the relationship, then consideration of a face-saving strategy should be one option a skilled business communicator considers when addressing negative news or information.

Empathy

Communication involves not only the words we write or speak, but how and when we write or say them. The way we communicate also carries meaning, and empathy for the individual involves attending to this aspect of interaction. Empathetic listening involves listening to both the literal and implied meanings within a message. For example, the implied meaning might involve understand what has led this person to feel this way. By paying attention to feelings and emotions associated with content and information, we can build relationships and address conflict more constructively. In management, negotiating conflict is a common task and empathy is one strategy to consider when attempting to resolve issues. We can also observe that inherent in the group development process is the presence of conflict. It is not a sign of bad things to come, nor a reason to think something is wrong. Conflict is a normal part of communication in general, and group communication in particular. In fact, conflict can be the antidote to groupthink, and help the group members refrain from going along with the flow, even when reason or the available information indicated otherwise.

Gunnysacking

Bach and WydenBach, G., & Wyden, P. (1968). *The intimacy enemy*. New York, NY: Avon. discuss gunnysacking (or backpacking) as the imaginary bag we all carry, into which we place unresolved conflicts or grievances over time. If your organization has gone through a merger, and your business has transformed, there may have been conflicts that occurred during the transition. Holding onto the way things used to be can be like a stone in your gunnysack, and influence how you interpret your current context.

People may be aware of similar issues but might not know your history, and cannot see your backpack or its contents. For example, if your previous manager handled issues in one way, and your new manage handles them in a different way, this may cause you some degree of stress and frustration. Your new manager cannot see how the relationship existed in the past, but will still observe the tension. Bottling up your frustrations only hurts you and can cause your current relationships to suffer. By addressing, or unpacking, the stones you carry, you can better assess the current situation with the current patterns and variables.

We learn from experience, but can distinguish between old wounds and current challenges, and try to focus our energies where they will make the most positive impact.

Managing Your Emotions

Have you ever seen red, or perceived a situation through rage, anger, or frustration? Then you know that you cannot see or think clearly when you are experiencing strong emotions. There will be times in the work environment when emotions run high, and your awareness of them can help you clear your mind and choose to wait until the moment has passes to tackle the challenge.

“Never speak or make decision in anger” is one common saying that holds true, but not all emotions involve fear, anger, or frustration. A job loss can be a sort of professional death for many, and the sense of loss can be profound. The loss of a colleague to a layoff while retaining your position can bring pain as well as relief, and a sense of survivor’s guilt. Emotions can be contagious in the workplace, and fear of the unknown can influence people to act in irrational ways. The wise business communicator can recognize when emotions are on edge in themselves or others, and choose to wait to communicate, problem-solve, or negotiate until after the moment has passed.

Evaluations and Criticism in the Workplace

Guffey, Guffey, M. (2008). *Essentials of business communication* (7th ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson-Wadsworth. pp.320 wisely notes that Xenophon, a Greek philosopher, once said “The sweetest of all sounds is praise.” We have seen previously that appreciation, respect, inclusion, and belonging are all basic human needs across all contexts, and are particularly relevant in the workplace. Efficiency and morale are positively related, and recognition of good work is important. There may come a time, however, when evaluations involve criticism. Knowing how to approach this criticism can give you peace of mind to listen clearly, separating subjective, personal attacks from objective, constructive requests for improvement. Guffey offers us seven strategies for giving and receiving evaluations and criticism in the workplace that we have adapted here.

Listen Without Interrupting

If you are on the receiving end of an evaluation, start by listening without interruption. Interruptions can be internal and external, and warrant further discussion. If your supervisor starts to discuss a point and you immediately start debating the point in your mind, you are paying attention to yourself and what you think they said or are going to say, and not that which is actually communicated. This gives rise to misunderstandings and will cause you to lose valuable information you need to understand and address the issue at hand.

External interruptions may involve your attempt to get a word in edgewise, and may change the course of the conversation. Let them speak while you listen, and if you need to take notes to focus your thoughts, take clear notes of what is said, also noting points to revisit later. External interruptions can also take the form of a telephone ringing, a “text message has arrived” chime, or a co-worker dropping by in the middle of the conversation.

As an effective business communicator, you know all too well to consider the context and climate of the communication interaction when approaching the delicate subject of evaluations or criticism. Choose a time and place free from interruption. Choose one outside of the common space where there may be many observers. Turn off your cell phone. Choose face to face communication instead of an impersonal email. By providing a space free of interruption, you are displaying respect for the individual and the information.

Determine the Speaker’s Intent

We have discussed previews as a normal part of conversation, and in this context they play an important role. People want to know what is coming and generally dislike surprises, particularly when the context of an evaluation is present. If you are on the receiving end, you may need to ask a clarifying question if it doesn’t count as an interruption. You may also need to take notes, and write down questions that come to mind to address when it is your turn to speak. As a manager, be clear and positive in your opening and lead with praise. You can find one point, even if it is only that the employee consistently shows up to work on time, to highlight before transitioning to a performance issue.

Indicate You Are Listening

In mainstream U.S. culture, eye contact is a signal that you are listening and paying attention to the person speaking. Take notes, nod your head, or lean forward to display interest and listening. Regardless of whether you are the employee receiving the criticism or the supervisor delivering it, displaying of listening behavior engenders a positive climate that helps mitigate the challenge of negative news or constructive criticism.

Paraphrase

Restate the main points to paraphrase what has been discussed. This verbal display allows for clarification and acknowledges receipt of the message.

If you are the employee, summarize the main points and consider steps you will take to correct the situation. If none come to mind, or you are nervous and are having a hard time thinking clearly, state out loud the main point and ask if you can provide solution steps and strategies at a later date. You can request a follow-up meeting if appropriate, or indicate you will respond in writing via email to provide the additional information.

If you are the employer, restate the main points to ensure that the message was received, as not everyone hears everything that is said or discussed the first time it is presented. Stress can impair listening, and paraphrasing the main points can help address this common response.

If You Agree...

If an apology is well deserved, offer it. Communicate clearly what will change or indicate when you will respond with specific strategies to address the concern. As a manager you will want to formulate a plan that addresses the issue and outlines responsibilities as well as time frames for corrective action. As an employee, you will want specific steps you can both agree on that will serve to solve the problem. Clear communication and acceptance of responsibility demonstrates maturity and respect.

If You Disagree...

If you disagree, focus on the points or issue and not personalities. Do not bring up past issues and keep the conversation focused on the task at hand. You may want to suggest, now that you better understand their position, a follow-up meeting to give you time to reflect on the issues. You may want to consider involving a third party, investigating to learn more about the issue, or taking time to cool off.

Do not respond in anger or frustration; instead, always display professionalism. If the criticism is unwarranted, consider that the information they have may be flawed or biased, and consider ways to learn more about the case to share with them, searching for a mutually beneficial solution.

If other strategies to resolve the conflict fail, consider contacting your Human Resources department to learn more about due process procedures at your workplace. Display respect and never say anything that would reflect poorly on yourself or your organization. Words spoken in anger can have a lasting impact, and are impossible to retrieve or take back.

Learn from the Experience

Every communication interaction provides an opportunity for learning if you choose to see it. Sometimes the lessons are situational, and may not apply in future contexts. Other times the lessons learned may well serve you across your professional career. Taking notes for yourself to clarify your thoughts, much like a journal, serve to document and help you see the situation more clearly.

Recognize that some aspects of communication are intentional, and may communicate meaning, even if it is hard to understand. Also know that some aspects of communication are unintentional, and may not imply meaning or design. People make mistakes. They say things they should not have said. Emotions are revealed that are not always rational, and not always associated with the current context. A challenging morning at home can spill over into the workday and someone's bad mood may have nothing to do with you. Team members aren't always the same day to day, and the struggles outside of the work environment can impact the

group.

Try to distinguish between what you can control and what you cannot, and always choose professionalism.

Key Takeaway

- Conflict is unavoidable and can be opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship.

Exercise 10.5.1

1. Write a description of a situation you recall where you came into conflict with someone else. It may be something that happened years ago, or a current issue that just arose. Using the principles and strategies in this section, describe how the conflict was resolved, or could have been resolved. Discuss your ideas with your classmates.
2. Of the strategies for managing conflict described in this section, which do you think are the most effective? Why? Discuss your opinions with a classmate.
3. Can you think of a time when a conflict led to a new opportunity, better understanding, or other positive result? If not, think of a past conflict and imagine a positive outcome. Write a 2–3 paragraph description of what happened, or what you imagine could happen. Share your results with a classmate.

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10.6: Effective Conflict Management Strategies

Learning Objectives

1. List four preventive steps that a group and its members may take to lessen the likelihood of experiencing damaging conflict
2. Identify measures related to space and time that a group may employ to mediate against potentially destructive conflict
3. Describe steps which members of a group may take to manage conflict when it arises
4. Explain the "SLACK" method of managing conflict

I've led a school whose faculty and students examine and discuss and debate every aspect of our law and legal system. And what I've learned most is that no one has a monopoly on truth or wisdom. I've learned that we make progress by listening to each other, across every apparent political or ideological divide.

Elena Kagan

In calm water, every ship has a good captain.

Swedish Proverb

To be peaceable is, by definition, to be peaceable in time of conflict.

Progressive magazine

If group members communicate effectively and show sensitivity to each other's needs and styles, they can often prevent unproductive and destructive conflict from developing. Nevertheless, they should also be prepared to respond in situations when conflict does crop up.

Before considering some strategies for dealing with conflicts, it's worth pointing out that the title of this section refers to "management" of conflict rather than to "resolution." The reason for this choice of terminology is that not all conflict needs to be—or can be—resolved. Still, most conflict needs to be managed to keep it from side-tracking, slowing down, weakening, or eventually destroying a group.

First Things First

We've all heard that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Managing conflict is easiest if we've acquired some tools to prevent it from getting out of hand. One way to gain such tools is to undergo some actual formal training in conflict management. A Google search of educational sites related to "conflict management courses" yields several thousand results from around the United States and elsewhere, including numerous certificate and degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate level. Commercial entities offer hundreds more opportunities for professional development in this realm.

A second, more specific preventive measure is for members of a group to periodically review and reaffirm their commitment to the norms, policies, and procedures they've set for themselves. In more formal groups, it's a good idea to assign one member to look over the bylaws or constitution every year to see if anything needs to be changed, clarified, or removed in light of altered circumstances. The danger in not paying attention to such details is represented in the story, told by Robert Townsend, Townsend, Robert (1970). *Up the organization*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf., of a British civil service job created in 1803 which called for a man to stand on the Cliffs of Dover with a spyglass. The man's role was to ring a bell if he saw Napoleon coming. The job was not abolished until 1945.

A third measure which groups can take to lessen the possibility that damaging conflict will take place within them is to discuss and distinguish between detrimental and beneficial conflict—between that which promotes improvement and that which obstructs progress. The initial "forming" stage of a group, when people are apt to act tentative and be on their best behavior, is probably the best time to set aside some group time to let members share their views, experiences, and expectations with regard to "bad" and "good" conflict. It may be a good idea to ask members of the group to cite specific examples of conflict which they would

accept or endorse, and also examples of conflict which they would hope to avoid.

A fourth preventive measure is for the group to explicitly remind its members that “deviates” are to be appreciated and respected for the diverse perspectives they can share and the unconventional opinions they may hold. This kind of statement may give creative members the impression that they have intellectual “free space” for generating and sharing ideas later in the evolution of the group.

Logistical Measures

Proponents of feng shui believe that configurations of furniture affect people’s moods and behavior. Employees at the National Observatory in Washington, DC, maintain an atomic clock that keeps precise universal time. You don’t need to belong to either of these groups to believe that how a group uses space and time can affect the level and nature of conflict it will experience.

With respect to proxemics, for instance, research has demonstrated that conflict between people who disagree with each other is more likely to flare up if they sit directly across from each other than if they are seated side by side. Gordon, J., Mondy, R. W., Sharplin, A., & Premeaux, S. R. (1990). *Management and organizational behavior*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 540. Why not, then, purposefully plan where people are going to sit and the angles from which they’ll see each other?

Decisions about when and for how long groups will gather can also affect their level of conflict. Research into human beings’ circadian rhythm—the 24-hour cycle of energy highs and lows-shows that 3 a.m. and 3 p.m. are the two lowest-energy times. www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2004/10/17/night-shift.html Depending on whether group members clash more or less when their energy level is low, it, therefore, may or may not be wise to meet at three o’clock in the afternoon.

Whenever people in a group get together, it’s natural that the mood and outlook they bring with them will be influenced in part by what’s happened to them earlier that day. For any individual, a touchy discussion, a disappointment, or an embarrassing episode might precede the group’s interactions. Unfortunate events like these—as well as other powerful experiences, whether positive or not—may consciously or unconsciously color the demeanor of group members at the start of their interaction.

Another time-related conflict management strategy, thus, is to begin a discussion with a “time out” for people to rest and loosen up. We know of college instructors who initiate each of their class sessions with two minutes of silence for this same purpose.

Once Conflict Occurs...

Numerous authorities have offered suggestions on how to manage conflict once it reaches a level where it should not or cannot be allowed to dissipate on its own. Hartley & Dawson, first of all, Hartley, P., & Dawson, M. (2010). *Success in groupwork*. New York: St. Martin’s Press. suggested taking the following steps:

1. Make sure the lines of communication are open. If they aren’t, open them.
2. Define the issues. Don’t allow a nebulous sense of overpowering disagreement to develop. Be specific about what the conflict pertains to.
3. Focus on the task, rather than on personalities. Discourage or deflect comments that question a group member’s motives or personal qualities.
4. Proceed according to your established ground rules, policies, procedures, and norms. After all, you established these components of your group’s identity precisely to deal with difficult circumstances.

In addition to following rules and procedures peculiar to its own history, a group that’s experiencing conflict should strive to maintain civilityMeyer, J.R. Effect of verbal aggressiveness on the perceived importance of secondary goals in messages. *Communication Studies, 55*, 168–184. and follow basic etiquette. As Georges Clemenceau wrote, “Etiquette is nothing but hot air, but that is what our automobiles ride on, and look how it smoothes out the bumps.”

Malcolm Gladwell’s popular book, *The Tipping Point*, describes how New York City’s subway system was revitalized by David Gunn and William Bratton in the 1980s and 90s Gladwell, M. (2000). *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.. Together, Gunn and Bratton launched a campaign to eliminate vandalism, including graffiti on the sides of train cars, and to prosecute “fare-beaters.” At the start of the campaign, doubters complained that more serious crime in the subways and streets needed to be attacked first. Gunn and Bratton insisted, however, that setting a broad example of civility would ultimately create an atmosphere in which potential criminals would be less likely to engage in serious criminal acts. After many years of relentlessly enforcing basic laws mandating public decency, not only did graffiti nearly disappear entirely

from the subway system, but overall crime in the New York metropolitan area declined substantially.

Hopefully, you will never witness vandalism, much less felonious behavior, in a small group. Malicious verbal interchanges, nevertheless, can poison the atmosphere among people and should be prevented if at all possible. As an old Japanese saying puts it, "The one who raises his voice first loses the argument." It doesn't hurt to calmly and quietly ask that discussion of particularly contentious topics be postponed if comments seem to be in danger of overwhelming the group with negativity.



Figure 10.6.1: Source: www.flickr.com/photos/joeshlabotnik/842977816/

In addition to reminding people that they should exercise basic politeness, it may be wise at times for someone in the group to ask for a recess in a discussion. Calvin Coolidge said, "I have never been hurt by anything I didn't say," and it may be a good idea in irate moments to silence people briefly to prevent what Adler and Rodman, Adler, R.B., & Rodman, G. (2009). *Understanding human communication* (10th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. referred to as an "escalatory spiral" of hurtful conversation.

If the tone of a group discussion permits thoughtful reflection, it can be helpful to separate task and relationship goals and deal with conflict over each kind separately. Fisher, R., & Brown, S. (1988). *Getting Together: Building a relationship that gets to yes.* Boston: Houghton-Mifflin. Using indirect communication, rather than confronting another group member head-on, may also defuse extreme emotions and preserve other people's faces.

Here are further techniques for managing conflict in group interactions:

1. "Test the waters" for new ideas without making it seem that you're so attached to them that you'll fight to impose them on others.
2. If an ego clash erupts, see if you can identify something that the disagreeing individuals *can* agree on. Perhaps this will be a superordinate goal. It could also be a common opposing force, since the idea that "my enemy's enemy is my friend" can serve to bind people together.
3. Employ active listening. Strive to fully understand other people's viewpoints before stating your own.
4. If people's comments meander to topics that aren't germane, steer the discussion back to the key issues under discussion.
5. Frame the situation as a problem to be solved, rather than as a struggle which must be won.
6. Treat everyone as partners on a common quest. Invite continued frank interchanges and assure group members that they may speak out without fear of reprisal.
7. Consider carefully how important it is for you to prevail in a particular conflict or even just to express your views. Ask yourself whether the potential negative consequences of your action will be worth it.
8. Unless a disagreement is over an essential point, consider whether it might be best to "agree to disagree" and move on.



Figure 10.6.2: Source: www.flickr.com/photos/buddawiggi/5987710858/

"Going with the Flow"

As we've seen, there is no shortage of specific strategies and techniques for people to choose from when conflict occurs in a group. In fact, it may be overwhelming to try to decide which strategies and techniques to use, at which times and with which people, under which circumstances. Randy Fujishin, a therapist and writer from California, proposed an attitude that might help people deal both with conflict itself and with the feelings of stress it often engenders. He suggested that we regard conflict as neither a call to battle nor a warning to dissolve or disband a group. Instead, Fujishin proposed that people regard conflict as "an invitation to listen, learn, explore, and growFujishin, R. (1998). *Gifts from the heart: 10 communication skills for developing more loving relationships*. San Francisco: Acada Books.." His advice when conflict takes place is this: "Instead of tensing, relax. Instead of stiffening, bend. Instead of arguing, listen. Instead of pushing or running away, get closer. Flow with the disagreement, situation, or individual for a period to discover where it may lead."

Fujishin also developed what he called the "SLACK" method of managing conflict. Although he intended it to be brought to bear primarily on disputes in one-on-one relationships, its components may apply also in group situations. "SLACK" is an acronym standing for "sit, listen, ask, compromise, and kiss." Major emphasis in this method is placed on being receptive to what other parties in a conflict have to say, as well as to their emotional states. Fujishin really does suggest kissing or hugging as the final step in this method, but of course many groups will choose instead to celebrate the achievement of post-conflict reconciliation and progress through words.

Perhaps the central message we can derive from Fujishin's writings on this topic is that, although we should respond to conflict earnestly, we should take a long view and avoid losing our composure in the process of managing it. Even at moments of extreme tension, we can remind ourselves of an ancient saying attributed first to Persian mystics and later cited by such notable figures as Abraham Lincoln: "This too shall pass."Taylor, A. (1968). "This Too Will Pass (Jason 910Q)". In F. Harkort, K.C. Peeters, & R. Wildhaber. *Volksüberlieferung: Festschrift für Kurt Ranke* (pp. 345–350). Göttingen, German: Schwartz.

Key Takeaway

- Conflict can be managed by implementing a combination of preventive, logistical, and procedural actions, as well as by maintaining composure and perspective.

Exercise 10.6.1

1. What proportion of conflicts within small groups do you feel can actually be resolved rather than merely managed? Provide a rationale and example(s) for your answer.

2. Think about a conflict that you recently observed or took part in. What elements of its timing, location, or physical surroundings do you think contributed to its nature or severity? Which of those elements, if any, do you think someone might have been able to change to lessen the intensity of the conflict?
3. Labor negotiations sometimes include a mandated “cooling-off period.” Describe a conflict situation you’ve witnessed which you believe might have turned out better had such a cooling-off period been incorporated into it. Describe areas of conflict in your life, at school or elsewhere, in which you feel it would be helpful to make use of such a technique?

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10.7: Crisis Communication Plan

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how to prepare a crisis communication plan

A rumor that the CEO is ill pulls down the stock price. A plant explosion kills several workers and requires evacuating residents on several surrounding city blocks. Risk management seeks to address these many risks, including prevention as well as liability, but emergency and crisis situations happen nevertheless. In addition, people make errors in judgment that can damage the public perception of a company. The mainstream media has no lack of stories that involve infidelity, addiction, or abuse that, from a company's standpoint, require a clear a response. In this chapter, we address the basics of a crisis communication plan.

Mallet, Vaught, and Brinch, Mallet, L., Vaught, C., & Brinch, M. (1999). *The emergency communication triangle.* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Saftey and Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Research Laboratory. indicate the importance of focusing on key types of information during an emergency including:

- What is happening?
- Is anyone in danger?
- How big is the problem?
- Who reported the problem?
- Where is the problem?
- Has a response started?
- What resources are on-scene?
- Who is responding so far?
- Is everyone's location known?

You will be receiving information from the moment you know a crisis has occurred, but without a framework or communication plan to guide you, valuable information may be ignored or lost. These questions help you quickly focus on the basics of "who, what, and where" in the crisis situation.



Figure 10.7.1: Crisis communication requires efficiency and accuracy. Source: Jupiter Images 4218613.jpg

Developing Your Own Crisis Communication Plan

A crisis communication plan is the prepared scenario document that organizes information into responsibilities and lines of communication prior to an event. With a plan in place, if an emergency arises, each person knows his or her role and responsibilities from a common reference document. Overall effectiveness can be enhanced with a clear understanding of roles

and responsibilities for an effective and swift response.

The plan should include four elements:

1. Crisis communication team members with contact information,
2. Designated spokesperson,
3. Meeting place/location, and
4. Media plan with procedures.

A crisis communication team includes people who can:

1. Decide what actions to take,
2. Carry out those actions, and
3. Offer expertise or education in the relevant areas.

By designating a spokesperson prior to an actual emergency, your team addresses the inevitable need for information in a proactive manner. People will want to know what happened and where to get further details about the crisis. Lack of information breeds rumors and that can make a bad situation worse. The designated spokesperson should be knowledgeable about the organization and its values, comfortable in front of a microphone, a camera, and media lights, and able to stay calm under pressure.

Part of your communication crisis plan should focus on where you will meet to coordinate communication and activities. For your own house in case of a fire, you might meet in the front yard. For an organization, a designated contingency building or office some distance away from your usual place of business might serve as a central place for communication in an emergency that requires evacuating your building. Depending on the size of your organization and the type of physical facilities where you do business, the company may develop an emergency plan with exit routes, hazardous materials procedures, and policies for handling bomb threats, for example. Safety, of course, is the first priority, but in terms of communication, a key goal is also to eliminate confusion about where people are and where information is coming from.

Whether or not evacuation is necessary, when a crisis occurs, your designated spokesperson will gather information and carry out your media plan. He or she will need to make quick judgments about which information to share, how to phrase it, and whether certain individuals need to be notified of facts before they become public. The media and public will want to know information and reliable information is preferable to speculation. Official responses help clarify the situation for the public, but an unofficial interview can make the tragedy personal, and attract unwanted attention. Remind employees to direct all inquiries to the official spokesperson and to never speak “off the record.”

Enable your spokesperson to have access to the place you indicated as your crisis contingency location to coordinate communication and activities, and allow that professional to prepare and respond to inquiries. When crisis communication is handled in a professional manner, it seeks not to withhold information or mislead, but to minimize the “spin damage” from the incident by providing necessary facts, even if they are unpleasant or even tragic.

Key Takeaway

- Because crises are bound to happen despite the best planning, every organization should have a crisis communication plan, which includes designating a crisis communication team and spokesperson.

Exercise 10.7.1

1. Locate the crisis communication plan where you go to school or work, or find one online. Briefly describe the overall plan and please note at least one part, element, or point of emphasis we have not discussed. Post and compare with classmates.
2. When people don’t know what to do in a crisis situation, what happens? How can you address probable challenges before the crisis occurs? Discuss your ideas with your classmates.
3. As a case study, research one crisis that involves your area of training or career field. What communication issues were present and how did they affect the response to the crisis? Compare your results with classmates.
4. Locate a crisis communication online and review it. Share and compare with classmates.

5. Do you always have to be on guard with members of the media? Why or why not? Explain your answer to the class as if they were members of the media.

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10.8: Summary

In this chapter, we have dealt with managing conflict. We have defined conflict and identified dangers that can arise from it. We have leadership approaches to conflict and reviewed the nature of conflict in the work environment. We have also explored effective conflict management strategies and explained how to develop and when to use a crisis communication plan. Conflict is a perennial and nature part of group communication which can be managed effectively if we understand the important concepts and skills shared in this chapter.

Review Questions

Interpretive Questions

1. In what 2–3 ways has your view of conflict changed as a result of reading this chapter?
2. To what degree do you feel that techniques which are effective for managing conflict in small groups can produce positive results within large organizations or between nations? On what evidence or experience do you base your view concerning this question?

Application Questions

1. Think of one of your ongoing relationships in which conflict plays a larger or more harmful part than you would prefer. Which conflict management strategies from this chapter are you willing to put into use in that relationship? Please report back to one or more of your classmates in two weeks concerning the outcome of your plan.
2. Think of a leader you know who you believe manages conflict particularly effectively. Arrange an interview with the person in which you ask him/her for examples of how s/he used one or more of the strategies mentioned in this chapter. Ask also if the person has further advice for you to use in a conflict situation. Present your instructor with a short written description of the results of your interview.

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10.9: Additional Resources

A Literary Zone article describes the literary devices of internal monologue and stream of consciousness.

literaryzone.com/?p=79

For another twist on the meaning of “stream of consciousness,” visit this blog from the retail merchant Gaiam.

blog.gaiam.com/

Read an informative article on self-concept and self-esteem.

psychology.suite101.com/article.cfm/impact_of_selfconcept_and_selfesteem_on_life

PsyBlog offers an informative article on self-disclosure. Don’t miss the reader comment fields at the end!

www.spring.org.uk/2007/02/getting-closer-art-of-self-disclosure.php

The job search site Monster offers a menu of articles about employment interviews.

career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/careers.aspx

About.com offers an informative article about different types of job interviews.

jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/a/interviewtypes.htm

The Boston Globe’s Boston.com site offers tips on handling conflict in the workplace from management consultant Sue Lankton-Rivas.

www.boston.com/jobs/galleries/workplaceconflict/

An article by M. Afzalur Rahim which describes in detail the challenges posed by organizational conflict and offers approaches for managing it.

193.140.134.6/~gokturk/sbox/Rahimtowarddevtheory.pdf

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11: GROUPS AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

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11.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. Contact two people who work in different parts of your college or university and ask them what problems they consider to be most significant in their immediate office or work area. What similarities and differences do you see between the two groups of problems?
2. Ask a family member to describe a problem he or she has solved recently. Describe the steps the person took in reaching the solution and identify the one(s) that you feel were most important in contributing to the solution. Which of the steps would you be most likely to take in a similar situation?
3. Identify two or three aspects of a course you're taking or have recently taken that you feel could be improved (e.g., grading, course policies, nature of reading materials, etc.). Describe the steps you might take with a group of fellow students to respond to those elements of the course.
4. What decision have you made in the last 2–3 years that you're proudest of? What lessons or advice do you think someone else could draw from the way you reached that decision?

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11.1: Group Problem-Solving

Learning Objectives

1. Identify and describe how to implement seven steps for group problem-solving

No matter who you are or where you live, problems are an inevitable part of life. This is true for groups as well as for individuals. Some groups—especially work teams—are formed specifically to solve problems. Other groups encounter problems for a wide variety of reasons. Within a family group, a problem might be that a daughter or son wants to get married and the parents do not approve of the marriage partner. In a workgroup, a problem might be that some workers are putting in more effort than others, yet achieving poorer results. Regardless of the problem, having the resources of a group can be an advantage, as different people can contribute different ideas for how to reach a satisfactory solution.

Once a group encounters a problem, the questions that come up range from "Where do we start?" to "How do we solve it?" While there are many ways to approach a problem, the American educational philosopher John Dewey's reflective thinking sequence has stood the test of time. This seven-step process, Adler, R. (1996). *Communicating at work: principles and practices for business and the professions*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. has produced positive results and serves as a handy organizational structure. If you are member of a group that needs to solve a problem and don't know where to start, consider these seven simple steps, McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.:

1. Define the problem
2. Analyze the problem
3. Establish criteria
4. Consider possible solutions
5. Decide on a solution
6. Implement the solution
7. Follow up on the solution

Let's discuss each step in detail.

Define the Problem

If you don't know what the problem is, how can you know you've solved it? Defining the problem allows the group to set boundaries of what the problem is and what it is not; and begin to formalize a description or definition of the scope, size, or extent of the challenge the group will address. A problem that is too broadly defined can overwhelm the group. If the problem is too narrowly defined, important information will be missed or ignored.

In the following example, we have a web-based company called Favorites that needs to increase its customer base and ultimately sales. A problem-solving group has been formed, and they start by formulating a working definition of the problem.

- Too Broad: "Sales are off, our numbers are down, and we need more customers."
- More Precise: "Sales have been slipping incrementally for 6 of the past 9 months and are significantly lower than a seasonally adjusted comparison to last year. Overall this loss represents a 4.5% reduction in sales from the same time last year. However, when we break it down by product category, sales of our non-edible products have seen a modest but steady increase, while sales of edibles account for the drop off and we need to halt the decline."

Analyze the Problem

Now the group analyzes the problem, trying to gather information and learn more. The problem is complex and requires more than one area of expertise. Why do non-edible products continue selling well? What is it about the edibles that is turning customers off? Let's meet our problem-solvers at Favorites.

Kevin is responsible for customer resource management. He is involved with the customer from the point of initial contact through

purchase and delivery. Most of the interface is automated in the form of an online “basket model,” where photographs and product descriptions are accompanied by “Buy It” buttons. He is available during normal working business hours for live chat and voice interface if needed, and customers are invited to request additional information. Most Favorites customers do not access this service, but Kevin is kept quite busy, as he also handles returns and complaints. Because Kevin believes that superior service retains customers while attracting new ones, he is always interested in better ways to serve the customer. Looking at edibles and non-edibles, he will study the cycle of customer service and see if there are any common points, from the main webpage through the catalog to the purchase process to returns, at which customers abandon the sale. He has existing customer feedback loops with end-of-sale surveys, but most customers decline to take the survey and there is currently no incentive to participate.

Mariah is responsible for products and purchasing. She wants to offer the best products at the lowest price, and to offer new products that are unusual, rare, or exotic. She regularly adds new products to the Favorites catalog and culls underperformers. Right now she has the data on every product and its sales history, but it is a challenge to represent it. She will analyze current sales data and produce a report that specifically identifies how each product, edible and non-edible, is performing. She wants to highlight “winners” and “losers” but also recognizes that today’s “losers” may be the hit of tomorrow. It is hard to predict constantly changing tastes and preferences, but that is part of her job. It’s not all science, and it’s not all art. She has to have an eye for what will catch on tomorrow while continuing to provide what is hot today.

Suri is responsible for data management at Favorites. She gathers, analyzes, and presents information gathered from the supply chain, sales, and marketing. She works with vendors to make sure products are available when needed, makes sales predictions based on past sales history, and assesses the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

The problem-solving group members already have certain information on hand. They know that customer retention is one contributing factor. Attracting new customers is a constant goal, but they are aware of the well-known principle that it takes more effort to attract new customers than to keep existing ones. Thus, it is important to insure a quality customer service experience for existing customers and encourage them to refer friends. The group needs to determine how to promote this favorable customer behavior.

Another contributing factor seems to be that customers often abandon the shopping cart before completing a purchase, especially when purchasing edibles. The group members need to learn more about why this is happening.

Establish Criteria

Establishing the criteria for a solution is the next step. At this point, information is coming in from diverse perspectives, and each group member has contributed information from their perspective, even though there may be several points of overlap.

Kevin: Customers who complete the post-sale survey indicate that they want to know 1) what is the estimated time of delivery, 2) why a specific item was not in stock and when it will be, and 3) why their order sometimes arrives with less than a complete order, with some items back-ordered, without prior notification.

He notes that a very small percentage of customers complete the post-sale survey, and the results are far from scientific. He also notes that it appears the interface is not capable of cross-checking inventory to provide immediate information concerning back orders, so that the customer “buys it” only to learn several days later that it was not in stock. This seems to be especially problematic for edible products, because people may tend to order them for special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries. But we don’t really know this for sure because of the low participation in the post-sale survey.

Mariah: There are four edible products that frequently sell out. So far, we haven’t been able to boost the appeal of other edibles so that people would order them as a second choice when these sales leaders aren’t available. We also have several rare, exotic products that are slow movers. They have potential, but currently are underperformers.
Suri: We know from a zip code analysis that most of our customers are from a few specific geographic areas associated with above-average incomes. We have very few credit cards declined, and the average sale is over $100. Shipping costs represent on average 8% of the total sales cost. We do not have sufficient information to produce a customer profile. There is no specific point in the purchase process where basket abandonment tends to happen; it happens fairly uniformly at all steps.

Consider Possible Solutions to the Problem

The group has listened to each other and now starts to brainstorm ways to address the challenges they have addressed while

focusing resources on those solutions that are more likely to produce results.

Kevin: Is it possible for our programmers to create a cross-index feature, linking the product desired with a report of how many are in stock? I'd like the customer to know right away whether it is in stock, or how long they may have to wait. As another idea, is it possible to add incentives to the purchase cycle that won't negatively impact our overall profit? I'm thinking a small volume discount on multiple items, or perhaps free shipping over a specific dollar amount.
Mariah: I recommend we hold a focus group where customers can sample our edible products and tell us what they like best and why. When the best sellers are sold out, could we offer a discount on related products to provide an instant alternative? We might also cull the underperforming products with a liquidation sale to generate interest.
Suri: If we want to know more about our customers, we need to give them an incentive to complete the post-sale survey. How about a five percent off coupon code for the next purchase, to get them to return and to help us better identify our customer base? We may also want to build in a customer referral rewards program, but it all takes better data in to get results out. We should also explore the supply side of the business and see if we can get a more reliable supply of the leading products, and try to get more advantageous discounts from our suppliers, especially in the edible category.

Decide on a Solution

Kevin, Mariah, and Suri may want to implement all of the solution strategies, but they do not have the resources to do them all. They'll complete a cost/benefit analysis, which ranks each solution according to its probable impact. The analysis is shown in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1 Cost/Benefit Analysis

Source	Proposed Solution	Cost	Benefit	Comment
Kevin	Integrate the cross-index feature	High	High	Many of our competitors already have this feature
Kevin	Volume discount	Low	Medium	May increase sales slightly
Kevin	Free shipping	Low	Low	This has a downside in making customers more aware of shipping costs if their order doesn't qualify for free shipping
Mariah	Hold a focus group to taste edible products	High	Medium	Difficult to select participants representative of our customer base
Mariah	Search for alternative products to high performers	Medium	Medium	We can't know for sure which products customers will like best
Mariah	Liquidate underperformers	Low	Low	Might create a "bargain basement" impression inconsistent with our brand
Suri	Incentive for post-sale survey completion	Low	Medium	Make sure the incentive process is easy for the customer
Suri	Incentive for customer referrals	Low	Medium	People may feel uncomfortable referring friends if it is seen as putting them in a marketing role
Suri	Find a more reliable supply of top-selling edibles	Medium	High	We already know customers want these products
Suri	Negotiate better discounts from vendors	Low	High	If we can do this without alienating our best vendors, it will be a win-win

Now that the options have been presented with their costs and benefits, it is easier for the group to decide which courses of action are likely to yield the best outcomes. The analysis helps the group members to see beyond the immediate cost of implementing a given solution. For example, Kevin's suggestion of offering free shipping won't cost Favorites much money, but it also may not pay off in customer goodwill. And even though Mariah's suggestion of having a focus group might sound like a good idea, it will be expensive and its benefits are questionable.

A careful reading of the analysis indicates that Kevin's best suggestion is to integrate the cross-index feature in the ordering

process so that customers can know immediately whether an item is in stock or on back order. Of Mariah's suggestions, searching for alternative products is probably the most likely to benefit Favorites. And Suri's two supply-side suggestions are likely to result in positive outcomes.

Implement the Solution

Kevin is faced with the challenge of designing the computer interface without incurring unacceptable costs. He strongly believes that the interface will pay for itself within the first year—or, to put if more bluntly, that Favorites' declining sales will get worse if the website does not soon have this feature. He asks to meet with top management to get budget approval and secures their agreement, on one condition: He must negotiate a compensation schedule with the Information Technology consultants that includes delayed compensation in the form of bonuses after the feature has been up and running successfully for six months.

Mariah knows that searching for alternative products is a never-ending process, but it takes time and the company needs results. She decides to invest time evaluating products that competing companies currently offer, especially in the edible category, on the theory that customers who find their desired items sold out on the Favorites website may have been buying alternative products elsewhere instead of choosing an alternative from Favorites's product lines.

Suri decides to approach the vendors of the four frequently sold-out products and ask point blank: "What would it take to get you to produce these items more reliably in greater quantities?" By opening the channel of communication with these vendors, she is able to motivate them to make modifications that will improve the reliability and quantity. She also approaches the vendors of the less popular products with a request for better discounts in return for cooperation in developing and test-marketing new products.

Follow up on the Solution

Kevin: After several beta tests, the cross-index feature was implemented and has been in place for 30 days. Now customers see either "In stock" or "Available [mo/da/yr]" in the shopping basket. As expected, Kevin notes a decrease in the number of chat and phone inquiries to the effect of, "Will this item arrive before my wife's birthday?" However, he notes an increase in inquiries asking "Why isn't this item in stock?" It is difficult to tell whether customer satisfaction is higher overall.
Mariah: In exploring the merchandise available from competing merchants, she got several ideas for modifying Favorites' product line to offer more flavors and other variations on popular edibles. Working with vendors, she found that these modifications cost very little. Within the first 30 days of adding these items to the product line, sales are up. Mariah believes these additions also serve to enhance the Favorites brand identity, but she has no data to back this up.
Suri: So far, the vendors supplying the four top-selling edibles have fulfilled their promise of increasing quantity and reliability. However, three of the four items have still sold out, raising the question of whether Favorites needs to bring in one or more additional vendors to produce these items. Of the vendors with which Favorites asked to negotiate better discounts, some refused, and two of these were "stolen" by a competing merchant so that they no longer sell to Favorites. In addition, one of the vendors that agreed to give a better discount was unexpectedly forced to cease operations for several weeks because of a fire.

This scenario allows us to see the problem may have many dimensions, and may have several solutions, but resources can be limited and not every solution is successful. Even though the problem is not immediately resolved, the group problem-solving pattern serves as a useful guide through the problem-solving process.

Key Takeaway

- Group problem-solving can be an orderly process when it is broken down into seven specific stages.

Exercise 11.1.1

1. Think of a problem encountered in the past by a group of which you are a member. How did the group solve the problem? How satisfactory was the solution? Discuss your results with your classmates.
2. Consider again the problem you described in Exercise #1. In view of the seven-step framework, which steps did the group utilize? Would following the full seven-step framework have been helpful? Discuss your opinion with a classmate.

3. Research one business that you would like to know more about and see if you can learn about how they communicate in groups and teams Compare your results with those of classmates.
4. Think of a decision you will be making some time in the near future. Apply the cost/benefit analysis framework to your decision. Do you find this method helpful? Discuss your results with classmates.

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11.2: Group Decision-Making

Learning Objectives

1. Define decision-making and distinguish between decision-making and problem-solving
2. Describe five methods of group decision-making
3. Identify six guidelines for consensus decision-making
4. Define autocratic, democratic, and participative decision-making styles and place them within the Tannenbaum-Schmidt continuum

Life is the sum of all your choices.

Albert Camus

Simply put, decision-making is the process of choosing among options and arriving at a position, judgment, or action. It usually answers a "wh-" question—i.e., what, who, where, or when?—or perhaps a "how" question.

A group may, of course, make a decision in order to solve a problem. For instance, a group of students might discover halfway through a project that some of its members are failing to contribute to the required work. They might then decide to develop a written timeline and a set of deadlines for itself if it believes that action will lead them out of their difficulty.

Not every group decision, however, will be in response to a problem. Many decisions relate to routine logistical matters such as when and where to schedule an event or how to reach someone who wasn't able to make it to a meeting. Thus, decision-making differs from problem-solving.

Any decision-making in a group, even about routine topics, is significant. Why? Because decision-making, like problem-solving, results in a change in a group's status, posture, or stature. Such change, in turn, requires energy and attention on the part of a group in order for the group to progress easily into a new reality. Things will be different in the group once a problem has been solved or a decision has been reached, and group members will need to adjust.

Methods of Reaching Decisions

Research does indicate that groups generate more ideas and make more accurate decisions on matters for which a known preferred solution exists, but they also operate more slowly than individuals. Hoy, W.K., & Miskel, C.G. (1982). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Random House. Under time pressure and other constraints, some group leaders exercise their power to make a decision unilaterally—alone—because they're willing to sacrifice a degree of accuracy for the sake of speed. Sometimes this behavior turns out to be wise; sometimes it doesn't.

Assuming that a group determines that it must reach a decision together on some matter, rather than deferring to the will of a single person, it can proceed according to several methods. Parker and Hoffman, Parker, G., & Hoffman, R. (2006). *Meeting excellence: 33 tools to lead meetings that get results.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass., along with Hartley and Dawson, Hartley, P., & Dawson, M. (2010). *Success in groupwork.* New York: St. Martin's Press., place decision-making procedures in several categories. Here is a synthesis of their views on how decision-making can take place:

"A Plop"

A group may conduct a discussion in which members express views and identify alternatives but then reach no decision and take no action. When people go their own ways after such a "plop," things sometimes take care of themselves, and the lack of a decision causes no difficulties. On the other hand, if a group ignores or postpones a decision that really needs attention, its members may confront tougher decisions later—some of which may deal with problems brought about by not addressing a topic when it was at an early stage.

Delegation to an Expert

A group may not be ready to make a decision at a given time, either because it lacks sufficient information or is experiencing unresolved conflict among members with differing views. In such a situation, the group may not want to simply drop the matter and move on. Instead, it may turn to one of its members who everyone feels has the expertise to choose wisely among the alternatives that the group is considering. The group can either ask the expert to come back later with a final proposal or simply allow the person to make the decision alone after having gathered whatever further information he or she feels is necessary.

Averaging

Group members may shift their individual stances regarding a question by "splitting the difference" to reach a "middle ground." This technique tends to work most easily if numbers are involved. For instance, a group trying to decide how much money to spend on a gift for a departing member might ask everyone for a preferred amount and agree to spend whatever is computed by averaging those amounts.

Voting

If you need to be quick and definitive in making a decision, voting is probably the best method. Everyone in mainstream American society is familiar with the process, for one thing, and its outcome is inherently clear and obvious. A majority vote requires that more than half of a group's members vote for a proposal, whereas a proposal subject to a two-thirds vote will not pass unless twice as many members show support as those who oppose it.

Voting is essentially a win/lose activity. You can probably remember a time when you or someone else in a group composed part of a strong and passionate minority whose desires were thwarted because of the results of a vote. How much commitment did you feel to support the results of that vote?

Voting does offer a quick and simple way to reach decisions, but it works better in some situations than in others. If the members of a group see no other way to overcome a deadlock, for instance, voting may make sense. Likewise, very large groups and those facing serious time constraints may see advantages to voting. Finally, the efficiency of voting is appealing when it comes to making routine or noncontroversial decisions that need only to be officially approved.



Figure 11.2.1: Source: www.flickr.com/photos/sashakimel/6244465144/

Consensus

In consensus decision-making, group members reach a resolution which all of the members can support as being acceptable as a means of accomplishing some mutual goal even though it may not be the preferred choice for everyone. In common use, "consensus" can range in meaning from unanimity to a simple majority vote. In public policy facilitation and multilateral

international negotiations, however, the term refers to a general agreement reached after discussions and consultations, usually without voting.“consensus”. (2002). In *Dictionary of Conflict Resolution, Wiley*. Retrieved from www.credoreference.com/entry/wileyconfres/consensus

Consensus should not be confused with unanimity, which means only that no one has explicitly stated objections to a proposal or decision. Although unanimity can certainly convey an accurate perspective of a group's views at times, groupthink also often leads to unanimous decisions. Therefore, it's probably wise to be cautious when a group of diverse people seems to have formed a totally unified bloc with respect to choices among controversial alternatives.

When a consensus decision is reached through full interchange of views and is then adopted in good faith by all parties to a discussion, it can energize and motivate a group. Besides avoiding the win/lose elements intrinsic to voting, it converts each member's investment in a decision into a stake in preserving and promoting the decision after it has been agreed upon.

Guidelines for Seeking Consensus

How can a group actually go about working toward consensus? Here are some guidelines for the process:

First, be sure everyone knows the definition of consensus and is comfortable with observing them. For many group members, this may mean suspending judgment and trying something they've never done before. Remind people that consensus requires a joint dedication to moving forward toward improvement in and by the group.

Second, endeavor to solicit participation by every member of the group. Even the naturally quietest person should be actively “polled” from time to time for his or her perspectives. In fact, it's a good idea to take special pains to ask for varied viewpoints when discussion seems to be stalled or contentious.

Third, listen honestly and openly to each group member's viewpoints. Attempt to seek and gather information from others. Do your best to subdue your emotions and your tendency to judge and evaluate.

Fourth, be patient. To reach consensus often takes much more time than voting would. A premature “agreement” reached because people give in to speed things up or avoid conflict is likely later to weaken or fall apart.

Fifth, always look for mutually acceptable ways to make it through challenging circumstances. Don't resort to chance mechanisms like flipping a coin, and don't trade decisions arbitrarily just so that things come out equally for people who remain committed to opposing views.

Sixth, resolve gridlock earnestly. Stop and ask, “Have we really identified every possible feasible way that our group might act?” If members of a group simply can't agree on one alternative, see if they can all find and accept the next-best option. Then be sure to request an explicit statement from them that they are prepared to genuinely commit themselves to that option.

One variation on consensus decision-making calls upon a group's leader to ask its members, before initiating a discussion, to agree to a deadline and a “safety valve.” The deadline would be a time by which everyone in the group feels they need to have reached a decision. The “safety valve” would be a statement that any member can veto the will of the rest of the group to act in a certain way, but only if he or she takes responsibility for moving the group forward in some other positive direction.

Although consensus entails full participation and assent within a group, it usually can't be reached without guidance from a leader. One college president we knew was a master at escorting his executive team to consensus. Without coercing or rushing them, he would regularly involve them all in discussions and lead their conversations to a point at which everyone was nodding in agreement, or at least conveying acceptance of a decision. Rather than leaving things at that point, however, the president would generally say, “We seem to have reached a decision to do XYZ. Is there anyone who objects?” Once people had this last opportunity to add further comments of their own, the group could move forward with a sense that it had a common vision in mind.

Consensus decision-making is easiest within groups whose members know and respect each other, whose authority is more or less evenly distributed, and whose basic values are shared. Some charitable and religious groups meet these conditions and have long been able to use consensus decision-making as a matter of principle. The Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, began using consensus as early as the 17th century. Its affiliated international service agency, the American Friends Service Committee, employs the same approach. The Mennonite Church has also long made use of consensus decision-making.

Decision-Making by Leaders

People in the business world often need to make decisions in groups composed of their associates and employees. Take the case of a hypothetical businessperson, Kerry Cash.

Kerry owns and manages Wenatcheese, a shop that sells gourmet local and imported cheese. Since opening five years ago, the business has overcome the challenge of establishing itself and has built a solid clientele. Sales have tripled. Two full-time and four part-time employees—all productive, reliable, and customer-friendly—have made the store run efficiently and bolstered its reputation.

Now, with Christmas and the New Year coming, Kerry wants to decide, "Shall I open another shop in the spring?" Because the year-end rush is on, there's not a lot of time to weigh the pros and cons.



Figure 11.2.2: Source: www.flickr.com/photos/richardnorth/7696781276/

As the diagram indicates, many managers in Kerry's situation employ two means to make decisions like this: intuition and analysis. They'll feel their gut instinct, analyze appropriate financial facts, or do a little bit of both.

Unfortunately, this kind of dualistic decision-making approach restricts an individual leader's options. It doesn't do justice to the complexity of the group environment. It also fails to fully exploit the power and relevance of other people's knowledge.

Too much feeling may produce arbitrary outcomes. And, as the management theorist Peter Drucker observed, too much fact can create stagnation and "analysis paralysis": "(A)n overload of information, that is, anything much beyond what is truly needed, leads to information blackout. It does not enrich, but impoverishes."Drucker, P.F. (1993). *The effective executive*. New York: Harper business.

Fortunately, a couple of authorities wrote an article in 1973 which can help members of groups assess and strengthen the quality of their decision-making Tannenbaum, R., & Schmidt, W. (1973, May-June). How to choose a leadership pattern. *Harvard Business Review*, 3–11. Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt were those authorities. Their article so appealed to American readers that more than one million reprints eventually sold.

The Tannnenbaum-Schmidt Continuum

Kerry Cash, wondering whether to open another Wenatcheese outlet, can refer to the Tannenbaum-Schmidt model in Table 11.2 to identify a spectrum of ways to resolve the question:

Table 11.2 Tannenbaum-Schmidt Continuum

Autocratic			Democratic			Participative
Manager makes decision and announces it	Manager sells decision	Manager presents ideas and invites questions	Manager presents tentative decisions subject to change	Manager presents problem, gets suggestions, and makes decision	Manager defines limits asks group to make decision	Manager permits subordinates to function within limits defined by superior

Let's take a look at the components of this continuum, from left to right. First, we have two autocratic options:

- OPTION ONE: Pure announcement. "All right, folks, I've decided we're going to open a new shop in Dryden over Memorial Day weekend."
- OPTION TWO: "Selling". "I'd like us to open a new shop in Dryden. I have five reasons. Here they are..."

Next, three democratic options are available:

- OPTION THREE: Presentation with questions. "I've decided we'll open a new shop in Dryden. What would you like to know about the plan?"
- OPTION FOUR: Tentative decision. "I want to open a new shop in Dryden. Do you have any observations or questions about this possibility?"
- OPTION FIVE: Soliciting suggestions. "I think we're in a position to open a new shop. Dryden seems like the best location, but I'd also consider Cashmere or Leavenworth or Okanogan. I'll decide which way to go after you give me your thoughts."

Finally, two participative kinds of approaches present themselves:

- OPTION SIX: Limited group autonomy. "I want to open a new shop in either Dryden, Cashmere, or Leavenworth sometime between Easter and Independence Day. Talk it over and let me know what we should do."
- OPTION SEVEN: Full group autonomy. "I'm willing to establish a new shop if you'd like. Let me know by two weeks from now whether you want to do that, and if so, where and when."

Of course, many decisions embody more complications and include more details than Kerry Cash's. Some are related to people: Shall we bring more people into the group? If we do, how many should be full-fledged and how many should be temporary or provisional? Or do we need to reduce our number of members?

Other decisions depend on financial variables and constraints: Can we trust the economy enough to invest in new equipment? Do we have time to develop and promote any new ideas?

The Tannenbaum-Schmidt model doesn't tell us how to choose between its own options. Tannenbaum and Schmidt, however, did offer some advice on this score. These are some topics they suggested that leaders address as they decide where to position themselves on the continuum:

- THE ORGANIZATION. What kind is it? Is it a new, or is it relatively solid and secure?
- THE PEOPLE. How mature are they? How experienced? How motivated?
- THE PROBLEM OR DECISION. How intricate is it? What kind of expertise is required to solve it?
- TIME. What deadlines, if any, do we face? Is there enough time to involve as many people as we'd like?



"Am I to understand that my proposal is greeted with some skepticism?"

Figure 11.2.3

Robert Tannenbaum died in 2003 after more than 50 years as a consultant, an academic, and a writer for businesses and organizations. Warren Schmidt lives on as an emeritus professor in the School of Policy, Planning, and Development at the University of Southern California.

Intel Corporation actually identifies in advance of its meetings the kind of decision-making that will be associated with each question or topic Matson, E. (1996, April-May). The seven sins of deadly meetings. *Fast company*, 122. The four categories it uses resemble some of the components of the Tannenbaum/Schmidt model, as follows:

- Authoritative (the leader takes full responsibility)
- Consultative (the leader makes a decision after weighing views from the group)
- Voting
- Consensus



Figure 11.2.4

Once you've reached a decision, take a few steps back. Ask yourself, "Is it truly consistent with our group's values, or was it perhaps simply a technocratic outcome: i.e., procedurally proper but devoid of empathy and human understanding? Throughout history, many a group's decision reached "by the book" later caused dissension, disappointment, or even dissolution of the group itself.

Key Takeaways

- Groups may choose among several methods of decision-making, including consensus, depending on their circumstances and the characteristics of their leaders and members. Making decisions that are consistent with the group's values is of paramount importance.

Exercise 11.2.1

1. Think of major decisions made in the last couple of years by two groups you're a part of. Which method from this section did the groups use in each case? Which of the decisions are you more satisfied with now? Why? To what degree do you feel the decision-making methods the groups used fit the circumstances and the characteristics of the groups themselves?
2. Tell a classmate about a decision that a group you're part of needs to make shortly. Ask the classmate for his/her advice on which decision-making method the group should employ.
3. A major hesitation raised by some people with respect to consensus decision-making is that it requires much more time than voting or other direct methods. In what kind of situation would you be, or have you been, willing to invest "as much time as it takes" to reach consensus in a group?
4. If you were compelled to make every decision either totally by intuition or totally by analysis, which would you choose? On the basis of what experience or value do you feel this way? If you could choose to have every group leader around you make decisions by only one of the two methods, which would you prefer, and why?

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11.3: Effective Strategies for Group Creativity

Learning Objectives

1. Define and explain “bisociation”
2. Describe brainstorming and identify criteria for its effective use
3. Differentiate between neophiles and neophobes
4. Distinguish between the creative styles of “brooders” and “spawners”



“I know this sounds crazy, but couldn’t we plant a lot of short rows, side by side?”

Figure 11.3.1

Sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, teachers—everybody starts to douse your imagination and creativity. At a young age it starts, and then all of a sudden you’re like a trunk going through an airport, covered in stickers. I think I have spent most of my life pulling off stickers.

Kim Basinger

Very few people do anything creative after the age of thirty-five. The reason is that very few people do anything creative before the age of thirty-five.

Joel Hildebrand

You can’t wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club.

Jack London

Human beings are naturally creative from an early age. Think of any four- or five-year-old child you’ve ever met, and you can verify this for yourself. Here are some examples from journals kept by one of the authors concerning his children’s development before age six:

I was reading *Animal Farm* the other day and mentioned that one of the “Seven Commandments” of the animals had to do with the beliefs that the beasts liked anything with four legs or wings. Amelia said, “Oh—then they like airplanes!”

Last night at dinner, Claire looked at the roll-top wooden bread storage compartment over the countertop in our kitchen and said, “That’s a garage door where food parks.”

When I was explaining that there are only four tastes which human tongues can detect—salty, sweet, sour, and bitter—Claire asked, “What about ‘yucky’?”

Last night on the way to folk-dancing, we started talking about vocabulary. For some reason, Amelia created a new word: “trampede.” According to her, a “trampede” is a centipede on a trampoline.

Solving problems and making decisions both work best if people in a group are creative; i.e., if they entertain new perspectives and generate new ideas. Can this be a simple matter of having the group’s leader tell people “Be creative,” though? Probably not. It’s like saying, “Don’t think of an elephant”: it’s apt to produce just the opposite effect of the command itself. Still, tools and techniques for encouraging creativity in a group do exist.

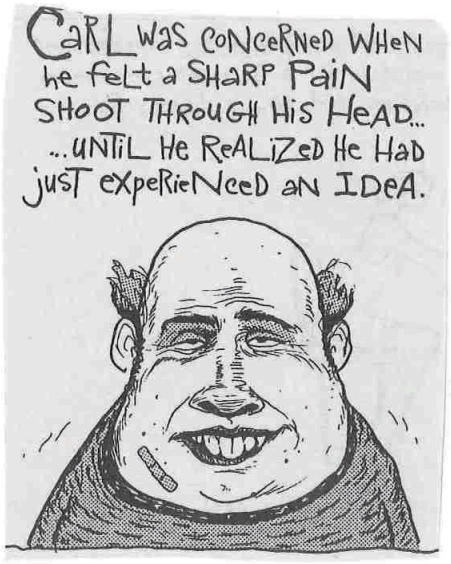


Figure 11.3.2

A Theory of Creativity

Arthur Koestler, a major intellectual and political force in Europe and the United States throughout most of the 20th century, contended that all creativity comprises a process he called “bisociation.”Koestler, A. (1964). *The act of creation*. New York: Macmillan. Koestler’s seminal book on this topic, titled *The Act of Creation*, put forth a theory that he believed accounted for people’s “Aha” reaction of scientific discovery, their “Ha-ha” reaction to jokes, and their “Ah” reaction of mystical or religious insight.

Above all, creativity creates new things—things that weren’t there before the creative act took place. In every kind of creative situation, according to Koestler, the result is produced by a meeting of lines of thought that bring together hitherto unconnected ideas and fuse them into something new. If the lines of thought concern devotional matters, mystical insight emerges, and when they concern more mundane matters the result is apt to be a joke. If they are scientific, the result is a scientific discovery.

The expression “to think outside the box” is often used to refer to creativity. Koestler’s view seems to be that creativity consists, instead, of linking existing but separate “boxes” together. One implication of his theory is that, to be creative, a person not only needs to depart from the status quo but also needs to be familiar and comfortable with a range of alternatives from a wide variety of fields. Koestler’s perspective would seem to be consistent with the association we often make between creativity on the one hand and intelligence and breadth of knowledge on the other.

Overcoming Inertia

At every crossroads on the path that leads to the future, tradition has placed 10,000 men to guard the past.

Maurice Maeterlinck

When you cannot make up your mind which of two evenly balanced courses of action you should take, choose the bolder.

William Joseph Slim

Groups generally comprise a mixture of people when it comes to openness to change. A small fraction of the members may position themselves at one end of the openness continuum or the other. Some of these people, called neophiles, will eagerly embrace almost anything novel. Others, known as neophobes, will invariably shun what's new and prefer the security of what they know and have done in the past. The majority of people, however, probably don't fit neatly into either of these categories. Instead, they may prefer to produce or experiment with new things under certain circumstances and resist them under others.

It's rarely possible to provoke creativity on the part of an entire group all at once. You needn't agree with Thomas Fuller's aphorism that "a conservative believes nothing should be done for the first time" to realize that some people in groups will hold onto what they're familiar with all the more stubbornly as others begin to waver and experiment with something new.

Brainstorming

In regard to every problem that arises, there are counselors who say, "Do nothing" [and] other counselors who say, "Do everything"...I say to you: "Do something"; and when you have done something, if it works, do it some more; and if it does not work, then do something else.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

One familiar technique that experts in the realm of creative thinking have long recommended is brainstorming. Alex Osborn, an advertising executive, began using the term in the mid-1950s and described the method in detail in his book *Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Problem Solving*. Osborn, A.F. (1963) *Applied imagination: Principles and procedures of creative problem solving* (3rd revised ed.). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

One criterion of proper brainstorming is that it must begin with an unrestricted search for quantity and creativity rather than quality. It should actually solicit and reward craziness and zaniness, in other words.

A second criterion for good brainstorming is that it should encourage and praise "piggybacking" on ideas that have already emerged. A third is that brainstormers should avoid making any judgments until they've generated an extensive list of ideas.

Robert Sutton, a respected organizational consultant, published a book in 2002 called *Weird Ideas That Work*.Sutton, R. (2002). *Weird ideas that work*. New York: Free Press. Among other things, Sutton's book paid tribute to brainstorming.



Figure 11.3.3: Source: www.flickr.com/photos/shizhao/3755850/

One of Sutton's central contentions was that excellence arises from "a range of differences"—precisely what brainstorming aims to generate. To illustrate, Sutton declared that such prodigious geniuses as Shakespeare, Einstein, Mozart, Edison, and Picasso were first and foremost productive. In fact, he argued that these brilliant individuals didn't succeed at a higher rate than anyone else; they just did more.

Mozart, for instance, started composing when he was seven years old and wrote at least 20 pieces of music per year from then until his death at the age of 35. Several of his compositions were routine or even dull, but many were sublime and some are unquestioned masterpieces.

Closer to home, Sutton noted that today's toy business offers examples of the value of starting with lots of ideas and only then selecting quality ones. Skyline, an arm of California's IDEO Corporation, employed just 10 staff members in 1998 but generated 4,000 ideas in that year for new toys.

According to Sutton, those 4,000 ideas boiled down to 230 possibilities worth examining through careful drawings or working prototypes. Of the 230 concepts, 12 were ultimately sold. In other words, the "yield" of saleable products came to only 3/10 of one percent of the original ideas. Sutton quoted Skyline's founder, Brendan Boyle, as saying, "You can't get any good new ideas without having a lot of dumb, lousy, and crazy ones."

The Ostrich and the Sea Urchin

Now let's take a look at what two animals have to do with ideas in general, and with varied ways of being creative about ideas in specific. The two animals are the ostrich and the sea urchin.

The ostrich's reproductive processes lie at one end of a continuum, the sea urchin's at the other. Like the 350-pound mother which lays it, an ostrich egg is large, imposing, and tough. For 42 days after it's laid, it grows until it weighs more than three pounds. It will then reliably crack open and release a baby ostrich. Unless something highly unexpected happens, its mother will tend it well, and that single baby ostrich will in turn grow up and become a mature ostrich.

A sea urchin differs in almost every respect from an ostrich. The whole animal takes up less space and weighs less than an ostrich egg, for one thing. It has no eyes. It hardly moves all its life. To propagate, an urchin spews a cloud of more than a million miniscule eggs into the ocean. The eggs disperse immediately into the tide pools and reef inlets populated by their spiny parents.



Figure 11.3.4: Source: www.flickr.com/photos/jennifurr-jinx/1387200062/

Some of the sea urchin eggs meet sea urchin sperm and combine to form tiny, transparent, free-floating embryos. Eggs remain viable for only 6–8 hours, however, so lots of them die before this happens. Of a one-million-egg cloud, those which are to have a chance of becoming embryos must do so within 48 hours. The odds aren't good.

Then things thin out even more. A Stanford University publication points out that "the young embryo is totally at the mercy of the sea. There are many organisms that will consume the young sea urchin embryo and later the young sea urchin."Brooders vs spawners. www.stanford.edu/group/Urchin/bvss.htm In other words, the overwhelming majority of sea urchin eggs die of loneliness or get eaten.

Biologists call animals like ostriches "brooders" because they create only a few offspring but take care of each one faithfully. Creatures such as sea urchins, which produce vast numbers of candidates for fertilization but don't take care of them and lose most of them to predators, are called "spawners." Brainstorming is clearly a "spawning" process rather than a "brooding" one.

Threats to the Effectiveness of Brainstorming

Although it is meant to generate large quantities of ideas on which to base sound decision-making, brainstorming entails some same challenges. One group of researchers Stroebe, W., Diehl, M., & Abakoumkin, G. (1992). The illusion of group affectivity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 18* (5): 643–650. identified three potential weakening factors inherent within brainstorming:

1. Blocking. Since only one person at a time in a group can speak, other members may lose the desire to contribute their own ideas or even forget those ideas in the midst of a lively brainstorming session.
2. Social matching.Brown, V., & Paulus, P. B. (1996). A simple dynamic model of social factors in group brainstorming. *Small Group Research, 27*, 91–114. People in a group tend to calibrate their own degree of contribution to its activities on the basis of what the other members do. If someone has lots of ideas but sees that the rest of the group is less productive, that person is apt to reduce his or her own creative production.
3. Illusion of group productivity. Group members are apt to rate the level of their output as being higher than it actually is. For one thing, members describe their group as being above average in productivity with respect to other groups. They also overrate their individual contributions; people in one study, for instance, said that they had contributed 36% of their group's ideas when in fact they had offered only 25%. Paulus, P. B., Dzindolet, M. T., Poletes, G., & Camacho, L. M. (1993). Perception of performance in group brainstorming: The illusion of group productivity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64* (4), 575–586.

Key Takeaways

- Creativity, which can play a positive role in group decision-making, has been described as a process of combining two disparate elements. It can be stimulated through brainstorming.

Exercise 11.3.1

1. Do you agree with Arthur Koestler that all creativity involves bringing disparate trains of thought together? Provide 2–3 examples that support your answer.
2. Do you consider yourself a "brooder" or a "spawner"? Explain your response to a fellow student, providing examples that support your answer.
3. When was the last time you showed exceptional creativity? What factors in your environment or within you at the time contributed most to that creativity?
4. Think of a neophile and a neophobe whom you've encountered in a group. Describe actions that each person took which illustrate his/her neophilia or neophobia.

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11.4: Facilitating the Task-Oriented Group

Learning Objectives

1. Define “group facilitation”
2. Identify five guidelines for facilitating a task-oriented group
3. Distinguish between collaboration and “coliberation”

Remember the story that Pope John XXIII told about himself. He admitted, “It often happens that I wake at night and begin to think about a serious problem and decide I must tell the Pope about it. Then I wake up completely and remember that I am the Pope.”

Glenn van Ekeren

I’m extraordinarily patient provided I get my own way in the end.

Margaret Thatcher

You’ve probably experienced being part of groups that pleased and motivated you. One reason you experienced those positive feelings may have been that the groups planned and executed their tasks so smoothly that you were hardly aware the processes were taking place. In this section, we’ll examine ways in which leaders can contribute to such pleasant, easy experiences.

Just as “facile” in English and “fácil” in Spanish mean “easy,” the word “facilitate” itself means “to make something easy” and “group facilitation” consists in easing a group’s growth and progress. Most student, community, and business groups are task-oriented, so we’ll consider here how they can most easily be guided toward accomplishing the tasks they set for themselves. Another section of this book deals specifically with the details of leading meetings, so for now we’ll consider broader questions and principles.

If you’re in a position to facilitate a group, you need to take that position seriously. Just as Pope John XXIII realized with respect to his authority and responsibility in the Catholic Church, it’s best to consider yourself the primary source of direction and the ultimate destination for questions in your group. With those concepts in mind, let’s consider five major guidelines you should probably follow in order to facilitate a group whose purposes include achieving tasks.

Know the Group's Members

This means more than just identifying their names and recognizing their faces. If you hope to accomplish anything significant together, you need to be familiar with people’s opinions, their needs, their desires, and their personalities.

Perhaps one member of a group you’re leading is particularly time-conscious, another likes to make jokes, and a third prefers to see concepts represented visually. If you take these propensities into account and respond to them as much as possible, you can draw the best cooperative effort from each of the people.

You may want to keep track of who’s done what favors for whom within the group, too. Like it or not, many people operate at least from time to time on the principle that “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine.”

Weigh Task and Relationship Considerations

The word “equilibristic” is sometimes applied to the actions of athletes and musicians. It refers to a capability to balance differing and sometimes conflicting forces so as to maintain continuous movement in a chosen direction.

Although almost any group has some work to do, and all groups comprise people whose welfare needs to be tended to, the effective facilitator realizes that it’s impossible to emphasize both those elements to the same degree all the time. If people are disgruntled or frustrated, they can’t contribute well to accomplishing a task. Likewise, if people are always contented with one another and their group but can’t focus on getting things done, the group will be unable to attain its objectives. To facilitate a

group well, thus, requires that you be equilibristic.

Understand and Anticipate Prevalent Features of Human Psychology

Keep in mind that everyone in a group will perceive what the facilitator does in light of his or her own circumstances and wishes.

Recall also that everyone possesses diverse and numerous capacities for self-justification and self-support. In their book *Mistakes were made (but not by me)*, Carol Tavris and Ellion Aronson referred to studies of married couples' behavior. They indicated that when husbands and wives are asked what proportion of the housework they perform, the totals always exceed 100 percent by a large margin. Tavris, C., & Aronson, E. (2007). *Mistakes were made (but not by me).* Orlando, FL: Harcourt Tavris and Aronson also described the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, which presents visitors with interactive exhibits portraying categories of people about whom many of us harbor negative preconceptions—including ethnic and racial minorities, obese individuals, people with disabilities, and so on. A video attempts to persuade visitors that they possess prejudices, after which two doors are offered as an exit. One is marked "Prejudiced" and the other is labeled "Unprejudiced." The second door is locked, to make the point that all of us are indeed subject to prejudice.



Figure 11.4.1: Source: www.flickr.com/photos/jeffsand/1466204908/

Deal Well With Disruptions

The playwright Paddy Chayevsky wrote that "life is problems." An effective group facilitator needs to anticipate and skillfully cope with problems as a part of life, whether they're caused by other people's behavior or by physical and logistical factors.

If you're an adherent of Theory Y, you probably believe that people enjoy pursuing their goals energetically, in groups or individually. You also probably believe that people prefer to select times and places along the way to relax and recharge. Unfortunately, interruptions often arise in such a way as to make both these aims difficult to achieve. Think about all the unexpected academic, family, and work-related reasons why you and other students you know have found it challenging to "stay the course" toward your personal and collective goals.

A group's facilitator, thus, needs to make sure that interruptions and disruptions don't derail it. In fact, he or she might profit from actually celebrating these elements of life, as one Seattle office executive did. According to Dale Turner, the executive's office had a sign on the wall reading "Don't be irritated by interruptions. They are your reason for being." Turner went on to quote the executive as saying "Happily, I have learned how to sit loose in the saddle of life, and I'm not usually disturbed by interruptions. I have made it a habit through the years to leave a stretch factor in my daily schedule. I start early and have tried not to so crowd my day with appointments that I have no time for the unexpected. I have not seen interruptions as an intrusion."Turner, D. (1991, March 23). Slaves of habit—we lose when there's no room for interruptions in our lives. *Seattle Times*. Retrieved from ProQuest Database.

Keep Returning to the Task

You've probably been part of a group in which the leader or facilitator had what might be called a divergent, rather than a convergent, personality. Perhaps that person had lots of good ideas but seemed to jump around from topic to topic and chore to chore so much that your head spun and you couldn't keep track of what was going on. Maybe the person "missed the forest for the trees" because of dwelling excessively on minutia—small and insignificant details. Or perhaps each time you met with the group its facilitator led a discussion of something valuable and important, but every time it was a different thing.

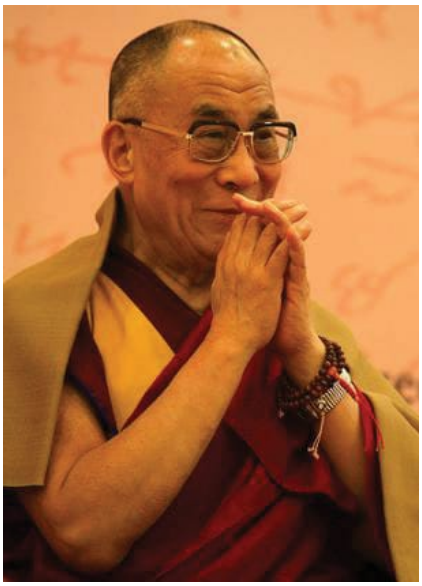


Figure 11.4.2: Source: www.flickr.com/photos/36668473@N05/4133002232/

The organizational theorist Anthony Jay wrote that it's important for leaders to "look for problems through a telescope, not a microscope."Jay, A. (1967). *Management and Machiavelli: An inquiry into the politics of corporate life*. New York: Bantam Books. He also contended that, as far as a leader is concerned, "other people can cope with the waves, it's [the leader's] job to watch the tide." By these comments, Jay meant that the primary duty of a group facilitator is to maintain an unwavering focus on the group's central tasks, whatever they may be.

The Dalai Lama has written, "Whether you are a spiritual leader or a leader in an organization, it is your job to inspire faith."His Holiness the Dalai Lama & Muyzenberg, L. (2009). *The leader's way: The art of making the right decisions in our careers, our companies, and the world at large*. New York: Broadway Books. Slogans, mottos, mission statements, quotations, logos, and written objectives can all contribute to a facilitator's ability to inspire faith by maintaining a group's focus and resolve to move in a common direction. Busy students and others in our society often need reminders like these to block out the competing stimuli surrounding them and focus their attention. Such mechanisms, however, should not be merely gimmicks, nor should they be used to promote blind faith in the group's facilitator.

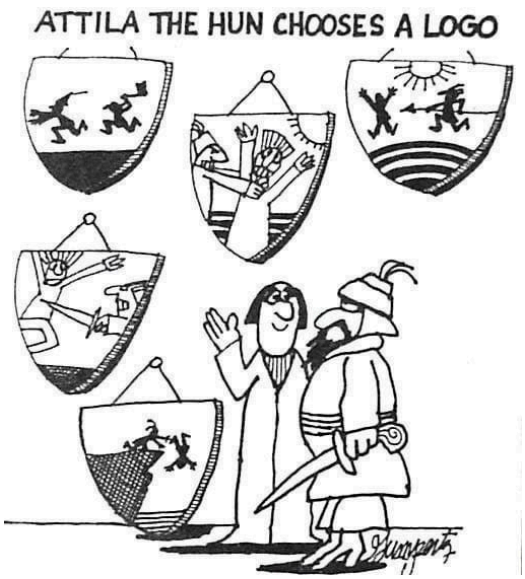


Figure 11.4.3

Another way to think of how a facilitator should keep bringing the group's attention back to its tasks relates to the process of meditation. Practitioners of meditation know that people's minds are naturally active and tend to move readily from subject to subject. When someone is meditating, they say, thoughts will naturally pop into his or her mind. The way to deal with this phenomenon is to regard the thoughts as clouds drifting across the sky. Rather than trying to banish them, the better approach is to allow them to pass by and dissipate, and then to return to serene contemplation. Rondon, N. (2006, Meditate. *Current Health 2* (32), 20–23. Retrieved from ProQuest Database

Coliberation

Above all, a facilitator's responsibility is to enable members of a group to function together as easily and happily as possible as they pursue their goals. When this happens, the group will achieve a high level of collaboration. In fact, it may rise beyond collaboration to achieve what the author and computer game designer Bernard DeKoven called "coliberation." In speaking about meetings, he had this to say: "Good meetings aren't just about work. They're about fun—keeping people charged up. It's more than collaboration, it's 'coliberation'—people freeing each other up to think more creatively."Matson, E. (1996, April-May). The seven sins of deadly meetings. *Fast Company*, 122.

Key Takeaway

- To facilitate a task-oriented group requires several skills and behaviors and can lead to a state of "coliberation."

Exercise 11.4.1

1. Recall a time when you were in a group whose leader stressed either its task or relationship factors too much. How did the members of the group react? Did the leader eventually develop an equilibristic approach?
2. Do you agree with the business executive who said that interruptions are "your reason for being"? In your studies and family life, what measures do you take to ensure that interruptions are beneficial rather than destructive? What further steps do you feel you might take in this direction?
3. Think of someone who effectively facilitated a group you were part of. Did the person perform the job identified by the Dalai Lama—inspiring faith in the group? If so, how?
4. What, if anything, do you feel members of most groups need to be "coliberated" from?

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11.5: Summary

In this chapter, we have explored problem-solving in groups. We have identified steps that groups can use to attack and solve problems, as well as several methods of reaching decisions. We have considered the nature of group creativity and reviewed how brainstorming may contribute to creative problem-solving and decision-making. Finally, we have identified methods that can be used to facilitate the problem-solving and decision-making behavior or task-oriented groups. Following systematic, sequential processes can help groups communicate in ways that resolve problems and lead to appropriate decisions.

Review Questions

Interpretive Questions

1. In what 2–3 ways has your view of problem-solving or decision-making changed as a result of reading this chapter?
2. Under what circumstances, or with what kinds of group members, do you feel brainstorming is most likely to produce better results than other methods of generating creative ideas?

Application Questions

1. Call the office of a state senator or representative. Ask the person who answers the phone to provide you with a list of five creative ideas the legislator has put forth to solve problems facing his or her constituency. If you wanted to expand on the list, who else would you consult, and what process would you use to generate more ideas?
2. Pick two historical figures who you believe made it easy for people they lived or worked with to achieve shared goals. Find two or three descriptions of episodes in which those figures took action demonstrating that capacity. Identify someone leading a group of which you're now a member and share the information about the historical figures with that person. What is the person's reaction? What do you feel might have made the leader's response more positive?
3. Look up the phrase "group decision support system" online and locate 4–5 software programs meant to assist groups with decisions. List the advantages and disadvantages of each and share your conclusions with your classmates.

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11.6: Additional Resources

www.deepfun.com/coliberation/: Bernard “Bernie” De Koven’s blog. A source of provocative ideas on why and how to indulge in creative fun as part of a group.

bit.ly/PV635method: A YouTube video describing the “6-3-5 method,” which offers an alternative to traditional brainstorming that attempts to draw and expand upon more ideas from a group of six people.

bit.ly/URuMVG: An article in the *Minnesota Daily* describing how groups of students, faculty members, and community leaders envisioned problems facing higher education and developed pragmatic proposals for solving them.

www.co-intelligence.org/I-decisionmakingwithout.html (“How to Make a Decision Without Making a Decision”): An article describing how guided “non-decision-making” can be used by groups to discover what the author refers to as “big obvious truths.”

www.tobe.net/: The website of Dynamic Facilitation Associates, a non-profit organization dedicated to teaching groups how to create choices through intentional facilitation. One of the site’s pages, www.co-intelligence.org/dynamicfacilitationGT.html, describes “Co-Counseling” and compassionate communication as further facilitation tools.

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12: GROUPS AND MEETINGS

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12.0: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

The OOCSIP (On-And-Off-Campus Student Involvement Project)

Rationale:

Educational, social, and recreational events take place on college campuses all the time. You've probably seen information about these activities and been invited to them. But have you ever attended a campus committee meeting or a community meeting whose members include college employees? Probably not. Thus, you may not understand how a college and its community function. This project will help you acquire such understanding.

What Students Should Gain:

1. Contact with knowledgeable college professionals whose ideas and actions affect students.
2. Appreciations for the nature and aims of campus and community groups.
3. Knowledge about group dynamics—including formal processes.
4. A chance to expose college employees to students' circumstances and perspectives.

Steps Students Should Take:

1. Identify an Employee Contact at their college or university who's willing to meet them at or take them to two on- or off-campus events.
2. Attend two (2) on- or off-campus events with their Employee Contact.
3. Complete an Assessment of a Student's Campus/Community Participation Form [Note 12.47], including the front page signed by the Employee Contact.
4. Complete a typed Critique of Formal Campus or Community Gathering Form [Note 12.48].
5. Send a hand-written thank-you note to their Employee Contact.

Once I ran across something in a book that really agitated me. The volume presented lists of ideas for living a happy and fulfilled life. One of the lists was headed "Five Great Ways to Find a Friend." Its first four ideas were to find a cause, find a church, find a class, and find a club. All those ideas seemed reasonable to me. Recommendation #5, however, was "find a committee." When I saw this, I immediately asked myself, "What were the authors of this book eating, drinking, or smoking when they wrote this? Who with more sense than a pencil eraser would suggest actually LOOKING FOR A COMMITTEE TO JOIN for any reason whatsoever?"

Phil Venditti



Figure 12.0.1: Are you lonely? Source: www.codinghorror.com/blog/2012/02/meetings-where-work-goes-to-die.html

Getting Started

A college administrator we know overheard her seven-year-old daughter and another little girl talking about their parents. “What does your mother do?” asked the other child. “She goes to meetings,” replied the administrator’s child.

Whether in educational settings or business or elsewhere, meetings dominate the way many groups operate in American society. Estimates of the number of meetings that take place every day in our country range from 11 million to more than 30 million http://www.studergroup.com/dotCMS/knowledgeAssetDetail?inode=269049. One authority claims that the average chief executive officer spends 17 hours per week in meetings, whereas the average senior executive spends 23 hours per week. Amos, J. (2002). *Making meetings work* (2nd ed.). Oxford, England: Howtobooks.

If the average number of people in each of these meetings is only five and the average meeting lasts only one hour, this means that between 55,000,000 and 150,000,000 person-hours each day are being consumed by meetings. Assuming a 50-week work year, then, the total time devoted to meetings each year amounts to at least fifteen billion person-hours. As for you, yourself, one estimate is that you’ll spend 35–50% of every workweek in meetings, for a total of more than 9,000 hours over the course of your lifetime. Doyle, M., & Straus, D. (1993). *How to make meetings work: The new interaction method.* New York: Jove Books.

If meetings are so central to what groups do, and so time-consuming, it makes sense to pay attention to how they’re conducted. Like any other course of action, the process of engaging in meetings has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In our first section, we’ll consider the beginning—the planning part. Later we’ll look at techniques for facilitating a meeting, the use of *Robert’s Rules of Order*, and the best ways to follow up after a meeting.

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12.1: Planning a Meeting

Learning Objectives

1. Identify questions whose answers can determine whether a meeting should be held
2. List obligations that group members should accept when they attend meetings
3. Discuss guidelines for planning an effective meeting

Aller Anfang ist schwer.

German saying ("All beginnings are difficult.")

The beginning is half the job.

Korean saying

"Meetings should be viewed skeptically from the outset, as risks to productivity."www.codinghorror.com/blog/2012/02/meetings-where-work-goes-to-die.html

Jeff Atwood

Whether and how carefully you plan any undertaking will determine in large part how well it turns out. Bad planning makes it harder to achieve your goals; good planning makes it easier. This certainly applies to meetings of groups, so it's wise for us to examine how to plan those meetings effectively. Before we consider the ins and outs of that planning, however, let's reflect on the proper role of meetings.

What Are Meetings for?

Office equipment and supplies constitute tools to support the work of most modern groups such as student teams in college classes, employees and executives in businesses, and collections of people in other organizations. None of those groups would say, however, that using copy machines and staplers is one of their goals. And none of them would visit a copy machine unless they had something they needed to reproduce. They wouldn't grab a stapler, either, unless they had some papers to attach to each other.



Figure 12.1.1

Meetings resemble office supplies in at least one way: they can help a group accomplish its goals. But meetings are like office supplies in another way, too: they're only a means toward reaching group goals, not an end in themselves. And sometimes they're even antithetical to the efficient functioning of a group. One statistical analysis of workers' reactions to meetings discovered a significant positive relationship between the number of meetings attended and both the level of fatigue and the sensation of being subjected to a heavy workload. Luong, A., & Rogelberg, S.G. (2005). Meetings and more meetings: The relationship between meeting load and the daily well-being of employees. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 9(1),* 58–67.

Remember these truths, therefore: If it is operating well, your group at some point probably adopted goals for itself. It may even have ranked those goals in order of importance. Members of a student team might, for example, decide that their joint goals are to earn a high grade on their group project, to have fun together, and to ensure that all of them can secure a positive recommendation from the instructor when they look for a job after graduation.

"To meet" is not one of the goals of any group, though, is it? No; your goals involve doing things, not meeting—not even meeting to decide what you're going to do and whether you're doing it. Therefore, you should not meet until and unless doing so will clearly contribute to a real goal of your group.

What this means in practical reality is that many, many regularly-scheduled meetings probably ought to be canceled, postponed, or at the very least substantially shortened. It means that meetings which aren't part of an official, ongoing series should be conducted only if the people who would be participating agree that having the meetings is necessary to answer a question, solve a problem, make a decision, or ensure that people know what it is they are and should be doing. It means, in short, that a group's "default position" should be never to meet.

If you're in a position to decide whether and when a meeting will take place, you're in control of what some might consider other people's most valuable possession: their time. If you take this responsibility seriously and act on it wisely, your fellow group members will appreciate it—especially since many group leaders don't do so.

To Meet or Not to Meet

In the twenty-first century, technology offers techniques for accomplishing many group goals without meeting face to face. A helpful website called "Lifehacker"www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/kill-meetings-to-get-more-done.html suggests that you follow these steps before scheduling in-person meetings:

Get done what you can by email. If email doesn't accomplish your aims, use the telephone. Only if neither email nor the phone works should you meet face to face.

Calculate the opportunity cost of a potential meeting. What task(s) that you could be engaged in at the time of the meeting will you have to postpone, or forgo entirely, because of the meeting? Is it worth it?

Ask yourself what bad results, if any, will come to pass if you don't meet. What about if you don't meet this time, but later instead? If the bad things which you expect to arise if you don't meet are minimal or can be dealt with easily, don't meet, or at least not now.

Ask if it's essential for everyone in the group to be at the same physical location at the time of the meeting. Assess whether the chore of just moving people's molecules from one place to another could render a face-to-face meeting undesirable.

If It's "to Meet," Then What?

Once you've decided that you should hold a meeting of some sort, you should do your best to make sure it will run well. Part of this undertaking is to ensure that all the members of your group understand the significance of the time they'll be devoting to getting together. To this end, you may want to create a list of basic obligations you feel everyone should fulfill with respect to all meetings. These obligations might include the following items:

- If you can't make it to a meeting, let the person who's organizing it know in a timely fashion. If you were expected to make a report or complete a task of some sort by the time of the meeting, either submit the report through someone else who will be there or inform the organizer of when you'll finish what you're committed to be doing. If you can find someone to fill in for you at the meeting, do it.
- If you can attend the meeting, prepare for it. Read meeting announcements and agendas. Take necessary and appropriate

information and tools with you to each meeting. Come to meetings with an open mind and with a mental picture of what you may contribute to the discussion.
- Pay attention. Avoid side conversations or other actions that might keep you from understanding what's going on in a meeting.
- Be clear and concise. Seek parsimonious discourse. Don't speak unless you're sure you'll improve over silence by doing so.
- Wait to express your own opinion until you're sure you understand others' views.
- Challenge assumptions, but stick to the topic and offer constructive rather than destructive criticism.
- Know when to give in on a matter of disagreement. Stick to your convictions, but consider carefully whether you need to have your way in any particular situation.

Guidelines for Planning a Meeting

Again, first of all: don't meet at all unless you need to. Once you've determined that a meeting will promote rather than hinder productivity, preparing for it well will give you a head start on maximizing its effectiveness. Here are six guidelines to take into account as you plan a meeting:

Identify the Specific Goals

Identify the specific goals you plan to achieve in the meeting and the methods you'll use to decide if you've achieved them. Write the goals down. Reread them. Let them sit awhile. Read them again to see if they're still appropriate and necessary.

If the goals of the meeting still look as though they're all valuable, remember Dwight Eisenhower's dictum that "What is important is seldom urgent, and what is urgent is seldom important http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_91.htm." If you're not sure you can get everything done that you hope to in the time you'll have available, set priorities so that the most urgent items are taken care of quickly and you can postpone others without endangering what's most important to get done.

Decide Carefully Who Needs to Attend

At one point, Amazon Corporation implemented a "two-pizza guideline" whereby it limited the number of people who composed its teams to the quantity that could be fed with two pizzashttp://www.fastcompany.com/50106/inside-mind-jeff-bezos. If you calculate that the people you plan to invite to your meeting constitute larger than a two-pizza group, ask yourself if all of them really, really, really need to be there.

Produce a Clear, Brief, Thorough, Informative Agenda



Figure 12.1.2

Don't spring surprises on people. To give them a solid idea of what to expect, divide the meeting's agenda into simple categories:

for instance, the establishment of a quorum; approval of minutes and the agenda; officers' and (sub)committee reports; unfinished business; new business, and "other." For each item, name the individual in charge of it, indicate whether it will require action by the group, and provide an estimated duration. (You'll need to confirm these estimates with the responsible parties, of course). If you expect some or all of the group's members to complete a task before they arrive, such as reading a report or generating possible solutions to a problem, tell them so clearly.

Here's a special note, too: Don't plan to stretch the contents of a meeting to fit a preordained time. Strive to cut down on how long you spend to handle each item on your agenda as much as you can so that members of your group can get back to their other responsibilities as soon as possible. A shorter-than-expected meeting is usually a thing of joy.

Pick a Good Venue

If you have a choice, plan to gather in a place with plenty of light, comfortable furniture, and a minimum of distracting sounds or sights. You should be able to adjust the temperature, too, if people get too hot or cold. Make sure that any technological tools you think will be available to you are actually going to be on hand when you meet and that they're all functioning. Even if you expect to have access to a laptop computer and a projector, plan to bring a flip chart and markers so that people will be able to express and record ideas spontaneously during the meeting. And all other things being equal, find a place to meet regularly which is large enough and secure enough to allow your group members to store the "tools of their trade" there—flipcharts, writing supplies, reference books, etc.—between gatherings.

Make Sure the Participants Receive the Agenda

Make sure people receive the agenda you've prepared in a timely fashion so they'll know why, when, where, and for how long the group is expected to meet. Two reminders per meeting may be enough—one by letter and one by e-mail, for instance—but three are better, including one the day before the meeting itself. Free computer-based confidential text-messaging services such as Class Parrot (classparrot.com/) and kikutext (kikutext.com/) can provide another channel for reaching group members.

One college president from a Southern state maintained that he'd gotten his board of trustees to act "like trained seals," partly through thorough preparation for their meetings. In fact, the president actually ran practice meetings with the board to make sure there would be no surprises when the real meetings took place. You should practice, too, at gently, repeatedly, and clearly notifying other group members of the time and agenda of each meeting. For every person who thinks you're being repetitive, two or three will thank you for keeping them from overlooking the meeting.

If you're planning to meet in a place for the first time, or if you're expecting someone to attend your meeting for the first time, be sure to provide clear and complete directions to the location. With online tools such as mapquest.com and google maps at your disposal, it should cost you very little time to locate such directions and send them to members of your group.

Arrive Early

Arrive early to size up and set up the place where you're meeting. Rooms sometimes get double-booked, furniture sometimes gets rearranged, technological tools such as LCD projectors and laptop computers sometimes break down or get taken away to be repaired, and so on and on. If you're the person in charge of leading the meeting, you need to know first if unexpected happenings like these have taken place.



Figure 12.1.3: Source: www.google.com/search?as_q=Meetings&safe=active&orq=&tbs=sur:fmc&biw=834&bih=479&sei=swJyUOelHqGmigLdy4CADw&tbm=isch

Following these half-dozen guidelines won't guarantee that your meetings will be as successful as you wish them to be. If you don't heed them, however, you're apt to encounter considerable difficulty in achieving that aim.

Key Takeaways

- Meetings should be avoided unless they are clearly necessary, but preparing for them well can enable a group to advance its objectives.

Exercise 12.1.1

1. Identify a group of which you're a member. What percentage of its meetings in the past year do you feel contributed significantly to its stated objectives? What role did pre-meeting planning play in producing that outcome?
2. Think about a time when a group you were part of canceled or postponed a meeting. On what grounds did it reach that decision? Why do you approve or disapprove of the decision?
3. What do you consider to be the pros and cons of limiting the number of people invited to a group meeting?
4. Describe for a classmate your ideal venue for a group meeting. What equipment, amenities, and other provisions do you feel would best assist a group to achieve the aims of its meetings?

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12.2: Facilitating a Meeting

Learning Objectives

1. Describe features of a poorly-facilitated group meeting
2. Identify guidelines for facilitating a meeting effectively
3. Discuss steps for facilitating virtual meetings

Most committees I've served on have been inefficient, superfluous, repetitive, sluggish, unproductive, erratic, rancorous, or boring—or all of the above. By and large, they've wasted my time and the time of many other people.

Frequently, everyone in the group eagerly helped identify jobs that needed to be accomplished, but just a few members ended up shouldering the burdens and completing the tasks. The rest did their best to avoid the group entirely and had to be cajoled or badgered to take part in meetings and work. Most of the meetings oscillated between tedium, dreariness, and fruitless conflict. In short, the meetings were cesspools of futility.

Phil Venditti

Preparing for group meetings well takes you a third of the way toward ensuring their productivity, and follow-up takes care of another third. The middle third of the process is to run the meetings efficiently.

Make no mistake: facilitating a meeting well is difficult. It requires care, vigilance, flexibility, resilience, humility, and humor. In a way, in fact, to run a meeting effectively calls upon you to act the way a skilled athletic coach does, watching the action, calling plays, and encouraging good performance. Furthermore, you need to monitor the interaction of everyone around you and "call the plays" based on a game plan that you and your fellow group members have presumably agreed upon in advance. Finally, like a coach, you sometimes need to call timeouts—breaks—when people are weary or the action is starting to get raggedy or undisciplined.

A Meeting Heroine

We will list and explain several principles and practices of good meeting facilitation in this section, but first, let's consider a friend and colleague of ours named Bonnie. Bonnie is the best meeting facilitator we've ever met, for several reasons. First of all, she makes it a point to become familiar with not only the issues and topics to be dealt with in a meeting, but also the personalities, strengths, and foibles of the other people who will be participating. Although she behaves in a warm and friendly manner at all times during a meeting, she never veers off into extraneous or superfluous details just for the sake of being sociable.

Because she attends closely to every interaction in a meeting and takes the time in advance to become familiar with the styles and proclivities of participants, Bonnie prevents discussions from getting off track. In fact, she has an uncanny knack of being able to spot a train of discussion that might even just be getting ready to go off track so that she can nudge it safely around bends and down slippery slopes. Furthermore, she seems to always know exactly what questions to ask, and to whom, to elicit concise, purposeful information which helps the group keep moving in the proper direction.

Bonnie is totally efficient and systematic in her pacing and wastes no time from the moment a meeting begins to the moment it ends...or afterward, either. If you go to a meeting led by Bonnie and its purpose is to plan an event—an Arbor Day celebration, for example, since that's a project she oversees every year in the town where she lives—you can be confident of the outcome. When the meeting ends, the event will be planned and you will be feeling good about yourself, about the meeting itself, and about the future of the group.

Perils of Poor Facilitation

Unfortunately, many people lack the skills of our friend Bonnie. As a result, a variety of negative results can take place as they fail to act capably as meeting facilitators. Here are some signs that there's "Trouble in River City" in a meeting:

- An argument starts about an established fact
- Opinions are introduced as if they were truths
- People intimidate others with real or imaginary “knowledge"
- People overwhelm each other with too many proposals for the time available to consider them
- People become angry for no good reason
- People promote their own visions at the expense of everyone else’s
- People demand or offer much more information than is needed
- Discussion becomes circular; people repeat themselves without making any progress toward conclusions

If you’ve experienced any of these symptoms of a poorly-facilitated meeting, you realize how demoralizing they can be for a group.

Guidelines for Facilitating a Meeting

Barge (1991)Barge, J.K. (1991, November). Task skills and competence in group leadership. Paper presented at the meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Atlanta, GA., Lumsden and Lumsden (2004) Lumsden, G., & Lumsden, D. (2004). *Communicating in groups and teams: Sharing leadership* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning., and Parker and Hoffman (2006)Parker, G., & Hoffman, R. (2006). *Meeting excellence: 33 tools to lead meetings that get results*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. are among many authorities who have recommended actions and attitudes which can help you facilitate a meeting well. Here are several such suggestions, taken partly from these writers’ works and partly from the authors’ experiences as facilitators and participants in meetings over the years:

Start Promptly... Always

Some time, calculate the cost to your group—even at minimum-wage rates—for the minutes its members sit around waiting for meetings to begin. You may occasionally be delayed for good reasons, but if you’re chronically late you’ll eventually aggravate folks who’ve arrived on time—the very ones whose professionalism you’d particularly like to reinforce and praise. Consistently starting on time may even boost morale: “Early in, early out” will probably appeal to most of a group’s members, since they are likely to have other things they need to do as soon as a meeting ends.

Begin With Something Positive

Face it: no matter what you do, many people in your group would probably rather be somewhere else than in a meeting. If you’d like them to overcome this familiar aversion and get pumped up about what you’ll be doing in a meeting, therefore, you might emulate the practice of City Year, a Boston-based nonprofit international service organization. City Year begins its meetings by inviting members to describe from their own recent life experiences an example of what Robert F. Kennedy referred to as a “ripple of hope.” Grossman, J. (1998, April). We’ve got to start meeting like this. *Inc.,* 70–74. This could be a good deed they’ve seen someone do for someone else, a news item about a decline in the crime rate, or perhaps even a loving note they’ve received from a child or other family member. Sharing with their fellow group members such examples of altruism, love, or community improvement focuses and motivates City Year members by reminding them in specific, personal terms of why their meetings can be truly worthwhile.

Tend to Housekeeping Details

People’s productivity depends in part on their biological state. Once you convene your meeting, announce or remind the group members of where they can find rest rooms, water fountains, vending machines, designated smoking areas, and any other amenities that may contribute to their physical comfort.

Make Sure People Understand Their Roles

At the start of the meeting, review what you understand is going to happen and ask for confirmation of what you think people are expected to do in the time you’re going to be spending together. Calling on someone to make a report if he or she isn’t aware it’s required can be embarrassing for both you and that person.

Keep to Your Agenda

Social time makes people happy and relieves stress. Most group meetings, however, should not consist primarily of social time. You may want to designate a "sheriff"—rotating the role at each meeting—to watch for departures from the agenda and courteously direct people back on task. Either you or the "sheriff" might want to periodically provide "signposts" indicating where you are in your process, too, such as "It looks like we've got 25 minutes left in our meeting, and we haven't discussed yet who's going to be working on the report to give to Mary."

If your meetings habitually exceed the time you allot for them, consider either budgeting more time or, if you want to stick to your guns, setting a kitchen timer to ring when you've reached the point when you've said you'll quit. The co-founder of one technology firm, Jeff Atwood, put together a list of rules for his company's meetings which included this one: "No meeting should ever be more than an hour, under penalty of death." Milian, M. (2012, June 11-June 17). It's not you, it's meetings. *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 51–52. Similarly, the library staff at one college in the Midwest conducts all their meetings standing up in a circle, which encourages brevity and efficiency.

Guide, Don't Dictate

If you're in charge of the meeting, that doesn't mean you're responsible for everything people say in it, nor does it mean you have to personally comment on every idea or proposal that comes up. Let the other members of the group carry the content as long as they're not straying from the process you feel needs to be followed.

You may see that some people regularly dominate discussion in your group's meetings and that others are perhaps slower to talk despite having important contributions to make. One way to deal with these disparities is by providing the group with a "talking stick" and specifying that people must hold it in their hands in order to speak. You could also invoke the "NOSTUESO rule" with respect to the talking stick, which says that "No One Speaks Twice Until Everybody Speaks Once."

Keep Your Eyes Open For Nonverbal Communication

As a meeting progresses, people's physical and emotional states are likely to change. As the facilitator, you should do your best to identify such change and accommodate it within the structures and processes your group has established for itself. When people do something as simple as crossing their arms in front of them, for instance, they might be signaling that they're closed to what others are saying—or they might just be trying to stay warm in a room that feels too cold to them.

When one person in the meeting has the floor and is talking, it's a good idea to watch how the rest of the group seems to be responding. You may notice clues indicating that people are pleased and receptive, or that they're uninterested, skeptical, or even itching to respond negatively. You may want to do a perception check to see if you're interpreting nonverbal cues accurately. For instance, you might say, "Terry, could we pause here a bit? I get the impression that people might have some questions for you." As an alternative, you might address the whole group and ask "Does anyone have questions for Terry at this point?"

Capture and Assign Action Items

Unless they are held purely to communicate information, or for other special purposes, most meetings result in action items, tasks, and other assignments for one or more participants. Sometimes these items arise unexpectedly because someone comes up with a great new idea and volunteers or is assigned to pursue it after the discussion ends. Be on the alert for these elements of a meeting.

Make things Fun and Healthy

Appeal to people's tummies and funnybones. Provide something to eat or drink, even if it's just coffee or peanuts in a bowl. Glenn Parker and George Hoffman's book on how to run meetings well Parker, G., & Hoffman, R. (2006). *Meeting excellence: 33 tools to lead meetings that get results*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. includes a chapter titled "Eating Well=Meeting Well," and it also refers to the fact that the American Cancer Society offers a program to help groups organize meetings and other events with good health in mind. www.cancer.org/healthy/morewaysacshelpsyoustaywell/meeting-well-description

Avoid Sarcasm and Cynicism

Encourage humor and merriment. If your agenda includes some challenging items, try to start out with “quick wins” to warm the mood of the group.

Take Breaks Regularly, Even When You Think You Don’t Need Them

If you’ve ever gone on a long hike on a beautiful day, you may have decided to continue a mile or two beyond your original intended destination because the scenery was beautiful and you were feeling spunky. If you’re like the authors, though, you probably regretted “going the extra mile” later because it meant you had to go back that mile plus all the rest of the way you’d come.

Something similar can arise in a meeting. People sometimes feel full of energy and clamor to keep a lively discussion going past the time scheduled for a break, but they may not realize that they’re tiring and losing focus until someone says or does something ill-advised. Taking even five-minute breathers at set intervals can help group members remain physically refreshed over the long haul.

Show Respect for Everyone

Seek consensus. Avoid “groupthink” by encouraging a free and full airing of opinions. Observe the Golden Rule. Listen sincerely to everyone, but avoid giving a small minority so much clout that in disputed matters “99-to-1 is a tie.” Keep disagreements agreeable. If you must criticize, criticize positions, not people. If someone’s behavior shows a pattern of consistently irritating others or disrupting the flow of your group’s meetings, talk to the person privately and express your concern in a polite but clear fashion. Be specific in stating what you expect the person to do or stop doing, and keep an open mind to whatever response you receive.

Expect the Unexpected

Do your best to anticipate and prepare for confrontations and conflicts. If you didn’t already make time to do so earlier, take a minute just before the start of the meeting to mark items on your agenda which you think might turn out to be especially contentious or time-consuming.

Conduct Multiple Assessments of the Meeting

Formative assessment takes place during an activity and allows people to modify their behavior in response to its results. Why not perform a brief interim evaluation during every meeting in which you ask, for instance, “If we were to end this meeting right now, where would it be, and if we need to make changes now in what’s happening in our meeting, what should they be?”

Summative assessment is implemented at the end of an activity. When you finish a meeting, for example, you might check to see how well people feel that the gathering met its intended goals. If you want something in writing, you might distribute a half sheet of paper to each person asking “What was best about our meeting?” and “What might have made this meeting better?” Or you could write two columns on a whiteboard, one with a plus and the other with a minus, and ask people orally to identify items they think belong in each category. If you feel a less formal check-up is sufficient, you might just go around the table or room and ask every person for one word that captures how she or he feels.

Think (and Talk) Ahead

If you didn’t write it on your agenda—which would have been a good idea, most likely—remind group members, before the meeting breaks up, of where and when their next gathering is to take place.

Tips For Virtual Meetings

Meetings conducted via Skype or other synchronous technological tools can function as efficiently as face-to-face ones, but only if the distinctive challenges of the virtual environment are taken into account. It’s harder to develop empathy with other people,

and easier to engage in unhelpful multitasking, when you're not in the same physical space with them. To make it more likely that a virtual meeting will be both pleasant and productive, then, it makes sense to tell people upfront what your expectations are of their behavior. If you want them to avoid reading emails or playing computer solitaire on their computers while the meeting is underway, for example, say so.

A major goal of most meetings is to reach decisions based on maximum involvement, so it pays to keep in mind that people work best with other people whom they know and understand. With this in mind, you might choose to email a photo of each person scheduled to be in the meeting and include a quick biography for everyone to look over in advance. This communication could take place along with disseminating the meeting's agenda and other supporting documentation.

Here are some further tips and suggestions for leading or participating in virtual meetings, each based on the unique features of such gatherings:

1. Get all the participants in an audio meeting to say something brief at the start of the meeting so that everyone becomes familiar with everyone else's voice
2. Remind people of the purpose of the meeting and of the key outcome(s) you hope to achieve together
3. Listen/watch for people who aren't participating and ask them periodically if they have thoughts or suggestions to add to the discussion
4. Summarize the status of the meeting from time to time
5. If you're holding an audio conference, discourage people from calling in on a cell phone because of potential problems with sound quality
6. Because you may not have nonverbal cues to refer to, ask other members to clarify their meanings and intentions if you're not sure their words alone convey all you need to know
7. If you know you're going to have to leave a meeting before it ends, inform the organizer in advance. Sign off publicly, but quickly, when you leave rather than just hanging up on the meeting connection.

Key Takeaway

- Facilitating a meeting well requires a large number of skills and talents and depends on overcoming many potential pitfalls, but following specific recommendations from authorities on the subject can make it possible.

Exercise 12.2.1

1. Reread the description of Bonnie's abilities. With a partner, list the abilities and rank them in what you feel is their order of importance. Which of the abilities, if any, do you feel are absolutely essential to successful leadership of meetings?
2. Which instances of "Trouble in River City" have you experienced in group meetings? Describe two or three such instances. What action might the group leader have taken to prevent or resolve the episodes?
3. Some cultures value exact punctuality differently from others. If you were leading a series of meetings comprising members of several cultural groups, what steps, if any, would you take to accommodate or modify people's habits and expectations concerning the starting and ending times of the meetings?
4. Imagine that you're the new chairperson of a group that got seriously off track in the first of its meetings that you presided over. You tried gently redirecting people to discuss pertinent issues, but they first ignored and then resisted your attempts. What steps might you take to address the situation?

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12.3: A Brief Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order

Learning Objectives

1. Identify ways in which parliamentary procedure can help a group conduct its business effectively
2. Distinguish between *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR)* and related summaries of parliamentary procedure
3. Master terminology related to major actions undertaken within parliamentary procedure

Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use.

Emily Post

In the previous two sections, we considered a number of practical planning, human relations, and communication guidelines to help you get ready for a meeting and facilitate it. Now we'll discuss a system of formal rules called "parliamentary procedure" which you may follow as you facilitate a meeting to save lots of time, prevent ill feelings, promote harmony, and ensure that everyone's viewpoints can be expressed and discussed democratically.

Why Parliamentary Procedure?

It's easy to make fun of individuals or groups who follow procedures "to the letter," especially in a country like the United States where we at least say that we prize spontaneity and self-determination. When it comes to most groups you work in or lead as a student or employee, you'll probably be able to get away with conducting their meetings fairly informally, or even "by the seat of your pants." In such groups—"among friends," as it were—parliamentary procedure may seem boring or unnecessary. You may just assume, for instance, that you'll observe the will of the majority in cases of disagreement and that you'll keep track of what you do by taking a few simple notes when you get together.



"This meeting was called in order to discuss the meat. It has been pointed out that there is no more meat. A motion has been made to fight over the bones."

Figure 12.3.1

But what about when you're asked to chair your children's PTA someday? Or when you're elected president of a community service group like Kiwanis or Rotary? Or when you become an officer in a professional society? Under those circumstances, you'll have entered a "deliberative assembly"—a body that considers options and reaches decisions—and you'll benefit from knowing at least the rudiments of parliamentary procedure in order to fulfill your duties within it. When you're in charge of running such a group's meetings, you should be able to ensure that things run smoothly, efficiently, and fairly. As odd as it sounds, under those circumstances, you'll probably actually find that imposing regulation on the group is necessary to preserve its freedom to act.

On a very practical level, parliamentary procedure can help you answer these common, important questions as you lead a meeting:

- Who gets to speak when, and for how long?
- What do we do if our discussion seems to be going on and on without any useful results?
- When and how do we make decisions?
- What do we do if we're not ready yet to say yes or no to a proposal but need to move on to something else in the meantime?
- What do we do if we change our minds?

Learning some parliamentary procedure promises at least two personal benefits, as well. First, you'll probably discover that the structures you become familiar with through using parliamentary procedure boost your confidence in general. Second, you're apt to find that you've laid the foundations for establishing yourself as a solid, reliable leader. Third, although you shouldn't be stricter or more formal than is good for your group, using parliamentary procedure regularly and as a matter, of course, should contribute to the impression that you care about consistency, equity, and efficiency in your dealings with other people in general.

Background of *Robert's Rules*

Henry Martyn Robert was an engineer who rose to the rank of brigadier general in the U.S. Army and first put together his *Rules of Order* in 1876. His aim was to keep that publication to 50 pages, but its first edition contained 176 pages. The eleventh edition now runs nearly four times as long—more than 650 pages. This current edition, abbreviated as "RONR" (*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*), was formulated by a team of parliamentarians which includes Robert's grandson.

A shorter summary, also prepared in part by Henry Martyn Robert III, comprises the most important features of RONR. It includes the contention that "at least 80 percent of the content of RONR will be needed less than 20 percent of the time" in even the largest, most complicated groups (Robert, Evans, Honemann, & Balch, 2011, p. 6Robert, H.M., Evans, W.J., Honemann, D.H., & Balch, T. J. (2011). *Robert's rules of order newly revised, in brief*. Philadelphia: Da Capo Press.). Thus, a formal group which adopts RONR as its parliamentary authority may decide to use the summary volume to help it get through most common operational situations, since the summary's sections are all linked item-by-item to more detailed portions of RONR itself.

Ingredients of RONR

Robert's Rules offers guidance for all the essential processes a group is apt to conduct. It suggests that a group select a chairperson ("chairman" in Robert's original language) and a secretary, that it decide on what proportion of its membership constitutes a quorum and is thus able to conduct substantive business, and that it follow at least a "simplified standard order of business" which may be as straightforward as this:

1. Reading and approval of minutes. Deciding whether notes of the previous meeting, generally taken by the group's secretary, can be accepted as written or need to be modified.
2. Reports. Statements by officers and heads of committees, along with any recommendations associated with them. For instance, the finance committee of a student government association might propose that the association as a whole spend money from a particular budget to send a student representative to a professional conference or purchase new bookkeeping software for the association's treasurer.
3. Unfinished business. Some groups use the term "old business" in this part of their agendas and allow members to bring up any topics that have occupied the body's attention throughout its history, but RONR discourages this. Instead, it insists that "unfinished business" be restricted to items which were left incomplete at the conclusion of the previous meeting or which were scheduled to be considered in the previous meeting but could not be because of insufficient time and were therefore specifically postponed to the next one.Robert, H.M., Evans, W.J., Honemann, D.H., & Balch, T. J. (2011).
4. New business. This part of a meeting revolves around motions introduced by members and considered by the group as a whole.

Agendas

Although a bare-bones standard order of business may satisfy the requirements of RONR, most groups decide to make use of an agenda such as the ones we've discussed in earlier sections of this chapter. Such agendas, if and when they are approved by groups at the outset of their meetings, may be individualized to name the persons who are to give reports and make recommendations. They may also include timelines that refer to specific topics, offer background information, and say when breaks will take place. RONR recognizes that every group has a personality of its own and should have the flexibility to express

that personality through a well-crafted agenda tailored to meet its needs.

Making Decisions

Generally speaking, RONR specifies that decisions about proposals should be made as soon as possible after the proposals are made. For instance, if a recommendation is made during an officer's report, it should be handled at that time.

Nothing may be decided in RONR unless a motion—a formal proposal put forth orally by a participant in the meeting—has been made. The proper way to submit a motion is to say, "I move that..." (not "I make a motion that..."). Some groups may decide that any motion raised by a member will be deliberated, but RONR requires that nearly all motions receive a second before the chairperson can proceed with the next step. That step is for the chairperson to "state the question"—that is, announce to the group that a motion has been made and seconded and is open for debate. Details on exceptions to this process can be found in RONR itself, but the basic reason for requiring a second is to ensure that more than a single individual would like to consider a proposal.

Assuming that the person who submits a motion has done so according to the procedures of the group, the motion is considered to be pending, and its initial form it is referred to as the "main motion." The chairperson is responsible for soliciting and guiding debate about any motion.

In the course of debate, the main motion may be amended or withdrawn, in part according to subsidiary motions and in part according to the will of the person who originally proposed it. It's also possible for a group to refer a matter to a subgroup or postpone discussion of it to a set time.

Generally, members should be recognized by the chairperson in the order in which they make it clear that they wish to speak. RONR stipulates that a speaker has up to 10 minutes each time he or she speaks and that the speaker isn't permitted to "save" time or transfer it to another person. If a motion being considered in a large group is particularly controversial, the chairperson should make an effort to recognize proponents and opponents back and forth so as to ensure balance in the presentations.

When debate ceases on a motion, the chairperson should say "The question is on the adoption of the motion that..." and put the question to a vote of the membership. When the vote has been observed or tallied, the chairperson announces which side "has it"—that is, which side has won the vote. He or she then declares that the motion has been adopted or lost and indicates the effect of the vote, as necessary.

For instance, someone in a student committee might move that $250 be spent toward sending Jamie, its vice president, to a conference in New York City. After the motion has been seconded and debated, you as the chairperson might call for a vote and announce afterward, "The 'ayes' have it. The motion carries, and Jamie will receive $250 toward expenses for the trip to New York. Jamie, you'll need to talk to Cameron, our treasurer, to get a check cut for you in advance of your travel."

Being Civil

The point of following *Robert's Rules* is to preserve order, decorum, and civility so that a group can make wise decisions. RONR allows a group's chairperson to rule people's comments out of order if the comments are irrelevant (not "germane") or are considered to be personal attacks.

Robert's Rules even makes provisions for group members to avoid direct attack. It attempts to accomplish this by allowing members of a group to refer to each other in the third person—e.g., "the previous speaker" or "the treasurer"—rather than by using each other's names. Unfortunately, in long-established organizations such as the US Congresspeople sometimes get away with incivility even within such tight interpretations of the strictures of RONR. Consider the story, which may or may not be historically accurate, of two US Senators. Senator Smith had just spoken passionately in favor of earmarking funds to build a bridge across a certain river in his state. Senator Jones said, "That's ridiculous. We don't need a bridge there. I could pee halfway across that river!" Senator Smith retorted, "The previous speaker is out of order!" to which Senator Jones replied, "I suppose I am. Otherwise, I could pee all the way across it."

More Details

How punctiliously a particular group observes the requirements of RONR will depend on the group's purposes, its level of formality,

and sometimes even on the personalities of its members and leaders. One statewide college faculty organization in the Pacific Northwest prides itself on operating according to what it jocularly calls “Bobby’s Rules of Order,” although its bylaws stipulate that it is governed by RONR. The faculty organization has found for nearly 40 years that it can achieve its aims and maintain civility without observing many of the official trappings of RONR. Your group, on the other hand, may want and need the consistency and specificity of RONR to get its work done.



Figure 12.3.2

In any case, knowing the basic nature of *Robert’s Rules* and how to get guidance on its finer points can be advantageous to anyone who wants to promote efficient operations and decision-making by a group. In addition to referring to *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief*, you may want to consult the website of the American Institute of Parliamentarians at www.parliamentaryprocedure.org for further information.

Key Takeaway

- *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR)*, a thorough and well-established system of parliamentary procedure, can be followed in greater or lesser detail as a group attempts to ensure civility, fairness, and efficiency in the conduct of its business.

Exercise 12.3.1

1. Watch a broadcast on C-SPAN television of either the opening of a session of the US House of Representatives or of debate on legislation in the House or Senate. What specialized terms or forms of address did you hear which fit with your understanding of *Robert’s Rules of Order*? What function did those terms or forms of address fulfill?
2. Locate a meeting agenda for a student group or employee committee on your campus. To what degree do its contents differ from the simplified standard order of business described in this section? Why do you think the organizers of the meeting modified the standard order as they did?
3. Draft an agenda for a meeting of an imaginary student group and share it with 2–3 fellow students. Explain why you structured your agenda the way you did.

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12.4: Post Meeting Communication and Minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify a tool for recording and preserving notes of professional group conversations
2. Acquire a format for minutes that emphasizes actions taken by a group and the people assigned to accomplish them
3. Identify three ways in which a good group leader should follow up on meetings of the group

Bookends hold books up. Without them, the books tumble onto each other or off the shelf. The "bookends" of a meeting, likewise, are as important as the meeting itself. Without them, nobody knows beforehand what's going to happen or remembers afterward what did.

We've discussed the first major bookend of a meeting, its agenda. In this section, we'll turn our attention to the kinds of bookends that follow a meeting, including principally its minutes.

One Administrative Tool

A college administrator we know developed a form to give people after any conversation they had in his office, much less a formal meeting. He would take notes on the form of what he and the other people in the conversation said, and especially of what they agreed or disagreed on at the end of their meeting. Then he would share the notes with the other people, make a photocopy for each, and have them all initial their copies. Why? Because the administrator knew that busy people may quickly forget exactly what they decided in a conversation, or even what they talked about, unless they keep a shared record of what happened. Whether we like or believe it or not, our individual impressions of a meeting start changing and diverging the moment we leave the site. As one business writer noted, "Even with the ubiquitous tools of organization and sharing ideas...the capacity for misunderstanding is unlimited."Matson, E. (1996, April-May). The seven sins of deadly meetings. *Fast Company*, 122.



Figure 12.4.1

The Why and How of Minutes

Among the exasperating experiences in group meetings are moments when people say, "We talked about this before—at least twice. Why are we going over the same ground again?" There are also those times when we hear, "John, you were supposed to report on this. What's your report?" and John replies, "But I didn't know I was supposed to make a report."

The best way to prevent such deflating episodes is to follow up after each meeting with good records. Here are two ways to do this:

Keep Ironclad Minutes

One college in Washington State has used this template for many years to shape and retain minutes of its academic committee meetings:

Date/time/location of meeting: _____

Purpose/goals of meeting: _____

Person presiding: _____

Officers in Attendance: _____

Other members in attendance: _____

Members absent: _____

Table 12.1 Agenda Template

Agenda Item	Discussion/Motions	Action Taken	Follow-Up
1. Minutes		Approved as printed.	
2. Agenda		Approved as disseminated 5/29/2013.	
3. Roof problem	John Smith reported that the ceiling in the staff washroom leaks. Motion by Mary Jones to have the ceiling repaired; motion passed.	Plant/Maintenance will be asked to patch the leak.	John Smith will contact Jane Doe, head of Plant/Maintenance, by 6/15 to schedule repair.

Time of adjournment: _____

Date/time/place of next meeting: _____

Notice that this style of minutes lacks extensive text and “he said/she said” descriptions.



Figure 12.4.2

Instead, it makes crystal clear who's responsible for what actions prior to the next meeting. Its contents are brief, easy to read, and very difficult to misinterpret (or evade). It promotes action and accountability.

Distribute Minutes Promptly

When and how you disseminate minutes shows whether and how much you care about what your group does. If your group has bylaws, it may be a good idea for them to include a time frame within which minutes of meetings need to be distributed (such as "within five days").



"Just reading the minutes back will be sufficient."

Figure 12.4.3

Make sure your mailing list of people to receive minutes is up to date and accurate. This will ensure that no one misses the next meeting because he or she didn't see when and where it was scheduled to take place.

Sloppy minutes degrade the value of the work and time people invest together. They can also weaken a group's morale. Professional minutes, on the other hand, may even make people who weren't at a meeting wish they had been—although that's perhaps asking a lot, unless you served pizza!—and can strengthen your group's pride and solidarity.

What Else?

If you're the leader of the group, making sure that minutes are prepared and distributed well is only one step toward increasing the likelihood that your meetings will achieve their full potential of transmitting discussions into plans and plans into action. You should do three other things after a meeting.

First, you should contact group members who were identified in the minutes as being responsible for follow-up action. See if they need information, resources, or other help to follow through on their assignments. If a committee or subcommittee was asked to take action on some point, get in touch with whoever heads it and offer to provide materials or other support that may be needed to accomplish its work.

Second, you should set a positive example. Take a few minutes to reflect on how effective you were in facilitating the last meeting and ask yourself what you might change at the next one. Be sure, too, to implement any decisions in a timely fashion that you as the leader were given.

Third, you should make sure that the minutes of your group's meetings are stored in secure form, either physically or digitally or both, so that they are available to both you and other group members at any time. Your group's institutional memory, which is the foundation for future members to build upon, needs to be tended regularly and diligently. When in doubt, it's better to hold onto information and documentation related to your group. Discarding something because you think to yourself "nobody will forget this" may very well turn out to be a mistake.

Observing these suggestions may not make the experiences associated with following up on group meetings heavenly, but it might at least keep them from being too hellish.

Key Takeaway

- After a group meets, its leader should ensure that professional minutes are disseminated and that other members of the group follow through with their responsibilities.

Exercise 12.4.1

1. Pay special attention to conversations you carry on over the next several days in school and at home. Pick one of them and write simulated minutes according to the format shown in this section. What did you learn from this process about distilling and summarizing information from oral interactions?
2. Locate a website of an academic, business, or civic organization that includes minutes of a recent meeting by some of its members. Identify portions of the minutes that you feel would enable you as a member of the group to adequately understand an important action taken by the group if you were unable to attend the meeting. If you were part of the group, what improvements would you make in the format of its minutes to further enhance their effectiveness?

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12.5: Summary

In this chapter, we have reviewed mechanisms and approaches to handling meetings. We have explored the purposes of meetings and discovered that alternatives to meetings can often yield satisfactory results within a group. We have reviewed specific steps in planning, facilitating, and following up after meetings, including the use of Robert's Rules of Order. Meetings play a large role in the life and development of most groups, so acquiring tools for putting meetings to the best possible use can be of great value to their members.

Review Questions

Interpretive Questions

1. Search the website of the Congressional Record at thomas.loc.gov/home/LegislativeData.php?&n=Record&c=111 for a legislative topic of your choice and locate 3–4 transcriptions of comments entered into the Record concerning it. What terminology or structure do you see in the text which differs from day-to-day conversational norms? What purposes do you believe these communication features might be intended to serve?
2. If you've participated in a virtual meeting which reached a decision of some sort, what elements of the medium do you feel contributed positively to making the decision? What elements, if any, made it more challenging for you to achieve your aims?

Application Questions

1. Think of a problem at your college that you and some of your fellow students feel needs to be addressed. Imagine that you've been told you have two weeks to present a proposal to the president of the college for remedying the problem. Draft an agenda for as many meetings as you feel would be necessary to involve the proper people in confronting the problem. Describe how the meetings would take place, including what rules you would follow, who would be invited, and what specific items would be dealt with in what sequence.
2. Review the minutes of 3–4 recent meetings of a local governmental agency such as a city council or parks commission. What portion of the text in each set of minutes, if any, do you feel could be eliminated without diminishing the effectiveness of the documents as records of the meetings? Write up a revised version of one of the sets of minutes which most efficiently conveys what was important in the meeting.

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12.6: Addtional Resources

Books and Articles

Mosvick, R.K., & Nelson, R.B. (1996). *A guide to successful meeting management*. Indianapolis, IN: Park Avenue. Includes information about business meetings, along with suggestions on how to improve them.

Silberman, M. (1999). *101 ways to make your meetings active*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Provides fun activities and exercises to help prepare people to conduct meetings effectively.

Streibel, B.J. (2003). *The manager's guide to effective meetings*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Includes advice on conducting virtual meetings, as well as useful examples and checklists related to meeting management.

Facilitation at a Glance; *Ingred Bens*

A wonderful pocket guide to facilitation, filled with tools and techniques useful to both novice and advanced facilitators. Great set of tools for problem-solving.

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making; *Sam Kaner*

An excellent resource for ideas on facilitation, with a focus on decision-making tools and techniques. The book includes excellent illustrations, which can be reproduced to help explain facilitation concepts to others.

Other Meeting Design and Facilitation Resources

The International Association of Facilitators (IAF)

The IAF promotes, supports, and advances the art and practice of professional facilitation through methods exchange, professional growth, practical research, collegial networking, and support services.

Interaction Associates

Interaction Associates is the creator and distributor of the Mastering Meetings: Tools for Collaborative Action and Essential Facilitation classes which MIT is licensed to teach. The Tips and Techniques section at their Web site is particularly useful.

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12.07: Appendix A- Assessment of a Student's Campus

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12.7: Appendix A- Assessment of a Student's Campus/ Community Participation

Dear Fellow College Employee:

Thank you very much for taking the time to assist a student in learning about the nature and functions of groups in our college and community. Please assess the student's behavior candidly so s/he and I can make future student/employee encounters more positive and productive. Please return this form to the student so that s/he can learn from your comments. Again, thank you for your assistance!

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

TWO ACTIVITIES YOU ATTENDED: _____

Please place an "X" on the following scales to show your evaluation of the student's behavior before, during, and after the interactions you've had with him/her:

1. The student approached me in a polite and courteous manner.

Strongly Disagree |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Strongly Agree

2. The student explained the purpose of our prospective interaction well.

Strongly Disagree |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Strongly Agree

3. The student's questions were clear and easy to understand.

Strongly Disagree |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Strongly Agree

4. The student thanked me appropriately for my time and assistance.

Strongly Disagree |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Strongly Agree

What could the student do in future interactions with college staff, faculty, and administrators to increase his/her professionalism, clarity, or courtesy?

Your name: _____ (Phone): _____

For Students: Description of Interactions with a Faculty/Staff/ Administrative Employee Contact

1. How did you first contact the college employee? (i.e., by phone? face to face? by e-mail?)
2. How did the person respond when you contacted him/her?
3. Name/nature of activity #1: _____ Date and time:_____

   Name/nature of activity #2: _____ Date and time:_____

4. What actions did your Employee Contact take to help you prepare for your experiences together?
5. What might have made the activities with your Employee Contact more educational for you?
6. Check and explain how your experience with the Employee Contact helped you in the following areas:

	Yes
I learned more about how our college functions	

	Yes
I learned how to act professionally in a business/educational/community organization	
I met people who may help me in my future schooling	
I met people who may help me in my future career	
I learned these other things from my experiences:	

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12.8: Appendix B- Critique of Formal Campus or Community Gathering

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

Date: _____

I attended a meeting/event of this group: _____

on this date: _____ at this location: _____

from _____ a.m./p.m. to _____ a.m./p.m.

My Employee Contact was: _____ (Phone): _____

The subject of the meeting/event was: _____

The purpose of the meeting/event was: _____

Name of the person leading the meeting/event: _____

The person's title within the group (e.g., president, chair, etc.): _____

The person's title at our college: _____

At what time was the meeting/event scheduled to begin? _____

At what time did the meeting/event begin? _____

At what time was the meeting/event scheduled to end? _____

At what time did the meeting/event end? _____

Was an agenda used at the meeting/event? _____ YES _____ NO

[If an agenda was used, please attach a copy to this form]

How many people attended the meeting/event? _____

What main topic(s) was/were discussed at the meeting/event? _____

If the group made any decisions, please list them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What method(s) did the group use to make its decision(s)?:

_____ Voice vote _____ Written voting _____ Consensus ("We all agree that XYZ")

_____ Other: _____

_____ Unsure of method

What particularly effective words, actions, stories, examples, or arguments stick in your mind from the event/activity?

Please place an “X” on the following scales to show your evaluation of the meeting/event:

Boring |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Fascinating

Chaotic |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____|| Well-Organized

Unintelligible |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Clear / Easy to Understand

Routine |_____|_____|_____|_____|_____| Controversial

The event/activity could have been improved by...

This is what I learned from the meeting/event that will make me a better student, employee, or citizen:

Other comments about the meeting/event:

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INDEX

N

norms
4.2: Norms among Group Members

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GLOSSARY

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