# Chapter 11

# Communication

(Click while connected to the Internet for online video teaching notes)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES (PPT11-1)

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Identify the main functions of communication.
2. Describe the communication process and distinguish between formal and informal communication.
3. Contrast downward, upward, and lateral communication, and provide examples of each.
4. Contrast oral, written, and nonverbal communication.
5. Contrast formal communication networks and the grapevine.
6. Analyze the advantages and challenges of electronic communication.
7. Show how channel richness underlies the choice of communication channel.
8. Identify common barriers to effective communication.
9. Show how to overcome the potential problems in cross-cultural communication.

INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

**Text Exercises**
- Myth or Science? People Are Good At Catching Liars At Work
- An Ethical Choice: Managing Your Tweeting And Twittering
- International OB: Lost In Translation?
- Point/CounterPoint: Keep It Secret
- Questions for Review
- Experiential Exercise: An Absence of Nonverbal Communication
- Ethical Dilemma: Defining Boundaries of Technology

**Text Cases**
Case Incident 1: Diana Abdala
Case Incident 2: Should Companies That Fire Shoot First?

**Instructor's Choice**

This section presents an exercise that is NOT found in the student's textbook. Instructor's Choice reinforces the text's emphasis through various activities. Some Instructor's Choice activities are centered on debates, group exercises, Internet research, and student experiences. Some can be used in-class in their entirety, while others require some additional work on the student's part. The

course instructor may choose to use these at anytime throughout the class—
some may be more effective as icebreakers, while some may be used to pull
together various concepts covered in the chapter.

WEB
EXERCISES

At the end of each chapter of this Instructor's Manual, you will find
suggested exercises and ideas for researching the WWW on OB topics. The
exercises "Exploring OB Topics on the Web" are set up so that you can
simply photocopy the pages, distribute them to your class, and make
assignments accordingly. You may want to assign the exercises as an out-
of-class activity or as lab activities with your class.

## SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS

You've probably discovered the link between communication and employee
satisfaction in this chapter: the less uncertainty, the greater the
satisfaction. Distortions, ambiguities, and incongruities between verbal and nonverbal
messages all increase uncertainty and reduce satisfaction.

The less distortion, the more employees will receive goals, feedback, and other
management messages as intended. This, in turn, should reduce ambiguities and
clarify the group's task. Extensive use of vertical, lateral, and informal channels also
increases communication flow, reduces uncertainty, and improves group performance
and satisfaction.

Perfect communication is unattainable. Yet a positive relationship exists between
effective communication (which includes perceived trust, perceived accuracy, desire for
interaction, top-management receptiveness, and upward information requirements) and
worker productivity. Choosing the correct channel, being an effective listener, and using
feedback can make for more effective communication. But the human factor generates
distortions we can never fully eliminate. Whatever the sender's expectations, the
message as decoded in the receiver's mind represents his or her reality. And this reality
will determine performance, along with the individual's level of motivation and degree of
satisfaction. Despite the great advantages of electronic communication, its pitfalls
are also numerous. Because we gather so much meaning from the way a message
is communicated (voice tone, facial expressions, body language), the potential
for misunderstandings in electronic communication is great. We need to use e-mail, IM,
TM, and networking software wisely, or we'll not be as effective as we might want to be.

Finally, by keeping in mind communication barriers such as gender and culture, we
can overcome them and increase our communication effectiveness.

*This chapter begins with a discussion of how email has become an effective form of evidence in many illegal and unethical transactions. Email does not have the privacy expectations many people apply to it. Instead, they are accessible and they are resilient by not cooperating with attempts to erase or destroy them. The message is clear, "Be Careful."*

BRIEF CHAPTER OUTLINE

I.   Functions of Communication (ppt11-2)
     A. Communication is more than merely imparting meaning. An idea, no matter how great, is useless until it is transmitted and understood by others. It must include both the transference and the understanding of meaning. There are four major functions of communication:
        1. Control
        2. Motivation
        3. Emotional expression
        4. Information

II.  The Communication Process (Exhibit 11-1) (ppt11-3)
     A. Before communication can take place, a purpose expressed as a message to be conveyed, is needed.
     B. It passes between a source (the sender) and a receiver.
     C. The message is encoded (converted to symbolic form) and is passed by way of some medium (channel) to the receiver, who retranslates (decodes) the message initiated by the sender.
     D. The result is transference of meaning from one person to another.
     E. The communication model is made up of eight parts: the source, encoding, the message, the channel, decoding, the receiver, noise, and feedback. (ppt11-4) (ppt11-5)

III. Direction of Communication (ppt11-6)
     A. Downward Communication
        1. Communication that flows from one level of a group organization to a lower level is a downward communication. This is typically what we think of when managers communicate with workers.
        2. Its purpose is to assign goals, provide instructions, communicate policies and procedures, provide feedback, etc.
     B. Upward Communication
        1. Upward communication flows to a higher level in the group or organization.
        2. It is used to provide feedback to higher-ups, inform them of progress, and relay current problems.
     C. Lateral Communication
        1. When communication takes place among members of the same work group, among members of work groups at the same level, among managers at the same level, or among any horizontally equivalent personnel, horizontal communications are often necessary to save time and facilitate coordination.
        2. In some cases, these lateral relationships are formally sanctioned.

IV.  Interpersonal Communication (ppt11-7)
     A. Oral Communication
        1. Oral communication is the chief means of conveying messages. Speeches, formal one-on-one and group discussions, and informal rumor mills or grapevines are popular forms of oral communication.

   2. Advantages are speed and feedback. A major disadvantage arises when the message must be passed through a number of people. This increases the potential for distortion.
  B. Written Communication
   1. Written communications include memos, letters, electronic mail, faxes, periodicals, bulletin boards, etc.
   2. Advantages include that they are tangible and verifiable. A written record is available for later use. People are more careful when communication is via written word.
   3. Drawbacks include: time consuming, lack of feedback, and no guarantee of receipt.
  C. Nonverbal Communication (ppt11-8)
   1. We send a nonverbal message every time we send a verbal one. At times the nonverbal message may stand alone. They include body movements, facial expressions, and the physical distance between sender and receiver.
   2. We use body language to convey a message and typically do so unconsciously.
   3. The two most important messages body language conveys are the extent to which an individual likes another and is interested in his or her views and the relative perceived status between sender and receiver.
   4. Intonations can change the meaning of a message. (See Exhibit 11–2)
   5. Facial expressions convey meaning.
   6. Physical distance or the way individuals space themselves also has meaning.
    a. Proper physical spacing is dependent on cultural norms.

V. Organizational Communication
  A. Formal Small-Group Networks (ppt11-9)
   1. There are three common small-group networks: the chain, wheel, and all-channel. (Exhibit 11-3)
   2. The effectiveness of each network depends on the dependent variable with which you are concerned. No single network will be best for all occasions. (See Exhibit 11–4) (ppt11-10)
  B. The Grapevine (ppt11-11)
   1. A recent survey found that 75 percent of employees hear about matters first through rumors on the grapevine. (ppt11-12)
   2. Three main characteristics of a grapevine:
    a. First, it is not controlled by management.
    b. Second, it is perceived by most employees as being more believable and reliable than formal communiqués.
    c. Third, it is largely used to serve the self-interests of those people within it.
  C. Computer-Aided Communication
   1. Introduction
    a. An indispensible–and in about 71 percent of cases, the primary–medium of communication.
    b. Includes e-mail, text messaging, networking software, blogs, and video conferencing.
   2. E-mail (ppt11-13)
    a. Uses the Internet to transmit and receive computer-generated text and documents.
    b. Growth has been significant. Common belief is that people are being swamped with e-mails. Recent study shows that the majority of Americans who access e-mail at work receive 10 or fewer e-mails per day.
    c. Advantages to e-mail usage
     i. E-mail messages can be quickly written, edited, and stored.

        ii.   They can be distributed to one person or thousands with a click of a mouse.

       iii.  Recipients can read them at their own convenience.

       iv.  And the cost of sending formal e-mail messages to employees is a fraction of the cost of printing, duplicating, and distributing a comparable letter or brochure.

    d.  Drawbacks to e-mail usage

       i.   Misinterpreting the message

       ii.  Communicating negative messages

       iii.  Time-consuming nature of e-mail

       iv.  E-mail emotions

       v.   Privacy concerns

3. Instant Messaging and Text Messaging (ppt11-14)

    a.  Like e-mail, instant messaging (IM) and text messaging (TM) use electronic media.

    b.  Unlike e-mail, though, IM and TM either occur in real time (IM) or use portable communication devices (TM).

    c.  In just a few years, IM and TM have become pervasive.

    d.  IM is usually sent via desktop or laptop computer, whereas TM is transmitted via cell phones or handheld devices such as BlackBerrys.

    e.  Despite their advantages, IM and TM aren't going to replace e-mail.

    f.  On the downside, some IM and TM users find the technology intrusive and distracting.

4. Networking Software (ppt11-15)

    a.  Nowhere has communication been more transformed than in networking, with the growth of social networking platforms such as Facebook and MySpace.

    b.  Some companies, such as IBM, have their own social networks.

5. Blogs (ppt11-16)

    a.  Blogs are Web sites about a single person or company, that are usually updated daily.

    b.  Experts estimate that more than 112 million blogs and more than 350 million blog entries are now read daily.

    c.  As a variant of blogs (which are generally either personal or company owned), Twitter is a service that allows users to post "micro-blog" entries about any topic, including work.

6. Video Conferencing (ppt11-16)

    a.  Video conferencing permits employees in an organization to have meetings with people at different locations.

    b.  Video conferencing technology, in effect, allows employees to conduct interactive meetings without the necessity of being physically in the same location.

D. Managing Information

1. Dealing with Information Overload

    a.  Basex, a company that looks at worker efficiency, found the largest part of an average worker's day—43 percent—is spent on matters that are neither important nor urgent, such as responding to noncrucial e-mails and surfing the Web.

    b.  Basex also found 25 percent of an employee's time was spent composing and responding to important e-mail.

    c.  Some of the biggest technologies companies, including Microsoft, Intel, Google, and IBM, are banding together to study the issue more systematically.

    d.  We have already reviewed some ways of reducing the time sunk into e-mails.

        2. Always on Call
            a. As information technology and immediate communication have become a
               more prevalent component of modern organizational life, more employees
               find they are never able to get offline.
            b. The addictive potential of constant communication is so great that some
               harried managers jokingly refer to their BlackBerrys as "Crackberries."
        3. Information Security
            a. Security is a huge concern for nearly all organizations with private or
               proprietary information about clients, customers, and employees.
            b. A Merrill Lynch survey of 50 executives found 52 percent rated leaks of
               company information as their number-one information security
               concern, topping viruses and hackers.
            c. An organization can buttress employee concerns by involving them in the
               creation of information-security policies and giving them some control
               over how their personal information is used.

VI. Choice of Communication Channel (ppt11-17)
    A. People choose one channel of communication over another for several reasons. A
       model of media richness has been developed to explain channel selection among
       managers. (ppt11-18)
    B. Recent research has found that channels differ in their capacity to convey
       information (Exhibit 11–6).
    C. The choice of one channel over another depends on whether the message is
       routine or nonroutine.
    D. Routine messages tend to be straightforward and have a minimum of ambiguity.
    E. High-performing managers tend to be more media-sensitive than low-performing
       managers.
    F. The past decade has been characterized by facility closings, large layoffs,
       restructuring, merging, consolidating, and the introduction of new products and
       services at an accelerated pace—all nonroutine messages high in ambiguity and
       requiring the use of channels that can convey a large amount of information.

VII. Barriers to Effective Communication (ppt11-19)
    A. Filtering
        1. Filter refers to a sender's purposely manipulating information so it will be
           seen as more favorable by the receiver. For example, telling the boss what
           she wants to hear.
    B. Selective Perception
        1. Receivers in their communication process selectively see and hear based on
           their needs, motivations, experience, background, and other personal
           characteristics.
    C. Information Overload
        1. When the information we have to work with exceeds our processing capacity,
           the result is information overload.
    D. Emotions
        1. How a receiver feels at the time a message is received will influence how he
           or she interprets it. Extreme emotions are likely to hinder effective
           communication.
    E. Language (ppt11-20)
        1. Words mean different things to different people. English—our common
           language—is far from uniform in usage.
    F. Silence
        1. It's easy to ignore silence or lack of communication, precisely because it is
           defined by the absence of information.
    G. Communication Apprehension

       1. An estimated five-to-twenty percent of the population suffer from communication apprehension. They experience undue tension or anxiety in oral and/or written communication. They may find it difficult to talk with others face-to-face or on the telephone.
- H. Gender Differences
  1. Research by Deborah Tannen provides important insights into the differences between men and women in terms of their conversational styles.
  2. Men frequently complain that women talk on and on about their problems. When men hear a problem, they frequently assert their desire for independence and control by offering solutions.
  3. Women criticize men for not listening.
  4. Many women view telling a problem as a means to promote closeness.
  5. The women present the problem to gain support and connection, not to get the male's advice.
  6. Mutual understanding is symmetrical, but giving advice is asymmetrical—it sets the advice giver up as more knowledgeable, more reasonable, and more in control.
- I. "Politically Correct" Communication (ppt11-21)
  1. A final barrier to effective communication is politically correct communication, which is so concerned with being inoffensive that meaning and simplicity are lost or free expression is hampered.
  2. Plenty of words and phrases invoke neither racial slurs nor politically correct language.
  3. We must be sensitive about words that do stereotype, intimidate, and insult individuals. But there's a downside to political correctness: it can complicate our vocabulary and make it harder to communicate accurately.
  4. There is no simple solution to this dilemma. However, you should be aware of the trade-offs and the need to find a proper balance.

VIII.    Global Implications (ppt11-22)
- A. Introduction
  1. Cross-cultural factors clearly create the potential for increased communication problems. (Exhibit 11-7)
  2. A gesture that is well understood and acceptable in one culture can be meaningless or lewd in another. (ppt11-23)
  3. Only 18 percent of companies have documented strategies for communicating with employees across cultures, and only 31 percent require that corporate messages be customized for consumption in other cultures.
- B. Cultural Barriers
  1. First, there are barriers caused by semantics. Words mean different things to different people. Some words do not translate between cultures.
  2. Second, there are barriers caused by word connotations. Words imply different things in different languages.
  3. Third, there are barriers caused by tone differences. In some cultures, language is formal; in others, it is informal. The tone changes depending on the context.
  4. Fourth, there are barriers caused by differences among perceptions. People who speak different languages actually view the world in different ways.
- C. Cultural Context
  1. Cultures tend to differ in the importance to which context influences meaning.
  2. People from Europe and North America reflect their low-context cultures.
     a. They rely essentially on words to convey meaning.
  3. Communication in high-context cultures implies considerably more trust by both parties.

           4.   Oral agreements imply strong commitments in high-text cultures.
    D.  A Cultural Guide (ppt11-24)
          1.   Assume differences until similarity is proven.
          2.   Emphasize description rather than interpretation or evaluation.
          3.   Practice empathy. Put yourself in the recipient's shoes.
          4.   Treat your interpretations as a working hypothesis.

IX.  Summary and Implications for Managers (ppt11-25)
    A.  There is a link between communication and employee satisfaction.
          1.   The less uncertainty, the greater the satisfaction.
             a.   Distortions, ambiguities, and incongruities between verbal and nonverbal messages all increase uncertainty and reduce satisfaction.
             b.   The less distortion, the more employees will receive goals, feedback, and other management messages as intended.
             c.   This, in turn, should reduce ambiguities and clarify the group's task.
             d.   Extensive use of vertical, lateral, and informal channels also increases communication flows, reduces uncertainty, and improves group performance and satisfaction.
    B.  Perfect communication is unattainable.
          1.   A positive relationship exists between effective communication (which includes perceived trust, perceived accuracy, desire for interaction, top-management receptiveness, and upward information requirements) and worker productivity.
          2.   Choosing the correct channel, being an effective listener, and using feedback can make for more effective communication. But the human factor generates distortions we can never fully eliminate.
          3.   Whatever the sender's expectations, the message as decoded in the receiver's mind represents his or her reality. And this reality will determine performance, along with the individual's level of motivation and degree of satisfaction.
    C.  Despite the great advantages of electronic communication, its pitfalls are also numerous.
          1.   Because we gather so much meaning from the way a message is communicated (voice tone, facial expressions, body language), the potential for misunderstandings in electronic communication is great.
          2.   We need to use e-mail, IM, TM, and networking software wisely, or we'll not be as effective as we might want to be.
          3.   Finally, by keeping in mind communication barriers such as gender and culture, we can overcome them and increase our communication effectiveness.

EXPANDED CHAPTER OUTLINE

I.  Functions of Communication
    A.  Communication is more than merely imparting meaning. An idea, no matter how great, is useless until it is transmitted and understood by others. It must include both the transference and the understanding of meaning. There are four major functions of communication:
        1.  Control
            a.  Communication acts to control member behavior in several ways:
            b.  Organizations have authority hierarchies and formal guidelines that employees are required to follow.
            c.  Informal communication also controls behavior. When work groups tease or harass a member who produces too much, they are informally communicating with, and controlling, the member's behavior.
        2.  Motivation
            a.  Communication fosters motivation by clarifying to employees what is to be done, how well they are doing, and what can be done to improve performance.
            b.  The formation of specific goals, feedback on progress toward the goals, and reinforcement of desired behavior all stimulate motivation and require communication.
        3.  Emotional Expression
            a.  Communication provides a release for the emotional expression of feelings and for fulfillment of social needs. For many employees, their work group is a primary source for social interaction.
        4.  Information
            a.  Communication facilitates decision making. It provides information by transmitting the data to identify and evaluate alternative choices.
            b.  No one of these four functions is more important than the others. You can assume that almost every communication interaction that takes place in a group or organization performs one or more of these four functions.

II.  The Communication Process (Exhibit 11-1)
    A.  Before communication can take place, a purpose expressed as a message to be conveyed, is needed.
    B.  It passes between a source (the sender) and a receiver.
    C.  The message is encoded (converted to symbolic form) and is passed by way of some medium (channel) to the receiver, who retranslates (decodes) the message initiated by the sender.
    D.  The result is transference of meaning from one person to another.
    E.  The communication model is made up of eight parts: the source, encoding, the message, the channel, decoding, the receiver, noise, and feedback:
        1.  The source initiates a message by encoding a thought.
        2.  The message is the actual physical product from the source.
        3.  The channel is the medium through which the message travels.
        4.  The receiver is the object to whom the message is directed.
        5.  Decoding—the symbols in the message must be translated into a form that can be understood by the receiver.
        6.  The receiver is limited by his/her skills, attitudes, knowledge, and social-cultural system.
        7.  Noise represents communication barriers that distort the clarity of the message.

8. Feedback is the check on how successful we have been in transferring our messages as originally intended.

III. Direction of Communication
   A. Downward Communication
      1. Communication that flows from one level of a group organization to a lower level is a downward communication. This is typically what we think of when managers communicate with workers.
      2. Its purpose is to assign goals, provide instructions, communicate policies and procedures, provide feedback, etc.
      3. It does not have to be face-to-face or an oral communication.
      4. When engaging in downward communication, managers must explain the reasons *why* a decision was made.
      5. Another problem in downward communication is its one-way nature; generally, managers inform employees but rarely solicit their advice or opinions.
   B. Upward Communication
      1. Upward communication flows to a higher level in the group or organization.
      2. It is used to provide feedback to higher-ups, inform them of progress, and relay current problems.
      3. Examples of upward communication are: performance reports prepared by lower management for review by middle and top management, suggestion boxes, employee attitude surveys, etc.
      4. To engage in effective upward communication:
         a. Try to reduce distractions (meet in a conference room if you can, rather than your boss's office or cubicle).
         b. Communicate in headlines, not paragraphs (your goal is to get your boss's attention, not to engage in a meandering discussion).
         c. Support your headlines with actionable items (what you believe should happen).
         d. Prepare an agenda to make sure you use your boss's attention well.
   C. Lateral Communication
      1. When communication takes place among members of the same work group, among members of work groups at the same level, among managers at the same level, or among any horizontally equivalent personnel, horizontal communications are often necessary to save time and facilitate coordination.
      2. In some cases, these lateral relationships are formally sanctioned.
      3. Often, they are informally created to short-circuit the vertical hierarchy and expedite action.
      4. They can create dysfunctional conflicts when the formal vertical channels are breached, when members go above or around their superiors to get things done, or when bosses find out that actions have been taken or decisions made without their knowledge.

IV. Interpersonal Communication
   A. Oral Communication
      1. Oral communication is the chief means of conveying messages. Speeches, formal one-on-one and group discussions, and informal rumor mills or grapevines are popular forms of oral communication.
      2. Advantages are speed and feedback. A major disadvantage arises when the message must be passed through a number of people. This increases the potential for distortion.
   B. Written Communication
      1. Written communications include memos, letters, electronic mail, faxes, periodicals, bulletin boards, etc.

2. Advantages include that they are tangible and verifiable. A written record is available for later use. People are more careful when communication is via written word.
3. Drawbacks include: time consuming, lack of feedback, and no guarantee of receipt.

C. Nonverbal Communication
1. We send a nonverbal message every time we send a verbal one. At times the nonverbal message may stand alone. They include body movements, facial expressions, and the physical distance between sender and receiver.
2. We use body language to convey a message and typically do so unconsciously.
3. The two most important messages body language conveys are the extent to which an individual likes another and is interested in his or her views and the relative perceived status between sender and receiver.
4. Intonations can change the meaning of a message. (See Exhibit 11–2)
5. Facial expressions convey meaning.
6. Physical distance or the way individuals space themselves also has meaning.
   a. Proper physical spacing is dependent on cultural norms.

V. Organizational Communication
A. Formal Small-Group Networks
1. There are three common small-group networks: the chain, wheel, and all-channel. ( Exhibit 11-3)
   a. The chain rigidly follows the formal chain of command.
   b. The wheel relies on the leader to act as the central conduit for all of the group's communication.
   c. The all-channel network permits all group members to actively communicate with each other.
2. The effectiveness of each network depends on the dependent variable with which you are concerned. No single network will be best for all occasions. (See Exhibit 11–4)

B. The Grapevine
1. A recent survey found that 75 percent of employees hear about matters first through rumors on the grapevine.
2. Three main characteristics of a grapevine:
   a. First, it is not controlled by management.
   b. Second, it is perceived by most employees as being more believable and reliable than formal communiqués.
   c. Third, it is largely used to serve the self-interests of those people within it.
3. One of the most famous studies of the grapevine:
   a. The approach was to learn from each communication recipient how he/she first received a given piece of information and then trace it back to its source.
   b. It was found that, while the grapevine was an important source of information, only 10 percent of the executives acted as liaison individuals.
   c. Information on events of general interest tended to flow between the major functional groups.
   d. No evidence surfaced to suggest that members of any one group consistently acted as liaisons; rather, different types of information passed through different liaison persons.
   e. An attempt to replicate this study among employees in a small state government office also found that only a small percentage (10 percent) acted as liaison individuals.
   f. This is interesting, since the replication contained a wider spectrum of employees.

g.   The flow of information in the government office took place within, rather than between, functional groups.
4.   The evidence indicates that about 75 percent of what is carried is accurate.
5.   Research indicates that rumors emerge as a response to situations that are important to us, where there is ambiguity, and under conditions that arouse anxiety.
6.   The grapevine is an important part of any group or organization's communication network and well worth understanding.
    i.   It identifies for managers those confusing issues that employees consider important and anxiety provoking.
    ii.  It acts as both a filter and a feedback mechanism, picking up the issues that employees consider relevant.
    iii. By assessing which liaison individuals will consider a given piece of information to be relevant, we can improve our ability to explain and predict the pattern of the grapevine.
    iv.  Management cannot eliminate rumors, but it can minimize the negative consequences. Exhibit 11–5 offers a few suggestions for minimizing those negative consequences.

C.   Computer-Aided Communication
1.   Introduction
a.   An indispensible–and in about 71 percent of cases, the primary–medium of communication.
b.   Includes e-mail, text messaging, networking software, blogs, and video conferencing.
2.   E-mail
a.   Uses the Internet to transmit and receive computer-generated text and documents.
b.   Growth has been significant. Common belief is that people are being swamped with e-mails. Recent study shows that the majority of Americans who access e-mail at work, receive 10 or fewer e-mails per day.
c.   Advantages to e-mail usage
    i.   E-mail messages can be quickly written, edited, and stored.
    ii.  They can be distributed to one person or thousands with a click of a mouse.
    iii. Recipients can read them at their own convenience.
    iv.  And the cost of sending formal e-mail messages to employees is a fraction of the cost of printing, duplicating, and distributing a comparable letter or brochure.
d.   Drawbacks to e-mail usage
    i.   Misinterpreting the message
        (a)  The potential to misinterpret e-mail is great.
        (b)  One research team at New York University found we can accurately decode an e-mail's intent and tone only 50 percent of the time.
    ii.  Communicating negative messages
        (a)  E-mail may not be the best way to communicate negative information.
        (b)  When Radio Shack decided to lay off 400 employees, it drew an avalanche of scorn inside and outside the company by doing it via e-mail. Employees need to be careful communicating negative messages via e-mail, too.
        (c)  Justen Deal, age 22, wrote an e-mail critical of some strategic decisions made by his employer, pharmaceutical giant Kaiser Permanente, and questioning the financing of several

information technology projects. Within hours, Deal's computer was seized; he was later fired.

   iii. Time-consuming nature of e-mail
     (a) An estimated 62 trillion e-mails are sent every year, of which approximately 60 percent, or 36 trillion are non-spam messages.
     (b) A survey of Canadian managers revealed 58 percent spent 2 to 4 hours per day reading and responding to e-mails.
       (i)   The average worker checks his or her e-mail 50 times a day.
     (c) Experts suggest the following strategies:
       (i)   Don't check e-mail in the morning.
       (ii)  Check e-mail in batches.
       (iii) Unsubscribe.
       (iv) Stop sending e-mail.
       (v)  Declare e-mail bankruptcy.

   iv. E-mail emotions
     (a) We tend to think of e-mail as a sort of sterile, faceless form of communication.
     (b) Some researchers say the lack of visual and vocal cues means emotionally positive messages, like those including praise, will be seen as more emotionally neutral than the sender intended.
     (c) Emails are often highly emotional.
       (i)   E-mail tends to have a disinhibiting effect on people; without the recipient's facial expression to temper their emotional expression, senders write things they'd never be comfortable saying in person.
       (ii)  If you find yourself angry or upset as you write an e-mail, save it as a draft, and look at it again once you are on a more even keel.
       (iii) When others send flaming messages, remain calm and try not to respond in kind. And, as hard as it might sometimes be, try to see the flaming message from the other party's point of view.

   v. Privacy concerns
     (a) There are two privacy issues with e-mail.
       (i)   First, your e-mails may be, and often are, monitored.
       (ii)  Second, you need to exercise caution in forwarding e-mail from your company's e-mail account to a personal, or "public" (for example, Gmail, Yahoo!, MSN), e-mail account.
     (b) Some researchers say the lack of visual and vocal cues means emotionally positive messages, like those including praise, will be seen as more emotionally neutral than the sender intended.

3. Instant Messaging and Text Messaging
   a. Like e-mail, instant messaging (IM) and text messaging (TM) use electronic media.
   b. Unlike e-mail, though, IM and TM either occur in real time (IM) or use portable communication devices (TM).
   c. In just a few years, IM and TM have become pervasive.
   d. IM is usually sent via desktop or laptop computer, whereas TM is transmitted via cell phones or handheld devices such as BlackBerrys.
   e. The growth of TM has been spectacular.
     i.  In 2001, for instance, just 8 percent of U.S. employees were using it.
     ii. Now that number is more than 50 percent because IM and TM represent fast and inexpensive means for managers to stay in touch with employees and for employees to stay in touch with each other.
   f. Despite their advantages, IM and TM aren't going to replace e-mail.

        i.   E-mail is still probably a better device for conveying long messages that must be saved.

       ii.  IM is preferable for one- or two-line messages that would just clutter up an e-mail inbox.

    g.  On the downside, some IM and TM users find the technology intrusive and distracting.

        i.   Their continual presence can make it hard for employees to concentrate and stay focused.

       ii.  Because instant messages can be intercepted easily, many organizations are concerned about the security of IM and TM.

      iii.  One other point: It's important to not let the informality of text messaging ("omg! r u serious? brb") spill over into business e-mails.

          (a)  Many prefer to keep business communication relatively formal. A survey of employers revealed that 58 percent rate grammar, spelling, and punctuation as "very important" in e-mail messages.

          (b)  By making sure your professional communications are, well, professional, you'll show yourself to be mature and serious. ]

          (c)  Avoid jargon and slang, use formal titles, use formal e-mail addresses for yourself (lose that partygirl@ yahoo.com), take care to make your message concise and well written.

4. Networking Software

    a.  Nowhere has communication been more transformed than in networking, with the growth of social networking platforms such as Facebook and MySpace.

    b.  More than 100 million users have created accounts at MySpace.

    c.  LinkedIn, XING, and ZoomInfo are all professional Web sites that allow users to set up lists of contacts and do everything from casually "pinging" them with updates to hosting chat rooms for all or some of the users' contacts.

    d.  Some companies, such as IBM, have their own social networks.

    e.  To get the most out of social networks and avoid irritating your contacts, use them for high-value items only—not as an everyday or even every-week tool.

    f.  Remember that a prospective employer might check your MySpace or Facebook entry.

    g.  Some entrepreneurs have developed software that mines such Web sites for companies (or individuals) that want to check up on a job applicant (or potential date).

5. Blogs

    a.  Blogs are Web sites about a single person or company, that are usually updated daily.

    b.  Experts estimate that more than 112 million blogs and more than 350 million blog entries are now read daily.

    c.  As a variant of blogs (which are generally either personal or company owned), Twitter is a service that allows users to post "micro-blog" entries about any topic, including work.

    d.  So what's the downside?

        i.   Although some companies have policies in place governing the content of blogs, many don't, and 39 percent of individual bloggers say they have posted comments that could be construed as harmful to their company's reputation.

       ii.  Many bloggers think their personal blogs are outside their employer's purview, but if someone else in a company happens to read a blog entry, there is nothing to keep him or her from sharing

             that information with others, and the employee could be dismissed as a result.

            iii. But most organizations are unlikely to be so forgiving of any blog entry that might cast a negative light on them.

            iv. Also, beware of posting personal blog entries from work.

6. Video Conferencing
   a. Video conferencing permits employees in an organization to have meetings with people at different locations.
   b. Video conferencing technology, in effect, allows employees to conduct interactive meetings without the necessity of being physically in the same location.

D. Managing Information
   1. Dealing with Information Overload
      a. Basex, a company that looks at worker efficiency, found the largest part of an average worker's day—43 percent—is spent on matters that are neither important nor urgent, such as responding to noncrucial e-mails and surfing the Web.
      b. Basex also found 25 percent of an employee's time was spent composing and responding to important e-mail.
      c. Intel designed an 8-month experiment to see how limiting information overload might aid productivity.
         i. One group of employees was told to limit both digital and in-person contact for 4 hours on Tuesdays, while another group followed its usual routine.
         ii. The first group was more productive, and 75 percent of its members suggested the program be expanded. "It's huge. We were expecting less," remarked Nathan Zeldes, an Intel engineer who led the experiments. "When people are uninterrupted they can sit back and design chips and really think."
      d. Some of the biggest technologies companies, including Microsoft, Intel, Google, and IBM, are banding together to study the issue more systematically.
         i. As one of the team members, IBM's John Tang, noted, "There's a competitive advantage to figuring out how to address this problem."
      e. We have already reviewed some ways of reducing the time sunk into e-mails.
   2. Always on Call
      a. As information technology and immediate communication have become a more prevalent component of modern organizational life, more employees find they are never able to get offline.
      b. The addictive potential of constant communication is so great that some harried managers jokingly refer to their BlackBerrys as "Crackberries."
      c. Some business travelers were disappointed when airlines began offering wireless Internet connections in flight because they could no longer use their time in flight as a rare opportunity to relax without a constant barrage of organizational communications.
      d. The negative effects of these communication devices can spill over into employees' personal lives as well.
      e. Both workers and their spouses relate the use of electronic communication technologies outside work to higher levels of work-life conflict.
      f. Employees must balance the need for constant communication with their own personal need for breaks from work, or they risk burnout from being on call 24 hours a day.
   3. Information Security

  a.  Security is a huge concern for nearly all organizations with private or
      proprietary information about clients, customers, and employees.
  b.  A Merrill Lynch survey of 50 executives found 52 percent rated leaks of
      company information as their number-one information security
      concern, topping viruses and hackers.
      i.   In response, most companies actively monitor employee Internet use
           and e-mail records, and some even use video surveillance and record
           phone conversations.
      ii.  Necessary though they may be, such practices may seem invasive to
           employees.
  c.  An organization can buttress employee concerns by involving them in the
      creation of information-security policies and giving them some control
      over how their personal information is used

VI.  Choice of Communication Channel
   A.  People choose one channel of communication over another for several reasons. A
       model of media richness has been developed to explain channel selection among
       managers.
   B.  Recent research has found that channels differ in their capacity to convey
       information (Exhibit 11–6).
   C.  Some are rich in that they have the ability to:
       1.  Handle multiple cues simultaneously.
       2.  Facilitate rapid feedback.
       3.  Be very personal.
       4.  As Exhibit 11-6 illustrates, face-to-face conversation scores highest in
           **channel richness** because it transmits the most information per
           communication episode—multiple information cues (words, postures, facial
           expressions, gestures, intonations), immediate feedback (both verbal and
           nonverbal), and the personal touch of being present.
   D.  Others are *lean* in that they score low on these factors.
       1.  Impersonal written media such as formal reports and bulletins rate lowest in
           richness.
   E.  The choice of one channel over another depends on whether the message is
       routine or nonroutine.
   F.  Routine messages tend to be straightforward and have a minimum of ambiguity.
       1.  Nonroutine messages tend to be complicated and have the potential for
           misunderstanding.
       2.  Routine messages can efficiently be communicated through channels that
           are lower in richness. However, nonroutine messages can effectively be
           communicated only by selecting rich channels.
   G.  High-performing managers tend to be more media-sensitive than low-performing
       managers.
   H.  The past decade has been characterized by facility closings, large layoffs,
       restructuring, merging, consolidating, and the introduction of new products and
       services at an accelerated pace—all nonroutine messages high in ambiguity and
       requiring the use of channels that can convey a large amount of information.
   I.  It's no coincidence that more senior managers have been using meetings to
       facilitate communication and regularly leaving their offices to manage by
       walking around.
   J.  They are relying on richer channels of communication to transmit the more
       ambiguous messages they need to convey.

VII. Barriers to Effective Communication
   A.  Filtering
       1.  Filter refers to a sender's purposely manipulating information so it will be

seen as more favorable by the receiver. For example, telling the boss what she wants to hear.
   2. The more levels in an organization's structure, the more opportunities there are for filtering. Being reluctant to give bad news, or trying to please one's boss distorts upward communications.
B. Selective Perception
   1. Receivers in their communication process selectively see and hear based on their needs, motivations, experience, background, and other personal characteristics.
   2. Receivers project their interests and expectations into communications as they decode them.
C. Information Overload
   1. When the information we have to work with exceeds our processing capacity, the result is information overload.
   2. The result is they tend to select out, ignore, pass over, or forget information. Or they may put it aside until the overload situation is over. The result is lost information and less effective communication.
D. Emotions
   1. How a receiver feels at the time a message is received will influence how he or she interprets it. Extreme emotions are likely to hinder effective communication.
   2. During those times we are most likely to disregard objective thinking and substitute emotions for judgments.
E. Language
   1. Words mean different things to different people. English—our common language—is far from uniform in usage.
   2. Individuals interpret meanings in different ways. For example, incentives and quotas are often perceived as implying manipulation causing resentment among lower levels of the organization.
F. Silence
   1. It's easy to ignore silence or lack of communication, precisely because it is defined by the absence of information.
   2. Employee silence means managers lack information about ongoing operational problems.
   3. Silence regarding discrimination, harassment, corruption, and misconduct means top management cannot take action to eliminate this behavior.
   4. Employees who are silent about important issues may also experience psychological stress.
   5. Silence is less likely where minority opinions are treated with respect, workgroup identification is high, and high procedural justice prevails.
G. Communication Apprehension
   1. An estimated five-to-twenty percent of the population suffer from communication apprehension. They experience undue tension or anxiety in oral and/or written communication. They may find it difficult to talk with others face-to-face or on the telephone.
   2. Studies show those affected with communication apprehension avoid jobs where communication is a dominant requirement.
   3. Managers need to be aware there is a group of people who severely limit their communications with others and rationalize the behavior telling themselves it is not necessary for them to do their jobs effectively.
H. Gender Differences
   1. Research by Deborah Tannen provides important insights into the differences between men and women in terms of their conversational styles. What her studies show is:
      a. Men use talk to emphasize status, while women use it to create

connection. Not every man or woman, but "A larger percentage of women or men as a group talk in a particular way, or individual women and men are more likely to talk one way or the other."

    b. Communication is continually juggling the conflicting needs for intimacy and independence. Intimacy emphasizes closeness and commonalities. Independence emphasizes separateness and differences.

    c. Women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy; men speak and hear a language of status, power, and independence.

    d. For many men, conversations are primarily a means to preserve independence and maintain status in a hierarchical social order.

    e. For many women, conversations are negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support.

2. Men frequently complain that women talk on and on about their problems. When men hear a problem, they frequently assert their desire for independence and control by offering solutions.

3. Women criticize men for not listening.

4. Many women view telling a problem as a means to promote closeness.

5. The women present the problem to gain support and connection, not to get the male's advice.

6. Mutual understanding is symmetrical, but giving advice is asymmetrical—it sets the advice giver up as more knowledgeable, more reasonable, and more in control.

I. "Politically Correct" Communication

1. A final barrier to effective communication is politically correct communication, which is so concerned with being inoffensive that meaning and simplicity are lost or free expression is hampered.

2. Plenty of words and phrases invoke neither racial slurs nor politically correct language.

3. But our desire to avoid offense can also block communication by keeping us from saying what's really on our mind, or it can alter our communication by making it unclear.

4. Consider a few examples:

    a. The *Los Angeles Times* allows its journalists to use the term *old age* but cautions that the onset of old age varies from "person to person," so individuals in a group of 75-year-olds aren't necessarily all old.

    b. CNN has fined its broadcasters for using the word *foreign* instead of *international.*

    c. The Little People of America (LPA) association prefers the term *little people* to *dwarfs* or *midgets.*

5. We must be sensitive about words that do stereotype, intimidate, and insult individuals.

6. But there's a downside to political correctness:

    a. It can complicate our vocabulary and make it harder to communicate accurately.

    b. You probably know what the following terms mean: *garbage, quotas,* and *women.* But each has been found to offend one or more groups.

    c. They've been replaced with terms such as *postconsumer waste materials, educational equity,* and *people of gender,* terms much less likely to convey a uniform message than the words they supplanted and that reduce the likelihood our messages will be received as we intended.

7. There is no simple solution to this dilemma. However, you should be aware of the trade-offs and the need to find a proper balance.

VIII.   Global Implications

    A.  Introduction

      1. Cross-cultural factors clearly create the potential for increased communication problems. (Exhibit 11-7)
      2. A gesture that is well-understood and acceptable in one culture can be meaningless or lewd in another.
      3. Only 18 percent of companies have documented strategies for communicating with employees across cultures, and only 31 percent require that corporate messages be customized for consumption in other cultures.

   B. Cultural Barriers
      1. First, there are barriers caused by semantics. Words mean different things to different people. Some words do not translate between cultures.
         a. Finnish—the word <u>sisu</u> is untranslatable into English. It means something akin to "guts" or "dogged persistence."
         b. English terms such as efficiency, free market, and regulation are not directly translatable into Russian.
      2. Second, there are barriers caused by word connotations. Words imply different things in different languages.
         a. The Japanese word <u>hai</u> means "yes," but may mean "yes, I'm listening," not "yes, I agree."
      3. Third, there are barriers caused by tone differences. In some cultures, language is formal; in others, it is informal. The tone changes depending on the context.
      4. Fourth, there are barriers caused by differences among perceptions. People who speak different languages actually view the world in different ways.

   C. Cultural Context
      1. Cultures tend to differ in the importance to which context influences meaning.
         a. Countries like China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam are high-context cultures.
         b. They rely heavily on nonverbal and subtle situational cues when communicating with others.
         c. What is not said may be more significant than what is said.
         d. A person's official status, place in society, and reputation carry considerable weight.
      2. People from Europe and North America reflect their low-context cultures.
         a. They rely essentially on words to convey meaning.
         b. Body language or formal titles are secondary to spoken and written words.
      3. Communication in high-context cultures implies considerably more trust by both parties.
      4. Oral agreements imply strong commitments in high-context cultures.
      5. Who you are—your age, seniority, rank in the organization—are highly valued and heavily influence your credibility.
      6. In low-context cultures, enforceable contracts will tend to be in writing, precisely worded, and highly legalistic. Similarly, low-context cultures value directness.

   D. A Cultural Guide
      1. Assume differences until similarity is proven.
      2. Emphasize description rather than interpretation or evaluation.
      3. Practice empathy. Put yourself in the recipient's shoes.
      4. Treat your interpretations as a working hypothesis.

IX. Summary and Implications for Managers
   A. There is a link between communication and employee satisfaction
      1. The less uncertainty, the greater the satisfaction.
         a. Distortions, ambiguities, and incongruities between verbal and nonverbal

messages all increase uncertainty and reduce satisfaction.
  b.  The less distortion, the more employees will receive goals, feedback, and other management messages as intended.
  c.  This, in turn, should reduce ambiguities and clarify the group's task.
  d.  Extensive use of vertical, lateral, and informal channels also increases communication flows, reduces uncertainty, and improves group performance and satisfaction.
B.  Perfect communication is unattainable.
  1.  A positive relationship exists between effective communication (which includes perceived trust, perceived accuracy, desire for interaction, top-management receptiveness, and upward information requirements) and worker productivity.
  2.  Choosing the correct channel, being an effective listener, and using feedback can make for more effective communication. But the human factor generates distortions we can never fully eliminate.
  3.  Whatever the sender's expectations, the message as decoded in the receiver's mind represents his or her reality. And this reality will determine performance, along with the individual's level of motivation and degree of satisfaction.
C.  Despite the great advantages of electronic communication, its pitfalls are also numerous.
  1.  Because we gather so much meaning from the way a message is communicated (voice tone, facial expressions, body language), the potential for misunderstandings in electronic communication is great.
  2.  We need to use e-mail, IM, TM, and networking software wisely, or we'll not be as effective as we might want to be.
  3.  Finally, by keeping in mind communication barriers such as gender and culture, we can overcome them and increase our communication effectiveness.