

# Business Communications

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Evolution of Business Communication  
Click the picture to watch video

This video traces business communications from chalk to typewriters to pc's ... all the way to social media & Twitter.

What is communication? If I asked you to write your own definition of communication...what would you write?

Here is how Daniel Webster, an American Journalist, defined communication...

"If all my possessions were taken from me with one exception, I would hope to keep my power of communication --- for by it I would regain all the rest."

## What is Communication?

- Communication occurs when a sender expresses an emotion or a feeling, creates an idea, or senses the need to communicate.
- The communication process is triggered when the sender makes a conscious or an unconscious decision to share the message with another person—the receiver.
- Every communicative act is based on something that conveys meaning, and that conveyance is the message.
- The message may be either verbal or nonverbal.
- Messages may also come from the context—or place and time—of the communication.
- Every message is sent and received through one of our five senses.
- The sensory media through which messages are sent and received are communication channels.

As you can tell, people communicate in multiple ways. Each method of communicating sends a message and sometimes what we are receiving from a sender is a conflicting message.

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## **Nonverbal Communications**

- People telegraph their intentions and feelings, whether they are aware of it or not.
- Most of us depend on our reading of others' facial expressions to judge how they feel about us or a particular situation.
- The body is another rich source of nonverbal confirmation or denial of our verbal message.
- Our appearance can disclose several pieces of information about us.

## **Nonverbal Receivers**

People who are better readers of nonverbal messages tend to do the following things:

- They look at the totality of cues rather than isolated ones (remember the crossed arms?).
- They take context (time and place) of the message into account.
- They attempt to compensate for their own biases and prejudices.

## **Nonverbal Clues**

When our words send one message and our nonverbal cues send another message, people almost always believe our nonverbal cues. Here are some typical nonverbal cues that we encounter every day:

- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Eye contact
- Dress and physical appearance
- Gestures

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## Sources of Communication

Do you know where most of our communication comes from? You probably thought *words*. Think about how much people talk every day and the amount of words that are shared with others. However, you would be **wrong**. Our communication comes from the following sources:

- Words make up 7% of our communication
- Tone of our voice makes up 36% of our communication
- Gestures compose 55% of our overall communication

Were you surprised? Think about the last time you were in a traditional classroom. Could the teacher control the classroom without says a word? I can quiet a classroom without saying a word. I can ask a student to wait, take off a hat, sit down, or even approach the desk without saying a word.

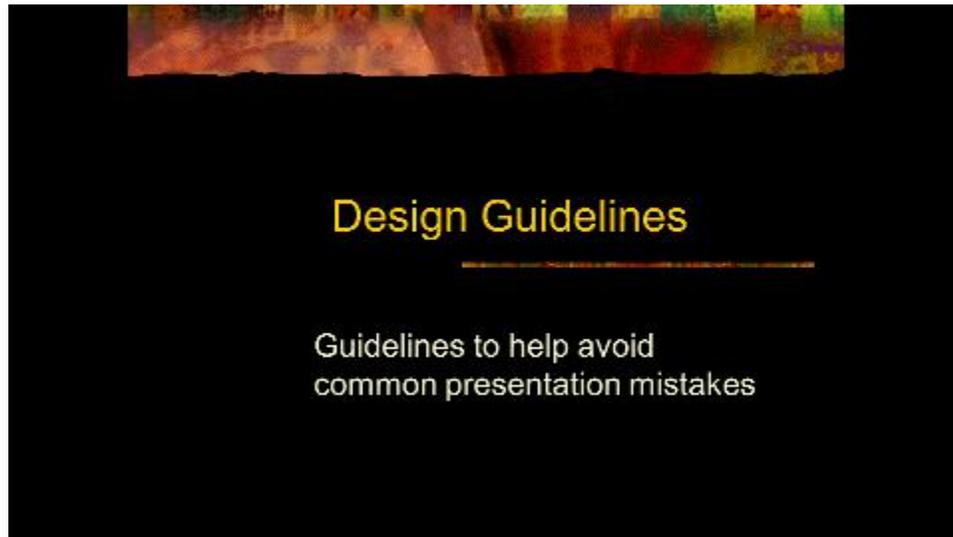


### Oral Communication

Did you know that Americans speak approximately 125 words per minute and

women speak quicker than men? People who are successful communicators take full responsibility for success in the communication process. These people take responsibility for being certain that you understand what they are saying. Successful communicators recognize that barriers to good communications exist so they speak in simple, grammatical, and understandable terms. Successful communicators give examples, ask for feedback, put what they said previously in different words, and make it easy for you to gain the true intent of their communications. However, this in no way frees the listener from responsibility from the process. Without proper listening, communication does not occur.

Oral communication in the form of a formal presentation is often accompanied by some type of visual aid such as a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation should help the audience follow your presentation and contain speaking points. The PowerPoint should not *be* the presentation. In other words, do not put your entire presentation (word for word) on PowerPoint slides which you read to your audience. Here are some guidelines for preparing good visual aids.



Click on the picture to view the presentation

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## Active Listening

Read the active listening presentation. Is listening and hearing the same thing? No. Think about the last time someone said to you, "What did they just say?" You know that you heard some speaking before the question was asked but because you were not paying attention, you do not know what you heard. Being an active listener is just as important as being an effective communicator. Remember, communication only happens when both the communicator and the listener are engaged.





Click the picture to read the active listening presentation

## Assignment: Question for Thought

Now that you have reviewed Active Listening, reflect for a few moments on your own listening skills. Are you an active listener?

**Directions:** In your own initial post, write a minimum of five well-thought out sentences stating in what areas of active listening you are strong and the areas in which you are weak. Discuss how you will improve on the areas in which you are weak. Place your paragraph directly (do not attach) into the textbox for the *Question for Thought 1* in itsLearning.

## Assignment: Active Listening Project

**Directions:** You have been selected to make a presentation on active listening. Not only must you describe what active listening is, you must also discuss what barriers there are that cause people to not be active listeners *and* how people may overcome those barriers. The project may be in the form of a paper, video, podcast, or presentation. Specific formatting instructions for the form of project you select are found on the actual assignment in itsLearning.

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## Telephone Techniques

Did you know... That right now millions of people are their cellphones (I almost said telephone but that is so old school). The cellphone is used in approximately 95% of all business transactions. It is estimated that 100 billion business calls are made each day..

Who invented the telephone? Answer: Alexander Graham Bell. I wonder what Bell would think of the cellphone today compared to his invention.

## **Proper Cellphone Etiquette**

You probably looked at the title and thought... "There's etiquette to the cellphone? First we have **netiquette** and now we have what? **celliquette**?. No, it is just etiquette in the use of a cellphone. And yes, there really is a proper way to use the cellphone. In business, there most certainly is a polite way to communicate using a cellphone.

The cellphone has become an essential tool of the business environment and more important than ever in today's business world. Much of our business communications takes place on a cell:

- in the office
- at home
- in the car
- virtually anywhere (even in the bathroom)

In this area, proper phone technique can make or break deals or relationships. The following are some guidelines to help you use the phone as a power tool.

### **Basic Good Manners: Telephone Tips When Placing Calls**

- Let the cell ring a reasonable length of time. It is frustrating to just get to the cell and hear a dial tone.
- If you dial a number that is wrong, apologize promptly and hang-up.
- Calling a business at or very near closing time is un-thoughtful.
  - When it is time to go home, after a long day, do not delay them.
- State your name when placing a call.
  - The game of "guess who this is" may not play very well to a busy friend.
- When speaking to anyone who is working and time is of the essence, make your call informative and short.
- Dial carefully and in proper lighting to avoid calling a wrong number and inconvenience others.
- If you need to leave a voicemail, always state the return number at the beginning and at the end of the call.

### **Basic Good Manners: Telephone Etiquette when Answering the Phone**

When you are the person making the call, be sure to use proper phone etiquette from the start. Be polite to the "gatekeepers" i.e. secretaries, receptionists etc. that answer

the phone for your business contact. Gatekeepers can be very influential and powerful. Gatekeepers have the power to put you through (or not) at 4:55 p.m. on Friday, when their boss is getting ready to leave the office. Gatekeepers may sit outside of the office, but they too have influence and power so a greeting such as “Good morning, this is Penny Jones, I’m returning a call from John Jones, is he available? is a bit of etiquette well spent in the long run.

It would also be wise to learn the names of the top assistants, and use their names to make them feel noticed and important. Some business relationships, especially in fields like sales and marketing, start or stall right at the front desk.

When you have reached the party, if your call has been expected, remind them of the prior conversation and appointment. People get busy and can seem surprised until you remind them of where they should remember you from. If your call is not expected, unless it will be a short call, ask the party if they have the time for you. Calling unannounced is much like “dropping in” and you shouldn’t overstay unless invited. If the other person does not have time, briefly state the purpose of your call and ask for an appointment to follow up at a later time.

It is also a good idea to keep a phone diary or call log. When you work in an office, keep a pencil and pad near the phone and jot notes during phone conversations. This will help you “actively listen” and have a reference for later. Employ active listening noises such as “yes” or “I see” or “great”. This lets the other person know that you care about what they have to say. Recap at the end of the call, using your notes and repeat any resolutions or commitments on either side to be sure you are both “on the same page”.

### **Ending a Call**

End the call on a positive note by thanking the other person for their time and express an interest in speaking with them again (if that is true). If not, just let them know you appreciated them speaking with you and end the call. A gracious good bye leaves the door open for further communication and in this day of mergers and acquisitions you never know with whom you will be doing business with in the future, so burning any bridges, or telephone lines, would be unwise. Remember, in this global marketplace, some of the most powerful business relationships have been between people who have never seen each other.

### **What does telephone usage have to do with our work ethic skills?**

A lot, if you consider that too often we tend to forget that the person on the other end of the line is a human being. When we cannot see the person, it is easier to be rude to him or her. Anger, irritation, and frustration can be suggested by our tone of voice. Ignoring our calls and our messages suggests that we are unconcerned about our clients and customers. When we transfer callers without trying to address their concerns, we are showing a disinterested, apathetic attitude. These are just a few of the negative ways that our lack of telephone etiquette can impact our work ethics.



When we speak on the phone at work, we should always have a smile in our voice. It might sound silly, but this is easy to achieve if we actually do smile when we answer the phone. Our voices should be clear and distinct. We should show that we have a service attitude by offering to give assistance however and whenever we can. We should not transfer calls blindly without making sure that the receiving party can take care of the caller's problem.

We must also be discreet when using the phone. Think through any requests for information and give out only information that is really needed by the caller. For instance, If someone calls asking for your supervisor, you would not say, "Mr. Jones is playing golf this afternoon." That would be giving unnecessary information. You would say, "Mr. Jones will be in the office tomorrow morning. May I help you or have him return your call?"

We should avoid slang in telephone conversations. Instead of saying "yeah," say "certainly." Instead of saying "bye-bye," say "goodbye." Doesn't it sound better to say "I beg your pardon. Would you please repeat that?" than to say "Huh?"

When taking telephone messages for others, don't be in such a hurry that you do not get all necessary information. Incomplete messages are frustrating. In fact, it is a good idea to repeat the message to the caller so that you can be certain that it is accurate. If you have to put callers on hold to gather information to handle their call, always ask their permission to do so. Or you might offer to call them back if you think they will have to wait some time before you can get back with them. As a rule, nothing irritates a caller more than to be left on hold. When you return to the phone, apologize for having the caller wait for you.

Sometimes the caller is unhappy or angry about a situation. When this is the case, be very careful. A good tactic is to let the caller vent. When he or she is finished, you will hear a noticeable sigh at which point you can express your understanding of and concern for the situation. If you let the caller vent, he or she will then be ready to listen to you and to be reasonable as you try to get to the root of the problem. However, when the venting is nasty and involves foul language, it is permissible to warn the caller that if he/she does not refrain from using such language, you will hang up. If the ugliness does not cease, you do not have to listen.

In summary, when taking calls at work, you should remember to treat the callers as you would want to be treated yourself. Also, treat them as if they were standing in front of

you. Remember this: To any caller on the other end of that telephone line, you are your company. The responsibility of being your company's sole ambassador during that phone conversation should help you remember to use correct telephone techniques.

## Assignment: Telephone Responses Worksheet

**Directions:** Read the telephone responses on the worksheet in itsLearning. Write a better manner of responding.

For example, instead of saying "Mr. Evans is playing golf this afternoon." You should respond with, "I'm sorry. Mr. Evans is unavailable this afternoon. May I take a message and have Mr. Evans return your call at a convenient time?" While it may be true that Mr. Evans is playing golf, telling the caller that makes it sound like Mr. Evans is slacking on the job while in fact he may have comp time for the afternoon or is meeting with clients on the golf course. You should **always** offer take a message and to have the call returned at a later time. Be sure to ask the caller for a return phone number and a convenient time to receive the returned call.

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## Communications in the Workplace

What is Customer Service? Customer service is a company's ability to supply wants and needs to customers. Good customer service is the ability of an organization to constantly and consistently exceed the customer's expectations. Why is customer service important? Customer service gives positive impressions to present and future clientele. It keeps customers willing to come back again and it makes customers feel like they are the number one priority.

Steps to creating good customer service:

- Make eye contact and greet a customer to show you are available to provide them service as needed.
- You should have a good understanding of the product or service you provide, so that if a customer needs assistance, you are able to deliver a satisfactory response.
- Assume attentive posture to convey confidence and a helpful attitude.
- Smile often, if appropriate, or model the emotion that is suitable to the situation.

## Customer Complaints

A customer complaint is communication that alleges deficiencies during or after purchase. Appropriate response to customer complaints is essential in a business. A customer with a complaint that is resolved is more likely to return than a dissatisfied customer who doesn't voice any complaints.

Here are some steps to handle a customer complaint:

- Provide customers with the opportunity to complain.
- Give customers your full and undivided attention.
- Listen carefully and ask key questions to fully understand the complaint.
- Agree that a problem exists; never argue.
- Apologize for the problem and resolve the complaint.
- Thank the customer for bring the complaint to your attention.

The average customer with an unresolved complaint will tell 9 to 10 other people.

For every complaint received, the average company has 26 unhappy customers that don't complain.

### **Types of Customers**

The Aggressive Customer readily complains, often loudly and at length. Your response to the aggressive customer is to listen complete. Do not be aggressive in return. This customer does not respond well to excuses or reasons why the product or service was unsatisfactory. Always follow company policy with the aggressive customer.

The high-roller customer expects the absolute best and is willing to pay for it. She is likely to complain in a reasonable manner. You should always listen respectfully and actively ask questions to fully determine the cause of the complaint while following company policy.

## **Assignment: Honesty in the Workplace Discussion Board**



Click the picture to watch video

**Directions:** Think about the employer's perspective on cellphone and email usage in the workplace. How have email and cell phone communication impacted employees? What are some examples of dishonest workplace practices you have heard about or witnessed? What could employers do to increase honesty and reduce theft in the workplace? Be prepared to discuss your answers. Participate in the Honesty in the Workplace Discussion Board after watching the embedded video

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## Review



Click the picture and review questions from this lesson

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# Resources

If you are having problems viewing this page, opening videos, or accessing the URLs, the direct links are posted below. All assignments are submitted in itsLearning. If you have having problems, contact Mrs. Rush through the itsLearning email client.

Evolution of Business Communication video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7xVhjblXt8>

Design Guideline presentation: <http://www.mrsrush.net/communications/tips.pdf>

Active Listening presentation: <http://www.mrsrush.net/communications/alp.pdf>

Effective Communicaton in the Workplace video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRE-uciREO4>

Review: <https://www.examtime.com/en-US/p/913126>

Transcript: <http://mrsrush.net/communicatons/index.pdf>

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[Transcript of this lesson](#)