

part I



Beginning Communication Principles

Chapter 1: Business and Professional
Excellence in the Workplace

Chapter 2: Verbal and Nonverbal
Communication

Chapter 3: Listening



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Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Define professional excellence and communication
2. Identify business and professional communication contexts
3. Understand the components of the communication model
4. Identify and explain the four KEYS to communication in the workplace
5. Discuss communication and professional excellence from an ethical perspective

chapter 1

Business and Professional Excellence in the Workplace

Vicky Oliver believes that new members of the workforce need some guidance about proper etiquette in a professional business setting.

As a career consultant, Oliver criticizes instances of new employees' texting during orientation or playing games on their tablets during business meetings. Another practice Oliver takes issue with is professional etiquette in the elevator. Too often, she notices employees wearing headphones or listening to music in this setting. "Wearing earplugs is like putting a Do Not Disturb sign on you," she says. It sends a message to colleagues that you want to be left alone, an unfriendly gesture at best" (Adams, 2010). Oliver discusses these points as part of the greater matter of business and professional excellence in the workplace. Effective and socially appropriate business communication is crucial in presenting yourself as a viable and wanted member of a professional organization.

Standards of business and professional excellence constantly change with the times. With the influx of new gadgets such as smartphones, tablets, and other portable devices, it is important to understand how to use these devices appropriately in a business setting. Spending too much time on your electronic devices can make you appear distant or awkward to your coworkers. Even worse, it can create the perception that you are focusing on something other than the business at hand, leading to labels such as "lazy" or "unfocused." Respecting your colleagues' professional and personal boundaries is also important; barging into someone's office or cubicle unannounced

can negatively affect that person's perception of you. Even in an open office, people like to claim "their" space, and respecting that claim is crucial to gaining the respect and appreciation of your coworkers.

Business and professional excellence is an idea that most workers will grapple with throughout their entire careers. There is no concrete formula for achieving workplace excellence, but there are tools available that can help individuals find out on their own what is acceptable in their unique workplaces. In this chapter, we will provide an overview of your study of business and professional excellence, from landing the job to work-life balance.

Reading about Vicky Oliver's experience may have caused you to stop and think for a moment about your own communication and the role communication can and will play in your successes and failures in the workplace. You may ask yourself, "Will I be able to get an interview? Will I be considered for a promotion at work? Will I fit in at my new job? What's the best way to run a meeting? What are the qualities of a professional presentation? How should I respond to negative coworkers?" The preceding questions are commonly asked by people entering the workplace for the first time, as well as by people changing job titles, duties, or careers. It seems that regardless of the position or the industry in which you desire to work, there is one thing that will make or break the experience: communication. So welcome to the world of business and professional communication. As you study business and professional communication over the course of this semester, we encourage you, regardless of your major, to take these principles and objectives to heart. After all, communication is the key to professional excellence, and professional excellence is the key to success.

Let us introduce ourselves as your coauthors. We approach this project with years of experience teaching basic communication courses such as public speaking, business and professional communication, interviewing, teamwork and leadership, organizational communication, and public relations. Balanced with our teaching experience and expert knowledge in the communication field are years of professional consulting and real-world experience in a variety of industries, including retail, manufacturing, shipping, health care, government, education, and more. We know firsthand the communication challenges you will face and the communication skills you will need to succeed. Based on our teaching and professional experience, we wrote this book for you, the student as developing professional.

When designing this text, we talked to professors and students alike, trying to get a sense of their needs. Two themes emerged from those conversations. First, instructors and professors are frustrated because students do not read their books. As a result, class discussions, exam scores, and student learning suffer. On the flipside, students are frustrated because they find most books extremely expensive and full of information they deem unimportant. Repeatedly, students asked, "Why can't professors just put the stuff I need to know on a PowerPoint slide?" Our goal when writing this text is to address both problems/needs. We have tried to develop a text that speaks directly to you as a student who desires success after graduation. We realize that those of you taking this class and reading this text are interested in different professions and are in different stages of your

professional lives. Given the array of professional journeys taking place in the lives of you the readers, we have included topics that will be valuable to everyone. The topic areas of the text will focus on *beginning communication principles*, *entering the workplace*, *developing in the workplace*, *excelling in the workplace*, *presenting in the workplace*, and *surviving challenges in the workplace*. We explore the experiences you will face as you transition from student to professional and, eventually, to leader. You will come to understand the role of communication in successfully handling situations such as job interviewing, providing feedback to supervisors, and working in teams. As an additional feature, this text not only discusses the greatest challenges we all will face in the modern workplace but also provides communication strategies for overcoming those challenges. Issues such as excelling under the pressure of increasingly competitive customer service demands, managing emotions when dealing with irate customers, overcoming stress and burnout, and managing difficult people are just a few of the topics covered. We hope that this approach will engage you as both a student and a reader.

Business and Professional Excellence in Context

The text's driving theme is **professional excellence**. To demonstrate excellence as a professional, you must demonstrate excellence as a communicator. Excellence does not equate to merely communicating a message effectively or simply demonstrating communication competencies. Professional excellence means being recognized for your skills as a communicator and serving as a role model to others. Before you begin your journey with this important topic, it is important to understand some fundamental areas of communication, such as verbal communication, nonverbal communication, and listening. Additionally, it's important to understand the business and professional contexts that will receive specific attention in this book. The business and professional contexts you will explore are beginning communication principles (i.e., verbal and nonverbal communication and listening), the job-seeking process, workplace culture and diversity, interpersonal communication, team communication, communication and technology, written communication, leadership, presenting as a professional, and work-life balance. These are the contexts that will no doubt shape your experience as a professional. Keep in mind that communication is at the core of the business and professional contexts you will study in this course. Let's take a look at each one in more detail.



When you hear the word *professional*, who or what comes to mind? Do a suit and a tie equate to professional excellence, or is it something more?



Where would you begin to search for jobs in the industry or profession in which you're interested?

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Chapter 2 explores the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication as the foundation of beginning principles needed to guide your study of business and professional communication across contexts. Verbal communication is both our words and our verbal fillers (e.g., *um*, *like*). Verbal messages are created through language. Effective communication involves accurate interpretations of others' verbal messages as meaning is cocreated. Further, nonverbal communication (sometimes referred to as body language) includes all those ways we communicate without words. Both verbal and nonverbal communication skills are explored in this book using the KEYS process.

Listening

Chapter 3 connects listening to your study of business and professional communication. Effective listening is central to fostering interpersonal relationships with coworkers, leaders, and clients. Effective listening can impact one's relationship satisfaction and can be a determining factor in whether someone is an effective communicator. Listening, in addition to other communication abilities, is a likely predictor of who gets promoted or who receives other relevant rewards such as status and power. In all, listening is a beginning communication skill or basic principle important to your

study of business and professional communication. You will learn the importance of listening across business and professional contexts using the KEYS process.

Résumés, Interviews, and Negotiations

The context you will study in Chapter 4 is job seeking. Our approach is to provide the information you'll need to conduct a comprehensive job search and know yourself in terms of professional goals and the type of work environment you desire. Job seeking is one context in which business and professional excellence is critical to your success.

Getting to Know the Diverse Workplace

Once you've landed the job, you'll enter a diverse workplace context. You will no doubt have coworkers whose views of the world and ways of living are different from yours. Further, it can take time to learn the organizational culture in terms of your role and how you fit in. As Chapter 5 explores, getting to know the diverse workplace goes beyond new employee orientation. The diverse workplace context requires professional excellence

fostered by careful self-inventory, adjustment, and mutual respect.

Interpersonal Communication at Work

Central to your personal and professional growth in any career are the relationships and overall rapport you'll have with your boss, coworkers, and clients. Chapter 6 reviews the importance of **interpersonal communication** in common business and professional encounters. While interpersonal communication (also referred to as people skills) helps you build relationships in your personal and professional life, it's critical to be aware of the challenges that these skills can help you survive (e.g., conflict, difficult coworkers and clients).



The handshake is an important example of nonverbal communication experienced in many business and professional situations.

Strengthening Teams and Conducting Meetings

Another common experience for professionals across industries is working in a team context. You've probably heard other people use terms such as *team player*, *team skills*, and *team building* in reference to job performance. Working in a team context can be both a rewarding and exhausting experience for any professional. Chapter 7 pays specific attention to the team context you'll likely encounter in your professional life, as well as strategies that foster professional excellence in team communication. We will also focus on the skills needed to run effective meetings, a primary tool for team communication.

Technology in the Workplace

Technology in business and professional contexts is central to communication, planning, marketing, networking, organization, research, and the like. Technology allows you to communicate faster than in years past with the use of e-mail, personal digital assistants, and a host of other devices designed to make the exchange of information in business instant rather than delayed. Chapter 8 examines the impact of communication and technology on business and professional contexts. As technology enables you to excel at work with faster information exchange and interaction, it's important to be aware of the problems and misunderstandings that can occur as the result of various technology-based communication channels. Additionally, we will discuss the role of social media as a professional tool and a professional barrier.

Business and Professional Writing

Chapter 9 examines written communication as it connects to professional excellence. As you enter business and professional contexts that require you to use written communication,

it is important for you to make decisions that will ensure professional excellence. Written communication can challenge professionals in a variety of contexts. How do I select the correct format to get the message out? Is it appropriate for me to send this document via e-mail? What tone should I strive for in this message? These are only a few of the questions about written communication that you may encounter in your career.

Leadership and Conflict Management

Chapter 10 reviews the role of leadership in business and professional contexts. In order to excel as a leader, you must understand what leadership is and get to know what style of leader you are and if your style works best in the business and professional context in which you're working. Further, this chapter explores the challenges leaders experience, as well as strategies for leading difficult people and managing workplace conflict.

Presentations

As a professional, you will enter situations that require you to give presentations. The presentation context arises in many forms (e.g., informative, persuasive, motivational, and team presentations). Chapters 11, 12, and 13 explore the presentation skills essential to your professional success. When you're faced with an opportunity to give a formal presentation, pitch a product, present research findings, run a meeting, conduct a morning huddle, acknowledge outstanding employees, or motivate your team in difficult times, view that

speaking situation as a chance to communicate professional excellence.



As much as anyone wants to be successful professionally, it's important to think about personal and family life, too. Unfortunately, maintaining balance can be difficult.

Work–Life Balance

Chapter 14 looks at how the various experiences in your professional and personal life can be in conflict with one another. This tension can present quite a challenge, which can lead to stress and burnout. We emphasize the importance of work–life balance, explore the triggers that cause imbalance, and present communication strategies that enable you to sustain professional excellence and foster meaningful and successful relationships in your personal life.

Present in each of these contexts is the KEYS process.

Understanding the KEYS Process

You will learn to demonstrate professional excellence by using KEYS, a communication process designed to enhance your ability to critically assess and then improve your

communication skills. By following the KEYS process, you will learn to utilize your communication strengths and develop your weaknesses, deliver audience-centered messages, understand the communication context, and reflect on your communication with the intention and ability to improve continually.

Effective business and professional communication is central to your success when entering the workplace for the first time, developing your skills at a job you already have, excelling in your career, or managing challenges that may come your way. But you may be wondering, “How can I master this multifaceted, multidimensional skill? How can I make sense of all this information and really make it useful in my career so I get something practical out of it, something that can enhance my business and professional communication skills and improve my life?” The “how” you are looking for is available to you in this course. Studying communication will enhance your skills as a professional. Doing well in this course will afford you the tools needed for professional excellence. Furthermore, making the KEYS process a part of your communication interactions will continue your development long after this course ends.

What is the KEYS process? The KEYS process (see Figure 1.1) is central to your development as a professional, meaning that we encourage you to personalize it as you continue to expand your understanding of business and professional communication. KEYS is an acronym for **K**now yourself, **E**valuate the professional context, **Y**our communication interaction occurs, and **S**tep back and reflect.

The organizing feature of this text is the KEYS process, a process designed to develop critical thinking skills and make you a more reflexive communicator with the ability to adapt and continually improve. What we strive for in this book is a balance of theory and practice—an approach that emphasizes skill development based on knowledge and understanding. Review Figure 1.1 to familiarize yourself with the KEYS process. We will

Figure 1.1 KEYS to Communication in the Workplace



1. **K**now yourself: Challenging people to assess their skills as communicators actively and then develop strategies to utilize their strengths and develop their weaknesses



2. **E**valuate the professional context: Teaching people to address the needs of their audience proactively and understand the constraints of the professional communication context, as well as developing their skills for communicating with a variety of audiences and contexts



3. **Y**our communication interaction occurs: Asking people to monitor their own verbal and nonverbal cues in addition to the cues of the audience within each communication interaction



4. **S**tep back and reflect: Examining the effectiveness of verbal and nonverbal messages we convey to others and the overall success of various communication interactions and then taking what we've learned and starting the process again; developing the ability to continually adapt and improve

use this feature to personally engage, prepare, and improve human communication in the variety of situations we all have encountered or will encounter in our lives as professionals, regardless of industry.

Defining Communication

As you begin your study, it's important to define what communication means. Communication has been defined in many ways, but here's the definition we prefer: **Human communication** is the process of understanding our experiences and the experiences of others through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages (Beebe, Beebe, & Ivy, 2007; Ivy & Wahl, 2009; Regenbogen et al., 2012). People come to understand that communication in everyday experiences is the essential process and skill that helps them make sense of things in both personal and professional contexts.

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

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

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

The Importance of Communication

Regardless of your major or the career path you eventually follow, effective communication will be essential to your success in the workplace (Gray, 2010). Your fellow students understand the value and importance of communication in their careers. Of 116 students surveyed at a southwestern university, 97% agreed that communication is a valuable skill and 88% saw themselves using oral presentation skills in their careers (Mallard & Quintanilla, 2007). Further support for the importance of communication in your professional careers comes from business and industry focus groups. In 2008, the U.S. Department

Table 1.1 Communication Competencies List (U.S. Department of Labor/Business and Industry)

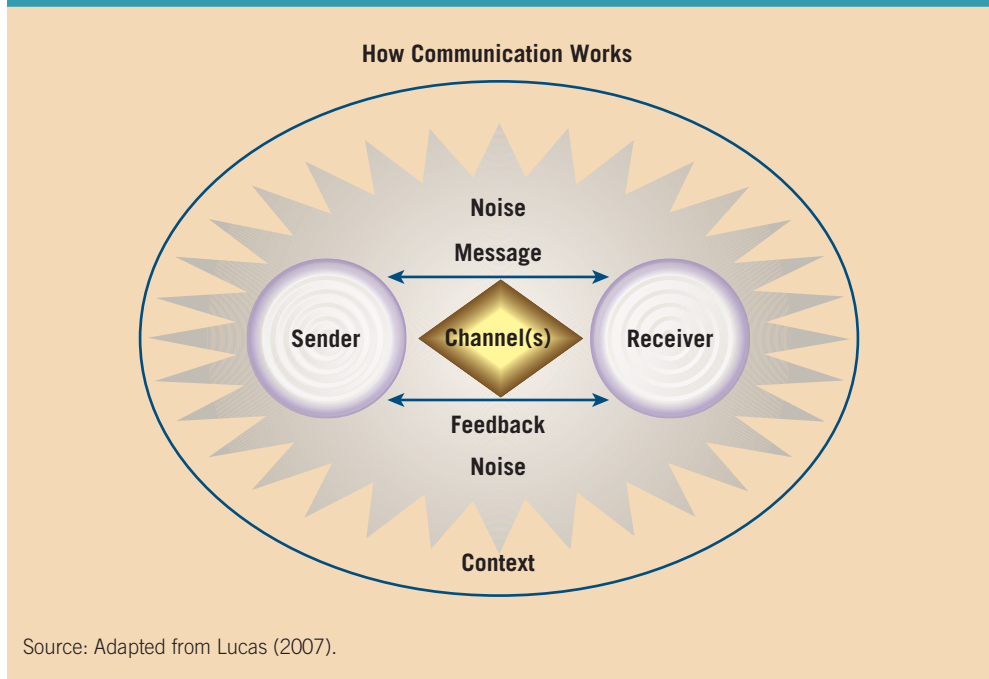
<i>Personal effectiveness competencies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phone interviews—exhibit personality and people skills• Personal appearance—professionalism• Must come to work and be on time• One-on-one people skills—social skills must be sharp• Sensitivity to diversity in the workplace• Must pass criminal background check• Integrity is critical• Avoid inappropriate phone calls/text messages at work
<i>Teamwork</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must be able to work as a team member• Play well with others• Respect others in the workplace
<i>Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and deliver presentations using appropriate media• Conduct meetings• Interpret nonverbal behaviors to enhance communication• Use politically correct/appropriate language• Share information effectively, small-group communication• Be able to deal with the public• Do not use text messaging—type abbreviations in e-mails and conversation• Phone-answering skills
<i>General skills desired by employers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problem-solving skills• Writing skills• Be willing to work your way to the top• Communication skills

of Labor reviewed the results and presented a list of important job skills and communication competencies. Take a moment to review Table 1.1, in which we've summarized the competencies. You'll notice that all the competencies listed in the table are connected to your study of business and professional communication in this course.

Communication: A Complex Process

Communication is a complex process (see Figure 1.2). You see that the communication process consists of a number of elements, all of which are in play every time you communicate. Those who demonstrate professional excellence consider these elements every time they communicate. By the end of this semester, so will you. Let's examine each of these elements in more detail.

Figure 1.2 Communication Model



Sender and Receiver

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

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

Message and Feedback

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

To say that you cannot *not* communicate is *not* to say that everything is communication. Rather, it means that messages have both a verbal and nonverbal component. In the previous example, Pat did not say anything verbally, but he did send a message nonverbally when he checked his watch. What was his message? That is not clear. He may have been giving a nonverbal cue that your wedding story was too long. He may

have had an appointment and needed to be on his way. Only Pat knows for sure. The point is, regardless of whether or not Pat intended to provide a message, he did, and you responded in accordance with the meaning you took from that message.

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



Professionals send and receive verbal and nonverbal messages in a variety of contexts.

Channel

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

Context

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



Your Communication Interaction Advisory Committee

Read the passage below and then answer the questions. As you read, think about ways the KEYS approach could help you improve **your communication interaction** if you were in Bruce's position.

Bruce had been an executive with the company for almost 10 years. During that time, he had set up many advisory committees, designed to allow employees on all levels to give feedback regarding important decisions. These committees had been well received, and employees actively sought opportunities to serve on them.

Most recently, Bruce began some advisory search committees. Those serving on the advisory search committees reviewed applications and made a list of the top 20 candidates. Then the list was forwarded to Bruce. He then conducted the interviews by himself and did the hiring. At times, as many as 100 applications had to be reviewed for a single position, so it was a labor-intensive process.

Committee members had asked if they could rank the candidates or give input individually and/or as a group, but Bruce felt that was not necessary since the committee was only advisory. He wanted to avoid conflict between group members over who should be hired. He also wanted to eliminate the possibility of a conflict between his decision and a committee decision. As the executive, he felt it was important for him to make the final decision, so he did not wish to consider their comments. After 6 months, employees stopped volunteering for the search committees.

Questions to Consider

1. How did eliminating feedback from the communication model impact this interaction?
2. Why are employees not willing to participate anymore?
3. Would you be willing to participate?
4. Using the KEYS process, how should Bruce handle this situation differently?

Noise

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

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

Communication Apprehension

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

Types of Communication Apprehension

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

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



What experiences have you had speaking into a microphone? Did using a microphone increase your communication apprehension?



Know Yourself Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

The following personal report will help you gain a better understanding of your own communication apprehension. Answer each question thoughtfully and then reflect on the results. How can this knowledge help you be a better communicator?

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)

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

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

- _____ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
- _____ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.
- _____ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
- _____ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
- _____ 5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
- _____ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
- _____ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
- _____ 8. Usually, I am comfortable when I have to participate in a meeting.
- _____ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called on to express an opinion at a meeting.
- _____ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
- _____ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
- _____ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
- _____ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
- _____ 14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
- _____ 15. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
- _____ 16. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
- _____ 17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
- _____ 18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
- _____ 19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
- _____ 20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
- _____ 21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
- _____ 22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
- _____ 23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
- _____ 24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

SCORING:

Group discussion: 18 – (scores for Items 2, 4, and 6) + (scores for Items 1, 3, and 5)

Meetings: 18 – (scores for Items 8, 9, and 12) + (scores for Items 7, 10, and 11)

Interpersonal: 18 – (scores for Items 14, 16, and 17) + (scores for Items 13, 15, and 18)

Public speaking: 18 – (scores for Items 19, 21, and 23) + (scores for Items 20, 22, and 24)

Group discussion score: _____

Interpersonal score: _____

Meetings score: _____

Public speaking score: _____

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

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

Causes of Communication Apprehension

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

1. *Novelty*: If the type of communication situation, such as giving a speech or running a meeting, is not something you do every day, it can create apprehension until you become familiar with this task or situation.
2. *Formality*: Preparing and organizing something to be in the spotlight can promote the feeling of formality that makes you nervous or apprehensive.
3. *Subordinate status*: If someone in charge of you, such as a manager at work, is evaluating your presentation, his or her higher status and evaluation can cause anxiety.
4. *Peer evaluation*: How are my coworkers going to respond to me? These questions hit some concerns you may have about your peers evaluating you. These concerns can in turn cause apprehension.
5. *Dissimilarity*: Sometimes you may feel different from the audience. Having nothing in common with the audience causes anxiety.
6. *Conspicuousness*: Feeling as though you are in the spotlight and all eyes are on you can certainly cause anxiety.
7. *Lack of attention*: When you feel as though a listener or the audience is bored and uninterested in your message or presentation, you may begin to feel apprehension.
8. *Prior history*: Many people have had a bad experience during a communication interaction, such as an interview, presentation, or meeting. This negative experience can create anxiety the next time you find yourself in a similar situation.

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

Communication Ethics

With professional excellence as our goal, we believe that ethical behavior must serve as a foundation for people to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. Central to professional excellence is communication ethics. **Ethics** is the general term for the discussion, determination, and deliberation processes that attempt to decide what is right or wrong, what others should or should not do, and what is considered appropriate in our individual, communal, and professional lives (By, Burnes, & Oswick, 2012; Japp, Meister, & Japp, 2005; Johannesen, Valde, & Whedbee, 2008). What considerations or factors help shape our ethical decisions as professionals? **Ethical considerations** are the variety of factors



Evaluate the Professional Context John's Presentation Problem

Read the following passage about John and answer the questions that come after.

John gave a big presentation today at work. He had spent hours and hours working on his PowerPoint slides. They were loaded with information—lots of statistics and charts. In fact, he had more than 50 slides in his 20-minute speech. When he began speaking, he was a little nervous. Because he had spent most of his time working on the slides, he did not have much time to practice. Still, he had the slides to read, and he thought the presentation went well. However, his audience seemed uninterested when he was speaking, and no one approached him after the speech to praise him for a job well done. Why didn't his preparation pay off for this particular professional presentation context?

Questions to Consider

1. Given the professional context, what would you have done the same and/or different if you were in John's position?
2. Do you think John accurately evaluated the context? Why or why not?
3. How could the KEYS process help John improve his presentation decision in the future?



Taking part in something as common as office gossip is an ethical consideration. Is the gossip true? Does it show respect for boundaries? What does it say about your integrity?

important for us to consider in any scenario in which we're making a decision, conducting an evaluation, or making a selection (Bok, 1989, 1999; Carter, 1996; Japp et al., 2005; Mathenge, 2011; Tannen, 1998). Ethical considerations vary from person to person, and it is not always as simple as the black-and-white world of right and wrong. For example, you may experience **ethical dilemmas**, situations that do not seem to present clear choices between right and wrong or good and evil. If you are asked to do something illegal, then it may be easy to make a decision. "No, I will not do something illegal." But what if it is not illegal? What if everyone else does it? What if it is just bending the rules a little bit? What follows are five questions we believe you should always consider as an ethical communicator.

Many ethical considerations are connected to our values and virtues. **Values** are moral principles or rules that determine ethical behaviors. Values are often articulated in should or should-not statements. Sometimes values are presented as statements of what a group believes or as lists of rules people intend to honor. Many readers of this text will take jobs in industries that ask all employees to support **organizational values**, specific principles or guidelines such as safety, teamwork, integrity, or ownership that are typically outlined in support of any given organizational mission or goal. For example, some health care systems and private education institutions ask employees to support certain religious values. Regardless of



Step Back and Reflect Ethical Considerations

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

Lying: Are you telling the truth?

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

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

Aggressive communication: Are you communicating with others void of power abuse and aggression? Are you communicating with others in a dignified and respectful manner? Are you communicating with mutual respect and open dialogue?

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

Step Back and Reflect

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

industry, organizational values address both the experience of the people working for the company and the experience of customers with service and product quality. To minimize ethical dilemmas in your professional career, seek employment with organizations that share your values.

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

KEYS for Excellence in the Workplace

We opened this chapter with attention to Vicky Oliver's concerns about the lack of professionalism seen in a variety of business contexts today. In response to Vicky's call for workplace excellence, we reviewed fundamental information to begin our study of business and professional communication. We defined human communication and provided a practi-



Ethical Connection

Throughout the text, each chapter will touch on particular issues in ethical communication. The topics covered in each chapter are directly related to business and professional excellence. Please read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

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

Questions to Consider

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



Know Yourself



Evaluate the Professional Context



Your Communication Interaction Occurs



Step Back and Reflect

cal communication model. We defined professional excellence: being recognized for your skills as a communicator, serving as a role model to those around you, recognizing your strengths and developing your weaknesses, being audience centered, understanding the context, and possessing the ability to adapt and continually improve.

Next, we situated our topic of study within the workplace as a communication context and discussed

communication apprehension as a common obstacle for professionals. We introduced the KEYS process as a way for professionals to develop their communication. *Knowing yourself* means actively assessing your skills as a communicator and then developing strategies to utilize your strengths and develop your weaknesses. *Evaluating the professional context* entails proactively addressing the needs of your audience and understanding the constraints of the communication situation, as well as developing your skills for communicating with a variety of audiences and situations. *Your communication interaction* requires you to monitor your own verbal and nonverbal cues, in addition to the cues from the audience within each communication interaction. *Stepping back and reflecting* encourages you to examine the effectiveness of verbal and nonverbal messages you

convey to others and the overall success of various communication interactions and then take what you've learned and start the process again, developing the ability to adapt and improve continually.

This introductory chapter has provided you with an understanding of some of the basic terminology and the importance of communication excellence. In the second chapter, we explore some of the most important verbal and nonverbal skills needed to enter the workplace or, put simply, how to put the KEYS process in action.

Executive Summary

Now that you have finished reading this chapter, you can do the following.

Define professional excellence and communication:

- *Professional excellence* means being recognized for your skills as a communicator and serving as a role model to others (p. 5).
- *Human communication* is the process of understanding our experiences and the experiences of others through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages (p. 5).
- Regardless of your major or the career path you eventually follow, effective communication will be essential to your success in the workplace (p. 10).

Identify business and professional communication contexts:

- The *business* and *professional contexts* you will explore are the job-seeking process, workplace culture and diversity, interpersonal communication, team communication, communication and technology, written communication, leadership, presenting as a professional, and work-life balance (p. 5).

Understand the components of the communication model:

- The person initiating the exchange is the *sender*, while the person listening to the exchange is the *receiver* (p. 12).
- Generally speaking, the process of sending and receiving communication is that a *message* is communicated (p. 13).
- When you are acting as the sender, you *encode* your messages with verbal and nonverbal cues to help others understand what you mean (p. 12).
- When the receivers of your messages respond or *decode* your message, you find out if your message was successfully transferred (p. 12).
- *Feedback* is communication sent from the receiver back to the sender (p. 13).
- The *channel* (p. 13) is the method by which you send your message (voice, phone, e-mail, etc.).
- *Context* refers to the location, time, and occasion where communication occurs (p. 13).
- *Noise* can be either external or internal. *External noise* includes distractions such as audible talking during a meeting, ruffling of

papers, or a cell phone going off in the next cubicle. *Internal noise* encompasses any internal condition or state that interferes with the communicator's ability to focus on the message (p. 14).

Define verbal and nonverbal communication.

Identify and explain the four KEYS to communication in the workplace:

- *Know yourself*: challenging people to assess their skills as communicators actively and then develop strategies to utilize their strengths and develop their weaknesses (p. 9).
- *Evaluate the professional context*: teaching people to address the needs of their audience proactively and understand the constraints of the professional communication context, as well as developing their skills for communicating with a variety of audiences and contexts (p. 9).
- *Your communication interaction occurs*: asking people to monitor their own verbal and nonverbal cues in addition to the cues of the audience within each communication interaction (p. 9).
- *Step back and reflect*: examining the effectiveness of verbal and nonverbal messages we convey to others and the overall success of various communication interactions and then taking what we've learned and starting the process again; developing the ability to adapt and improve continually (p. 9).

Discuss communication and professional excellence from an ethical perspective:

- *Ethics* is the general term for the discussion, determination, and deliberation processes that attempt to decide what is right or wrong, what others should or should not do, and what is considered appropriate in our individual, communal, and professional lives (p. 17).
- *Ethical considerations* are the variety of factors important for us to consider in any scenario in which we're making a decision, conducting an evaluation, or making a selection (p. 18).
- *Ethical dilemmas* are situations that do not seem to present clear choices between right and wrong or good and evil (p. 18).

Discussion Questions

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

Terms to Remember

audience-based communication apprehension (p. 15)	ethical considerations (p. 17)	noise (p. 14)
channel (p. 13)	ethical dilemmas (p. 18)	organizational values (p. 18)
communication apprehension (p. 15)	ethics (p. 17)	professional excellence (p. 5)
communication bravado (p. 10)	external noise (p. 14)	receiver (p. 12)
context (p. 13)	feedback (p. 13)	sender (p. 12)
context-based communication apprehension (p. 15)	human communication (p. 10)	situational communication apprehension (p. 15)
decode (p. 12)	internal noise (p. 14)	trait communication apprehension (p. 15)
encode (p. 12)	interpersonal communication (p. 7)	values (p. 18)
	message (p. 13)	

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