

5.2: Ready, Set, Communicate

Learning Objectives

- Understand the elements of effective business communication.
- Recognize the implications of different types of verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Learn how your dress communicates in an interview and the workplace.
- Discuss how technology tools can help a salesperson manage customer relationships.

Have you ever had one of these communications be misinterpreted? You meant one thing, but your friend thought you meant something else?

- A text message.
- A voice mail.
- A passing comment.
- A Facebook post.
- An unreturned phone call.

Sometimes, the miscommunication can result in the confusion of a meeting time or a place to get together. Or worse, it can be entirely misunderstood and may have a negative impact on your relationship.

Communication, the exchange of information or ideas between sender and receiver, is a challenging aspect in your personal life, at school, and especially in selling. Today, it's even more complex with business being conducted around the world and with varying communication methods. In this constant, high-speed business environment, communication blunders can cost you more than you might think. Did you ever hear the saying, "You only have one chance to make a good first impression"? It couldn't be truer when it comes to communication: The first two seconds of communication are so important that it takes another four minutes to add 50 percent more information to an impression—positive or negative—within that communication. Communication has often been referred to as a **soft skill**, which includes other competencies such as social graces, personality traits, language abilities, and ability to work with other people. Soft skills also encompass **emotional intelligence**, which Adele B. Lynn, in her book *The EQ Interview: Finding Employees with High Emotional Intelligence*, defines as "a person's ability to manage herself as well as her relationship with others so she can live her intentions." "Interviewing for Emotional Intelligence," *Selling Power Hiring & Recruiting eNewsletter*, October 15, 2008. But in today's business world, communication has become part of the new "**hard skills**" category, a technical job requirement, because of the critical role that it plays in business. Patricia M. Buhler, "Managing in the New Millennium: Six Tips to More Effective Communication," *Supervision* 70, no. 7 (July 2009): 19. According to Peter Post, great-grandson of the late Emily Post, "Your skills can get you in the door; your people skills are what can seal the deal." The Emily Post Institute (accessed July 13, 2009).

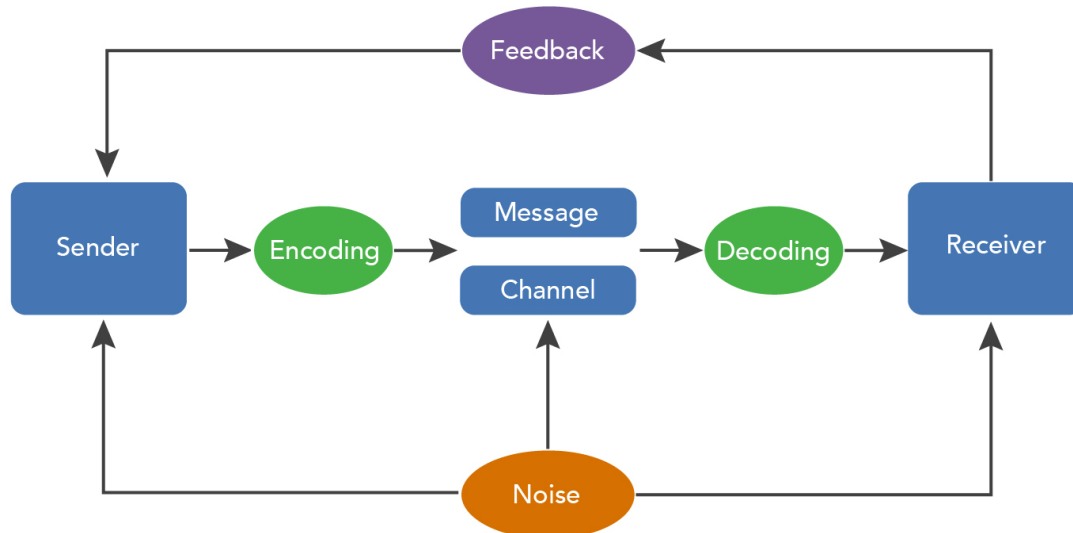
Misunderstood = Miscommunication

In Chapter 3 you learned about the importance of relationships. In fact, it is almost impossible to be in sales without developing relationships inside your organization and with your customers. Your relationship skills build trust, allow you to be a true partner, and help solve your customer's problems; both internal trust and external communication are essential keys to your ability to deliver on your promises. How are these qualities intrinsically related? The way in which you communicate can determine the level of trust that your colleagues or customers have in you. Gail Fann Thomas, Roxanne Zoliln, and Jackie L. Harman, "The Central Role of Communication in Developing Trust and Its Effect on Employee Involvement," *Journal of Business Communication* 46, no. 3 (July 2009): 287.

Just like relationships are the cornerstone of trust, communication is the foundation of relationships. But it's difficult to establish and develop relationships; it takes work and a lot of clear communication. You might think that sounds simple, but consider this: Nearly 75 percent of communications that are received are interpreted incorrectly. At the same time, interestingly, many people consider themselves good communicators. The telling disconnect occurs because people tend to assume that they know what other people mean or people assume that others know what they mean. This is compounded by the fact that people tend to hear what they want to hear—that is, a person may interpret elements of a conversation in such a way that the taken meanings contribute to his already established beliefs. When you put these assumptions together, communication can easily become "miscommunication." Patricia M. Buhler, "Managing in the New Millennium: Six Tips to More Effective Communication," *Supervision* 70, no. 7 (July 2009): 19.

The Communication Model

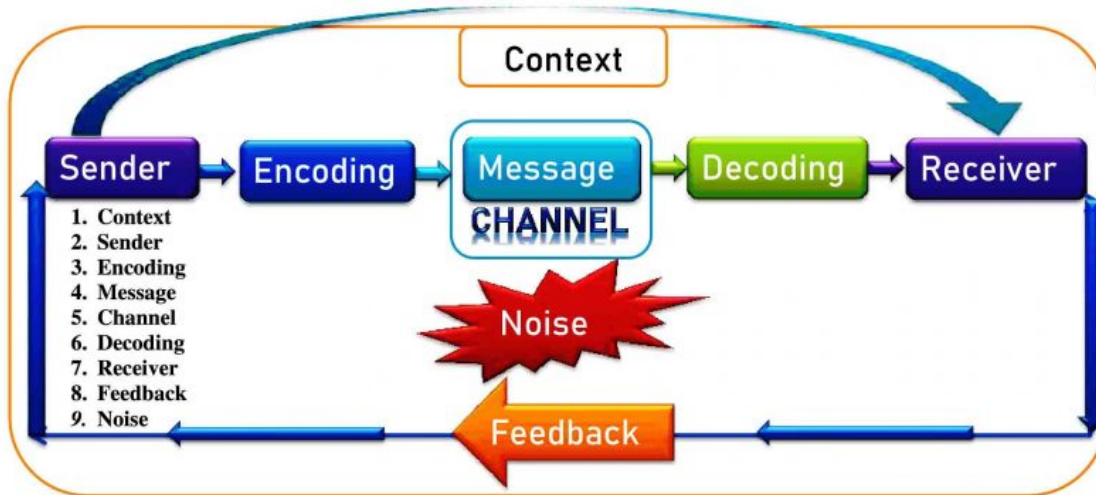
The standard model of communication has evolved based on two parties—the **sender** and the **receiver**—exchanging information or ideas. The model includes major processes and functions categorized as **encoding**, **decoding**, **response**, and **feedback**. In addition, the model accounts for **noise**, which symbolizes anything that might disrupt the sending or receiving of a message. George E. Belch and Michael A. Belch, *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective*, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin, 2009), 146.



The model helps describe exactly how communication takes place. For example, if you send a text message to your friend to ask him if he wants to go a movie, you are the source, or sender, of the message. You translated or encoded your message into text characters. A personal digital assistant (PDA) such as a BlackBerry, iPhone, or cell phone is the **channel**, or the method by which you communicated your message. Chances are, if your friend does not have his PDA or cell phone with him, your message will not reach him, and you might miss the movie. So in this example, the PDA or cell phone is the channel. When your friend, the receiver, reads the message, he decodes it or determines what you meant to communicate, and then he responds. If he was talking to another friend while he was reading your text message and didn't see the time the movie started, that conversation would be considered noise because it would be interfering with the communication of your message. Noise interferes with communication or causes distraction, whether it is heard or seen. When your friend responds to you by saying that he wants to go see the movie, he is providing feedback (or a response to your message). Figure 5.2.2 shows this example applied to the communication model.

The same thing can happen in a selling situation. For example, if you call a prospect to set up a meeting, you are the sender. The message is the meeting information (e.g., date, time, and place) that you encode into words. The channel is the telephone, and the receiver is the prospect. It sounds easy enough. Assume, however, that the prospect responds to you and agrees to the meeting. But because he was checking his e-mails while he was talking to you (which is noise), he puts the wrong time on his calendar. When you come for the appointment, he's out of the office, and your sales call doesn't take place. Now you have to start the communication process all over again. This is only an example of simply setting up a meeting. Now imagine the challenges if you started explaining the features and benefits of a complex product or negotiating a contract. You can see why understanding the communication process is so important in selling.

Figure



Communication Process Example

✓ Did You Know...?

- Positive e-mail messages are likely to be interpreted as neutral.
- Neutral e-mail messages are likely to be perceived as negative.
- People who send e-mails overrate their ability to communicate feelings.
- There is a gap between how a sender *feels* when he writes the e-mail and the way the emotional content is communicated that can cause an error in decoding on the part of the receiver.
- One simple e-mail can lead to a communication debacle if the e-mail is not clearly written and well thought out from the recipient's point of view. Jeremy Dean, "Avoid Email Miscommunication," PsyBlog, <http://www.spring.org.uk/2007/10/avoid-email-miscommunication.php> (accessed July 15, 2009).

Effective Communication

How do you avoid the pitfalls of poor communication and build productive business relationships? It's best to always communicate in a timely manner and in the method that your customer prefers. That may be easier said than done. Here are six tips that can help you increase your chances of making your communications effective.

Tip 1: Empathy Is Essential

One of the key elements of being a good communicator is having empathy. That means thinking about your communication from the receiver's point of view. It's focusing on what *she* wants to learn as a result of your communication, not what you want to tell her. Empathy is about demonstrating that you care about the other person's situation. Think about when you received your acceptance letter from your college; the letter probably mentioned what an exciting time it is in your life. The author of the letter demonstrated empathy because she focused on the situation from your perspective. A purely factual letter, without empathy, might have said that you were accepted and that now the school can make their budget since they met their enrollment goal. That would be quite a different letter and would make you feel very different (and probably not very welcome). Although it's always best to be

candid, you should deliver information from the receiver's point of view and address her concerns. Steve Adubato, "Empathy Is Essential to Effective Communication." (accessed July 14, 2009).

Empathy is an integral part of emotional connection, one of the elements of a brand that you learned about in Chapter 1. (Keep in mind that when you are in sales, you *are* the brand to the customer.) It is especially important to have an emotional connection and empathy when apologizing to customers. Chances are the customer is already angry, or at least disappointed, when you are not able to deliver as expected. You can express empathy in your communications by saying or writing, "You have every right to be upset. I understand how you must feel. I apologize for the late delivery. Let's work on a new process that will help prevent it from happening again."

Tip 2: Think Before You Communicate

Quick responses, whether verbal or via electronic methods, can be less effective than those that are considered and can even cause misunderstanding. Although a timely response is critical, it's worth a few minutes to think about exactly what you want to say before you say it (or type it).

Tip 3: Be Clear

It seems obvious, but not everyone is clear in his communications. Sometimes, people are trying to avoid "bad news" or trying to avoid taking a stand on a topic. It's always best to avoid confusion and clearly say what you mean by framing your message in a way that is easily understood by all receivers. It's also a good idea to avoid **buzz words (or jargon)**—those words, phrases, or acronyms that are used only in your company. If they can't be avoided, explain them in the same communication terms. You should also avoid jargon on your résumé and cover letter—help your reader see your brand story at a glance without needing a decoder ring.

Tip 4: Be Brief

Business communication should be short and to the point. Your customers are busy and need information—whether it's a proposal, report, or follow-up to a question—in a clear, concise way. It's best to avoid being verbose, especially in any business plans, proposals, or other significant documents. Patricia M. Buhler, "Managing in the New Millennium: Six Tips to More Effective Communication," *Supervision* 70, no. 7 (July 2009): 19.

Tip 5: Be Specific

If you go to dinner at Cheesecake Factory and there is a wait to get a table, the hostess will hand you a portable pager and tell you that the wait will be twenty to twenty-five minutes. Perfect. You have just enough time to run a quick errand at a nearby store at the mall and be back in time to get your table. If, on the other hand, she told you that you will be seated shortly, you might have an expectation of being seated in five to ten minutes. Meanwhile, "shortly" might mean twenty to twenty-five minutes for her. You would probably forgo running your errand because you think you are going to be seated soon but end up waiting for twenty-five minutes and being frustrated. Being specific in your communication not only gives clarity to your message but also helps set your customer's expectations. In other words, your customer won't expect something you can't deliver if you are clear about what exactly you *can* deliver and when. The same is true for prices. For example, if you order from the menu at the Cheesecake Factory, you know precisely what you will get to eat and how much it will cost. However, if there is a menu special that you heard about tableside, but weren't told how much the dish was, you might be surprised (and disappointed) when you receive the check. Specificity avoids surprises and sets expectations. See some examples in the Table below of general statements that can be communicated more effectively when made into specific statements.

Table 5.2.1: General versus Specific Statements

General Statement	Specific Statement
I'll get back to you shortly.	I'll get back to you by Tuesday.
It will only take a few minutes.	It will take less than 5 minutes.
It will cost about \$5,000 plus installation.	The cost is \$4,800 plus \$200 for installation.
Everything is included.	It includes your choice of entrée, vegetable, dessert, and coffee.

Tip 6: Be Timely

Timing is everything in life and most certainly in selling. It's best to be proactive with communication, and if you owe someone a response, do it sooner rather than later. If you are slow to respond to questions and communication, it will be difficult to develop trust, as prolonged responses may seem to imply that you are taking action without informing the customer what it is you are doing. Timing is especially important when you are communicating a negative response or bad news. Don't put it off; do it as soon as possible and give your customer the benefit of complete information.

✓ Rules of Engagement

At the beginning of each relationship, ask your customer how he prefers to communicate. Getting the answers to these simple questions will save time and confusion throughout your relationship and help ensure good communication.

- How do you prefer to receive regular communication (e-mail, text, phone, in person, hard copy)?
- What can I expect as a standard turnaround time for response to questions and issues?
- How do you prefer to receive urgent communication (e-mail, text, phone)?
- Who else (if anyone) in the organization would you like to also receive communication from me?
- When is the best time to touch base with you (early morning, midday, or later in the afternoon)?
- How frequently would you like a status update and in what format (e-mail, phone, in person)?

Listen Up

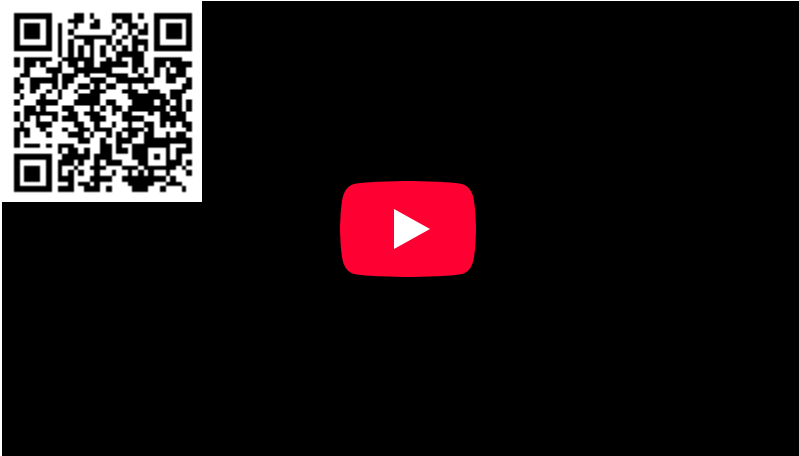
While you may think you are ready to communicate, it's a good idea to stop and listen first. Creating your message is only half of communication; listening is the other half. But it's difficult to listen because we listen faster than we speak—that is, based on what the other person is saying, we are already constructing responses in our minds before they have even finished. As a result, many people are guilty of “listening too fast.” Jeffrey J. Denning, “How to Improve Your Listening Skills, Avoid Mix-ups,” *Ophthalmology Times* 26, no. 10 (May 15, 2001): 28. Cicero once said that it is good thing that humans were given one mouth and two ears, in light of the way we use them. Patricia M. Buhler, “Managing in the New Millennium: Six Tips to More Effective Communication,” *Supervision* 70, no. 7 (July 2009): 19.

Listening, in fact, is so important that companies like Starbucks believe that it may directly improve profits. According to Alan Gulick, a Starbucks Corporation spokesperson, if every Starbucks employee misheard one \$10 order each day, it would cost the company one billion dollars in a year. That's why Starbucks has a process to teach their employees how to listen. Although listening may seem passive, it is actively linked to success: One study conducted in the insurance industry found that better listeners held higher positions and got promoted more than those who did not have developed listening skills. Beverly Davenport Sypher, Robert N. Bostrom, and Joy Hart Seibert, “Listening, Communication Abilities and Success at Work,” *Journal of Business Communication* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1989): 293. So it's worth it to hone your listening skills *now* so that when you get into the business world you can be successful. Here are a few tips:

- **Use active listening.** Confirm that you heard the sender correctly by saying something like, “Just to be sure I understand, we are going to move forward with twelve cases for your initial order, then revisit your inventory in five days.” Review the communication model above and take notice of the importance of decoding. If you decode a message from your customer incorrectly, the communication is ineffective and could even be costly. In the example above, the customer might have said in response, “I meant that the initial order should be five cases, and we'll revisit the inventory in twelve days.” That's a big difference.
- **Ask questions.** Questions are a way to gather more information and learn about your customer and their business. They are also an excellent way to demonstrate that you are communicating by listening. You learned in Chapter 2 that asking the *right* questions is critical to being a successful salesperson. Focus on listening and asking the right questions, and you'll be rewarded with great information.
- **Focus.** Although multitasking has seemingly become a modern virtue, focus actually helps create more effective communication. Stop and focus on your customer when he is speaking. This is a sign of respect, and this concentration allows you to absorb more information. Take notes to remember exactly what you discussed. There's nothing more important than what your customer has to say. Jeffrey J. Denning, “How to Improve Your Listening Skills, Avoid Mix-ups,” *Ophthalmology Times* 26, no. 10 (May 15, 2001): 28.
- **Take notes.** While it may seem like you will remember everything that is said at a meeting or during a conversation, taking notes signals that you are listening, and it provides you with an accurate record of what was said. “The palest ink is better than

the best memory.” “A Lesson on Listening,” Selling Power Pharmaceuticals eNewsletter, April 9, 2008, (accessed March 16, 2010).

Listen More, Talk Less



This video highlights some challenges and tips for listening in sales.

Source: Josaine Feigon, <http://www.tele-smart.com>

There's More to Communication than Meets the Eye...or Ear

It's important to remember that you will be communicating with many different people about many different topics in selling. Sometimes, you will be communicating one-on-one and sometimes you will be communicating with a group. Just as people have varying social styles (as you've learned in Chapter 3), it's important to know that people also absorb information differently. Research conducted in the 1970s indicates that people comprehend information in four distinct ways:

- **Why.** They want to know the reasons for doing something.
- **What.** They want to know the facts about it.
- **How.** They want to know only the information they need to get it done.
- **What if.** They want to know the consequences of doing it.

This can be a helpful road map of the elements you will want to include in your communications, especially if you are communicating with a group, since you may not know everyone's best method of absorbing information. It's been proven that if people don't receive the type of communication they prefer, they tend to tune out or reject the information.

You've probably noticed that both people and brands communicate the same message multiple times and usually in multiple ways. Creative repetition is key to successful communication. Think about the advertising Pepsi ran when it launched its new logo in early 2009; you most likely saw the television commercial during the Super Bowl, noticed a billboard in a high-traffic area of a major city, received an e-mail, saw banner ads on the Internet, reviewed the commercial on YouTube, and saw the new logo on the packaging. Pepsi's ad campaign illustrates the "three-times convincer" concept, which claims that 80 percent of people need to be exposed a message three times to buy into it, 15 percent need to be exposed to it five times, and 5 percent need to be exposed to it up to twenty-five times. Natalie Zmuda, "Pepsi, Coke Try to Outdo Each Other with Rays of Sunshine," *Advertising Age*, January 19, 2009. You may have seen the message so many times that it's hard to remember what the old logo even looked like.

Types of Communication

It is important to use multiple types of communication so that repetition does not become boring like a broken record. There are three types of communication: **verbal**, which involves speaking to one or many people to convey a message; **nonverbal**, which includes body language and other observations about people; and **written**, which includes a message that is read in hard copy, e-mail, text message, instant message, Facebook, Twitter, blog, or other Internet-based written communication. Varying the usage of these mediums can help ensure your customer's attention, but you must carefully develop each skill separately to communicate effectively.

Verbal Communication

An introduction, a presentation, a telephone conversation, a videoconference call: these are all examples of verbal communication because information is transmitted orally. Despite the ubiquitous use of technology in the business world, verbal communication is the most common method of exchanging information and ideas. Verbal communication is powerful, fast, and natural and includes voice inflections that help senders and receivers understand the message more clearly. The downside to verbal communication is that once it is spoken, the words are essentially gone; they are preserved only in the memory of those present, and sometimes the memories of the specific words spoken vary dramatically. The he-said-she-said argument is an example of this. No one really knows who said what unless the words are recorded. Recall is rarely exactly the same between two or more people.

Voice inflection, the verbal emphasis you put on certain words, can have a significant impact on the meaning of what you say. In fact, the same words can take on completely different meaning based on the inflection you use. For example, if you say the sentence in Figure 5.2.4 with an inflection on a different word each time, the sentence communicates something completely different each time.

Sentence	Meaning
I borrowed your book.	I was the one who took your book.
I borrowed your book.	I didn't take your book; I only borrowed it.
I borrowed your book.	Your book was the one I borrowed.
I borrowed your book .	I borrowed your book, not your laptop.

Figure 5.2.4: The Impact of Intonation

Source: Based on ideas in Kiely, M. (October, 1993). When “no” means “yes.” *Marketing*, 7–9.

You may also enjoy hearing recognized selling expert Zig Ziglar discuss the importance of intonation in a sales call.

Verbal communication may take place face-to-face, such as an in-person conversation or group meeting, speech, or presentation. It could also take place by phone in an individual conversation, a conference call, or even a voice mail. Other forms of verbal communication include videoconferences, podcasts, and Webinars, which are increasingly common in business. All these methods allow you to use inflection to communicate effectively. Face-to-face meetings also provide the opportunity to use and interpret other visual cues to increase the effectiveness of your communication. Verbal communication is especially important throughout the steps of the selling process. Your choice of words can make the difference in someone’s decision to first hear your sales presentation, and your presentation can determine whether that person will purchase your product or service. You will learn more specifically about how communication is used throughout the selling process covered in later chapters.

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Nonverbal Communication

Imagine that you are in a retail store buying a suit for an interview. When the salesperson approaches you, she smiles, makes eye contact, and shakes your hand. You respond positively. You notice that she is dressed professionally, so she makes you feel as if you will receive good fashion advice from her. When you make your choice, the tailor comes over wearing a tape measure around his neck. You know he is a professional and you can trust him to alter your new suit properly. On the other hand, if the salesperson waits on you only after you interrupt her personal phone call, doesn’t make eye contact or shake your hand, acts as if she is bored being at work, and is dressed in worn jeans and flip-flops, it’s unlikely that you trust her to help you choose your suit.

You have, no doubt, used and noticed nonverbal communication in virtually every personal encounter you have had. Think about it: A gesture, a smile, a nod, eye contact, what you are wearing, the fact that you are frequently checking your cell phone for text messages, and how close you stand to someone are all examples of nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is extremely powerful. In fact, some studies indicate that the influence from nonverbal communication such as tone and visuals can have a greater impact than the spoken words. Dr. Albert Mehrabian, a famed psychologist and professor emeritus of psychology at University of California, Los Angeles, is considered a pioneer in the area of body language and nonverbal communication. His research includes an equation, called the **Mehrabian formula**, Albert Mehrabian, “Silent Messages,” <http://www.kaaj.com/psych/smorder.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). that is frequently used to define the relative impact of verbal and nonverbal messages based on experiments of communication of feelings and attitudes. Dr. Mehrabian developed the formula shown in Figure 5.2.5 to define how communication takes place.

$$\text{Total liking} = 7\% \text{ verbal liking} + 38\% \text{ vocal liking} + 55\% \text{ facial liking}$$

Figure 5.2.5: The Mehrabian Formula

The Mehrabian formula is used to explain situations in which verbal communication and nonverbal communication do not match. In other words, when facial expressions contradict words, people tend to believe the facial expressions. “Mehrabian’s Communication Research,” Businessballs.com, www.businessballs.com/mehrabiancommunications.htm (accessed July 15, 2009).

✓ Types of Nonverbal Communication

- Handshake
- Body language
- Gestures
- Nodding or shaking your head
- Eye contact (or lack of eye contact)
- Eye roll
- Facial expressions
- Touch
- Space or proximity
- Dress
- Multitasking (e.g., texting while listening to someone, earphones in ears while working)

Your Handshake Says It All

In some countries, you might bow when you meet someone; in others you might kiss; but when you meet someone for a business meeting in the United States, it’s best to shake hands. Terri Morrison, “Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands.” Although fist bumps and high fives may be trendy as friendly greetings, neither is appropriate in a business setting.

✓ Be Memorable

Watch this video about “Body language, the power is in the palm of your hands.”



The exact history of the handshake is unknown; however, at one time it was used as method to prove that you had no weapons in your hands. Rachel Zupek, “The Worst Way to Shake Hands,” *CNN.com*, <http://www.cnn.com/2007/LIVING/worklife/11/05/cb.hand.shake/index.html> (accessed July 13, 2009). A good handshake is essential in business; it is the first nonverbal cue that you give to the person with whom you are meeting. It’s so important to have a good handshake that a recent study conducted at the University of Iowa showed that during mock interviews, those students who scored as having a better handshake were also considered more hireable by interviewers. According to Greg Stewart, a business professor who conducted the study said, “We found that the first impression begins with a handshake and sets the tone for the rest of the interview.” “Good Handshake Key to Interview Success,” BC Jobs, www.bcjobs.ca/re/career-advice/career-advice-articles/interview-advice/good-handshake-key-to-interview-success (accessed July 12, 2009).

Do you think you have a good handshake? Believe it or not, it’s worth practicing your handshake. Here are five tips for a good handshake:

1. Extend your right hand when you are approximately three feet away from the person with whom you want to shake hands. Rachel Zupek, “The Worst Way to Shake Hands,” *CNN.com*, <http://www.cnn.com/2007/LIVING/worklife/11/05/cb.hand.shake/index.html> (accessed July 13, 2009).
2. Keep your wrist straight and lock hands connecting your hand with the same part of the other person’s hand. John Gates, “A Handshake Lesson from Goldilocks,” *Free-Resume-Help.com*, (accessed July 12, 2009). Apply appropriate pressure; don’t crush the person’s hand.
3. Shake up and down three or four times. “Good Handshake Key to Interview Success,” BC Jobs, (accessed July 12, 2009).
4. Avoid the “wet fish” handshake. “Good Handshake Key to Interview Success,” BC Jobs. This is where practice is really important. The more you shake hands, the less nervous you will be.
5. Smile and make eye contact. “Good Handshake Key to Interview Success,” BC Jobs, www.bcjobs.ca/re/career-advice/career-advice-articles/interview-advice/good-handshake-key-to-interview-success (accessed July 12, 2009). This is your opportunity to use multiple types of nonverbal communication to get your meeting or interview off to a good start.

Body Language

Do you use your hands when you talk? If so, you are using body language to help make your point. But body language includes more than talking with your hands. **Body language** is what we say without words; nonverbal communication using your body includes elements such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, a head tilt, a nod, and even where and how you sit. Body language can indicate an unspoken emotion or sentiment that a person might be feeling either consciously or subconsciously. Body language can indicate if you are listening to someone and are engaged in what he is saying, disagreeing with him, or getting bored. (You might want to think twice about the body language you are using in class.) It’s important that you are aware of what you communicate with *your* body language and to understand and respond to the cues you are getting from *someone else’s* body language.

✓ Do You Speak Body?

Here are some common examples of body language and what they mean.

- Crossed arms: discomfort
- Spreading fingers: territorial display
- Mirroring (i.e., mimicking your body position to another’s): comfort
- Drumming or tapping fingers: frustration
- Hands on hips: there is an issue
- Hands behind the back: “leave me alone”
- Hands clasped, thumbs up: positive
- Thumbs down: don’t like
- Hands clasped with fingers forming a steeple: confidence
- Touch neck: insecurity
- Crossed legs: comfort
- Glancing at watch: concerned about time or bored

Body language is not just an interesting topic to consider; it’s a proven science that can help you improve your communication. If you would like to see how body language is used in everyday life, watch this video featuring Tonya Reiman, national television

commentator and author of *The Power of Body Language*.

Tonya Reiman, Body Language Expert



Learn what your body language is communicating.

Source: CBS Interactive

Here are some tips to remember about your body language to be sure you are sending the right nonverbal message to your customer or interviewer.

- **Make eye contact** with the person to whom you are speaking. Eye contact avoidance can be distracting and can prevent you from establishing a relationship as shown in this video.

Eyes Have It



Eye avoidance can be damaging to your career.

Source: eHow.com

- **Smile** when you meet someone and throughout the conversation. A smile is a positive response to another person and has a significant impact on how people perceive you. A smile can break the ice and help you start a conversation.
- **Dress for success** at all times, which means always dressing appropriately for the situation. The *Selling U* section in this chapter covers how to dress for an interview. But it's best to keep in mind that even after you get the job you want, it's a good idea to dress a little better than the position. Even in very casual work environments, what you wear is a nonverbal communication about who you are. If you don't dress for the next promotion, chances are you won't be considered for it. Be aware of the company policy and dress code, and if in doubt, dress more conservatively. This podcast featuring Peter Post discusses how to handle casual dress in the workplace.

Written Communication

Although verbal and nonverbal communications usually take place in real time, written communication has a longer consideration period. The sender must encode the message in words to be communicated on paper or a screen. Business reports, proposals, memos, e-mails, text messages, Web sites, blogs, wikis, and more are all examples of written communication. Each of them is created over a period of time and can include collaboration from multiple people. Collaboration is especially important for communicating, planning, and creating documents so many people use tools such as **wikis** to share documents. To see how a wiki works, watch this video.

Written communication is preferred to verbal communication when careful consideration is important or the information needs to be permanent, such as a company policy, sales presentation, or proposal. Written communication can also take place when verbal communication isn't an option, like when you need to respond to an e-mail or text message at 1:00 a.m.

Although verbal communication is faster and more natural than written communication, each has its pros and cons. Generally, written communication is better at conveying facts, while verbal communication is better at conveying feelings. Verbal communication has another significant drawback: consider the fact that humans listen much faster than they speak. For example, the average public speaker speaks at about 125 words per minute. Although this sounds natural, the average person can listen at 400 to 500 words per minute. That means that listeners' minds have time and space to wander, which can impact the effectiveness of verbal communication. (You may have noticed your mind wandering during a class lecture—even if you found the topic interesting.)

Written communication requires a good command of the English language, including the rules of grammar and spelling. If you think that business exists solely on quick instant messages and text messages, you might be surprised to learn that they are only a portion of the communication within a company and between the company's vendors and other partners. Because the nature of written communication is such that it allows time for consideration and composition, the standards for writing are much higher than for a casual conversation. Customers and colleagues alike expect clear, concise written communications with proper grammar and spelling. And because written communication is long lasting—whether on paper or on the Internet—errors or misstatements exist for an irritatingly long time. So whether you are writing a proposal, a presentation, a report, a meeting recap, or a follow-up e-mail, it's best to take the time to think about your communication and craft it so that it is effective. Consider using the following tips:

- **Be short and sweet.** Shorter is always better when it comes to business correspondence. It's best to include all pertinent facts with concise information. If you write your communication with the receiver in mind, it will be easier to make it shorter and more effective.
- **Grammar, please.** Sentences should be structured correctly and use proper grammar, including a subject and a verb in each sentence. Business correspondence should always include uppercase and lowercase letters and correct punctuation. Patricia M. Buhler, "Managing in the New Millennium: Six Tips to More Effective Communication," *Supervision* 70, no. 7 (July 2009): 19. If writing is not your strong suit, visit your campus student services office or learning center to provide information about upcoming writing clinics and access to other tools that can help improve your writing skills.
- **Check spelling.** Use the spell-check tool on your computer. There is no excuse for a misspelled word. Text abbreviations are not acceptable in business correspondence.
- **Read before you send.** Reread your document or electronic communication before it goes out. Is everything complete? Is it clear? Is it something you will be proud of days or weeks later? Take the extra time to review before you send. It's difficult to revise a communication as revisions cause confusion.
- **Just the facts.** Stick to the facts to maximize the impact of your written communications; leave the emotional topics for verbal dialogue. For example, send an e-mail to confirm meeting time, date, and location; use a verbal communication for the content of the meeting to be discussed, such as a negotiation.

✓ You Are What You Write

You might not think twice about sending a text to your friend. But in the business world, everything you write in an e-mail, text message, letter, or memo is a direct reflection of your personal brand.

Which Is Best?

Although verbal, nonverbal, and written communication all play a role in your communication with your customers, you might be wondering which one is best. It depends on your customer and on the situation. Some customers want to work day to day using all

the latest technology tools, including text messaging, social networking, Web conferences, wikis, and more. Other customers prefer more traditional face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and some e-mail correspondence. Adapt to the method of communication that your customer prefers and not the other way around. In some situations, a face-to-face meeting is best—for instance, if you wish to discuss a complex issue, negotiate, or meet some additional members of the team. Sometimes, a face-to-face meeting isn't feasible, so other verbal communication methods such as a videoconference, phone call, or conference call can be efficient and effective if used properly.

Chances are you will use a combination of communication types with each customer tailored to his particular preferences and situation. Be guided by the fact that you want to keep your communication personal in meaning and professional in content. Think about it from the receiver's point of view, and deliver bad news verbally whenever possible.

✓ Which Is Better: E-mail or Face-to-Face?

It might seem intuitive, but it's not always true that a face-to-face meeting is better than an e-mail. It depends on the type of relationship you have with the person. If you are competitive with her, it's best to use e-mail to communicate. According to a study conducted by Robert B. Cialdini and Rosanna Guadagno in 2002, if you have a more cooperative relationship, a face-to-face meeting is probably a better choice if it's physically possible. "Communicating Persuasively: Email or Face-to-Face," PsyBlog, <http://www.spring.org.uk/2007/03/communicating-persuasively-email-or.php> (accessed July 15, 2009).

Key Takeaways

- **Communication** is vital in selling and is the foundation of relationships.
- The **communication model** describes exactly how communication is sent and received and provides clues as to how to improve the effectiveness of communication.
- Empathy is thinking about your communication from the receiver's point of view. Empathy helps build an emotional connection.
- Effective **communication** is clear, concise, brief, specific, and timely.
- Creating your message is only one half of **communication**; listening is the other half. Being a good listener improves your ability to be a good communicator.
- There are three types of **communication**: **verbal**, which involves speaking to one or many people to convey a message; **nonverbal**, which includes body language and other observations about people; and **written**, which includes a message that is read in hard copy, e-mail, text message, instant message, Facebook, Twitter, blog, or other Internet-based written communication.
- **Verbal communication** provides the opportunity to change communication with inflection, or the emphasis put on certain words in a conversation or presentation.
- **Nonverbal communication** provides additional insights into the sending and receiving of a message through gestures, eye contact, proximity, and other elements of **body language**.
- Your handshake can be one of the most powerful elements of nonverbal communication and sets the tone for the meeting or interview ahead.
- **Written communication** includes printed words designed to communicate a message on paper or a screen and is more permanent than **verbal** or **nonverbal communication**.
- **Written communication** is best used for factual information, whereas **verbal communication** is best used for emotional topics or those that require discussion.
- The best method of **communication** depends on your customer's preferences and on the situation.

? Exercise 5.2.1

1. Choose an advertisement online or in a magazine. Apply the communication model by answering the following questions: Who is the source? What is the message? How is the message encoded? What is the channel with which it is communicated? How is the message decoded? Who is the receiver? What might be an example of potential noise that would interfere with the communication of the message? How can the sender receive feedback from the receiver?
2. Are you a good listener? Complete this online listening activity to see how well you listen.

https://englishteststore.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11388

3. Test your listening skills. Do this exercise with a partner, one is the speaker and one is the listener. The speaker has three minutes to describe what he is looking for in a vacation destination. The listener has to use active listening skills. Then, the listener has three minutes to “sell” a destination to the speaker, based on what the speaker said he wanted. The speaker has one minute to review how close the listener was to his destination. Reverse roles and repeat.
4. Name the three types of communication and give an example for each one. How might the communication be misinterpreted in each example? How might the communication be made more effective in each example?
5. Visit a local retailer that uses personal selling and ask a salesperson questions about purchasing a product or service. Identify three types of communication the salesperson uses. Were they effective? Why or why not?
6. Identify four examples of nonverbal communication you observe in class. What does each example communicate?
7. Visit your campus student services or learning center and learn about the resources that are available to help you develop your writing skills. What information, classes, or workshops are available? Which ones sound like they might be helpful? Why?
8. Consider this situation: You are a salesperson who has to tell your customers that the original shipping date will not be met and the new date is one week later. What are the four things that your customers would want to know?

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