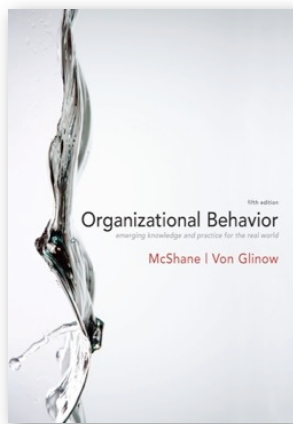# Instructor's Manual to Accompany

Organizational Behavior 5/e

emerging knowledge and practice for the real world

by Steven L. McShane and Mary Ann von Glinow

Chapter 9
Communicating in teams and Organizations

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9 Communicating in Teams and Organizations

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Explain why communication is important in organizations.
2. Diagram the communication process and identify four ways to improve this process.
3. Discuss problems with communicating through electronic mail.
4. Identify two ways in which nonverbal communication differs from verbal communication.
5. Appraise the appropriateness of a communication medium for a particular situation based on social acceptance and media richness factors.
6. Identify four common communication barriers.
7. Discuss the degree to which men and women communicate differently.
8. Outline the key strategies for getting your message across and engaging in active listening.
9. Summarize three communication strategies in organizational hierarchies.
10. Debate the benefits and limitations of the organizational grapevine.

CHAPTER GLOSSARY

communication -- the process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people.

emotional contagion -- the nonconscious process of 'catching' or sharing another person's emotions by mimicking that person's facial expressions and other nonverbal behavior

grapevine -- an unstructured and informal network founded on social relationships rather than organizational charts or job descriptions

information overload – a condition where the volume of information received exceeds the person's capacity to process it.

management by walking around (MBWA) -- A communication practice in which executives get out of their offices and learn from others in the organization through face-to-face dialogue.

media richness -- the medium's data-carrying capacity, that is, the volume and variety of information that can be transmitted during a specific time.

persuasion -- using facts, logical arguments, and emotional appeals to change another person's beliefs and attitudes, usually for the purpose of changing their behavior

wikis -- collaborative web spaces in which anyone in a group can write, edit, or remove material from the Web site
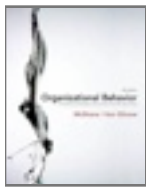
CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

Communication refers to the process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people. Communication supports work coordination, organizational learning, decision making, and employee wellbeing. The communication process involves forming, encoding, and transmitting the intended message to a receiver, who then decodes the message and provides feedback to the sender. Effective communication occurs when the sender's thoughts are transmitted to and understood by the intended receiver. Four ways to improve this process is for both sender and receiver to have common codebooks, to share common mental models, to be familiar with the message topic, and to be proficient with the communication channel.

The two main types of communication channels are verbal and nonverbal. Various forms of computer-mediated communication are widely used in organizations, with email the most popular. Although efficient and a useful filing cabinet, email is relatively poor at communicating emotions; it tends to reduce politeness and respect; it is an inefficient medium for communicating in ambiguous, complex, and novel situations; and it contributes to information overload. Facebook-like web sites, wikis, virtual reality platforms, and other forms of virtual social networking are also gaining popularity as forms of communication. Nonverbal communication includes facial gestures, voice intonation, physical distance, and even silence. Unlike verbal communication, nonverbal communication is less rule-bound and is mostly automatic and nonconscious.

The most appropriate communication medium partly depends on social acceptance factors, including organization and team norms, individual preferences for specific communication channels, and the symbolic meaning of a channel. A communication medium should also be chosen for its data-carrying capacity (media richness). Nonroutine and ambiguous situations require rich media. However, we also need to recognize that lean media allow people to multi-communicate, that the capacity of computer-mediated communication is varied due to the proficiency of individual users, and that social distractions can reduce the efficient processing of information in high media richness channels.

Several barriers create noise in the communication process. People misinterpret messages because of perceptual biases. Some information is filtered out as it gets passed up the hierarchy. Jargon and ambiguous language are barriers when the sender and receiver have different interpretations of the words and symbols used. People also screen out or misinterpret messages due to information overload. These problems are often amplified in cross-cultural settings because of language barriers and differences in meaning of nonverbal cues. There are also some communication differences between men and women, such as the tendency for men to exert status and engage in report talk in conversations, whereas women use more rapport talk and are more sensitive than are men to nonverbal cues.

To get a message across, the sender must learn to empathize with the receiver, repeat the message, choose an appropriate time for the conversation, and be descriptive rather than evaluative. Listening includes sensing, evaluating, and responding. Active listeners support these processes by postponing evaluation, avoiding interruptions, maintaining interest, empathizing, organizing information, showing interest, and clarifying the message.

Some companies try to encourage communication through workspace design, as well as through web-based sites, Some executives also meet directly with employees, such as through management by walking around (MBWA), to facilitate communication across the organization.

In any organization, employees rely on the grapevine, particularly during times of uncertainty. The grapevine is an unstructured and informal network founded on social relationships rather than organizational charts or job descriptions. Although early research identified several unique features of the grapevine, some of these features may be changing as the Internet plays an increasing role in grapevine communication.

POWERPOINT® SLIDES

Organizational Behavior Fifth Edition includes a complete set of Microsoft PowerPoint® files for each chapter. (Please contact your McGraw-Hill/Irwin representative to find out how instructors can receive these files.) In the lecture outline that follows, a thumbnail illustration of each PowerPoint slide for this chapter is placed beside the corresponding lecture material. The slide number helps you to see your location in the slide show sequence and to skip slides that you don't want to show to the class. (To jump ahead or back to a particular slide, just type the slide number and hit the Enter or Return key.)

LECTURE OUTLINE (WITH POWERPOINT® SLIDES)
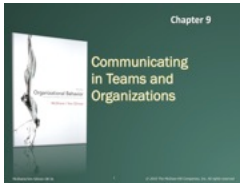
Communicating in Teams and Organizations
Slide 1

Communicating in Teams and Organizations

Social Network Communication at IBM
Slide 2

Social Network Communication at IBM

Standing in front of Beijing's Forbidden City, IBM chief executive Sam Palmisano communicates through his Second Life avatar to several thousand employees worldwide.

Communication Defined
Slide 3

Communication Defined

The process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people

Effective communication -- transmitting the sender's intended meaning (not just symbols)

Importance of
Communication
Slide 4

Importance of Communication

1. Essence of organizations for coordination
   - Need communication to work interdependently toward collective goals
   - Coordinating work activities

2. Organizational learning and decision making
   - Sharing knowledge to make better decisions

3. Employee well-being
   - Fulfills the drive to bond
   - Self-concept through social identity
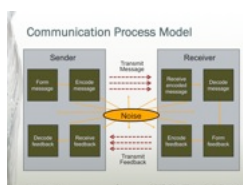
Communication Process
Model
Slide 5

Communication Process Model

1. Sender forms and encodes meaning into words/symbols, etc.

2. Encoded message transmitted to the intended receiver through one or more media

3. Receiver receives and decodes stimuli as intended

4. Sender receives feedback about whether message was received and understood

Noise throughout process
   - psychological, social, and structural barriers that distort and obscure the sender's intended message
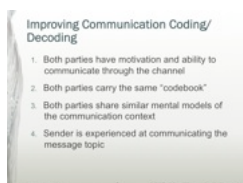
Improving
Communication
Coding/Decoding
Slide 6

Improving Communication Coding/Decoding

Four influences on effective encoding and decoding

1. Both parties have motivation and ability to communicate through the channel
   - How well you and/or other party work with that channel

2. Both parties carry the same "codebook"
   - More accurate and more efficient communication
   - Less need for redundancy

3. Both parties share similar mental models of the communication context
   - Requires less communication

4. Sender is experienced at communicating the message topic
   - Learn best symbols to communicate that topic

Verbal (oral/written) communication

Face-to-face better for conveying emotions, persuading the receiver
- nonverbal cues aid emotional communication
- provides immediate feedback to sender

Written is best for technical details
- higher comprehension than when received verbally

About Face on
Workplace E-mail
Slide 7

About Face on Workplace E-mail

HiWired executives introduced "Home Week" each month, in which they must not travel. This initiative has helped them rediscover the benefits of face-to-face rather than e-mail communication.

How Email Has Altered
Communication
Slide 8

How Email Has Altered Communication

- Preferred communication channel in most companies
  - Now preferred medium for coordinating work
- Efficient for sorting, searching, organizing messages
- Tends to increase volume of communication
- Less face to face/telephone
- More upward communication
- Reduces selective attention biases
  - Less stereotype bias when other party unknown, but increasing stereotype reliance when other's personal characteristics are known

Problems with Email
Slide 9

Problems with Email

- Communicates emotions poorly
- Reduces politeness and respect
  - Sending messages before emotions subside (flaming)
- Inefficient for ambiguous, complex, novel situations
- Increases information overload

Social Networking
Communication
Slide 10

Social Networking Communication

Social network communication clusters people around common interests, expertise or themes.
- e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn
- Most companies seem to fight against rather than leverage potential of social network communication
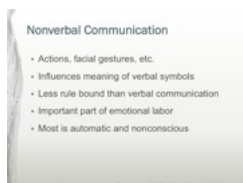
Avatar sites (e.g. Second Life)
- Adds a degree of nonverbal communication

Instant messaging
- Real-time communities through clustered communication

Wikis
- Collaborative web spaces -- co-authoring and editing

Nonverbal
Communication
Slide 11

Nonverbal Communication

Includes actions, facial gestures, physical distance, etc.
- In face-to-face, typically more info transmitted nonverbally than verbally

Influences meaning of verbal symbols

Nonverbal differs from verbal communication
- Less rule bound than verbal communication -- more ambiguous and more susceptible to misinterpretation
- Automatic and nonconscious
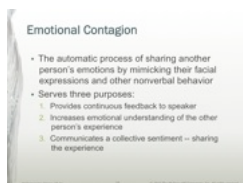
Emotional Contagion
Slide 12

Emotional Contagion

Automatic and nonconscious tendency to mimic and synchronize nonverbal behaviors with others.

Serves three purposes
1. Provides continuous feedback to speaker
2. Increases emotional understanding of the other person's experience
3. Communicates a collective sentiment -- sharing the experience

I Love Rewards Gets
Media-Rich Quick
Slide 13

I Love Rewards Gets Media-Rich Quickly

Every day at 11:15 am, employees at I Love Rewards Inc. meet face-to-face for 10 minutes to communicate priorities and coordinate their efforts. These quick meetings provide a personal connection and highly interactive feedback.

Choosing the Best
Communication
Channel: Social
Acceptance
Slide 14

Choosing the Best Communication Medium: Social Acceptance

Best communication channel depends on:
• Social acceptance
• Media richness

Social acceptance -- how well the communication medium is approved and supported

    1. Team and organization norms about preferred channel

    2. Individual preferences for specific communication channels

    3. Symbolic meaning of the communication channel

Choosing the Best
Communication
Channel: Media
Richness
Slide 15

Choosing the Best Communication Channel: Media Richness

The channel's data-carrying capacity needs to be aligned with the communication activity

High richness when channel:
• conveys multiple cues
• allows timely feedback
• allows customized message
• permits complex symbols

Use rich communication media when the situation is nonroutine and ambiguous
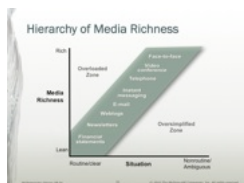
Hierarchy of Media
Richness
Slide 16

Hierarchy of Media Richness
- Highest for face-to-face -- transmits verbal and nonverbal, gives immediate feedback, customizable event
- Lowest for lean media (e.g. reports, flyers)

Contingencies of media richness:
1. nonroutine situations -- parties have little common experience (e.g. emergencies)
2. ambiguous situations -- need to resolve multiple and conflicting interpretations
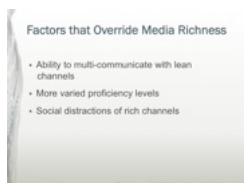
Factors that Override
Media Richness
Slide 17

Factors that Override Media Richness

Ability to multi-communicate
- Multi-tasking in communication -- using two or more channels at the same time

More varied proficiency levels
- Some people can "push" out more message in computer-mediated technology

Social distractions of rich channels
- Effect of status and other social factors reduce efficiency of rich channels
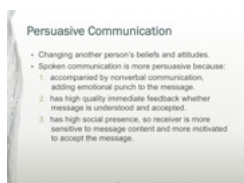
Persuasive
Communication
Slide 18

Persuasive Communication

Changing another person's beliefs and attitudes.

Spoken communication is more persuasive because:
1. accompanied by nonverbal communication, adding emotional punch to the message.
2. has high quality immediate feedback whether message is understood and accepted.
3. has high social presence, so receiver is more sensitive to message content and more motivated to accept the message.
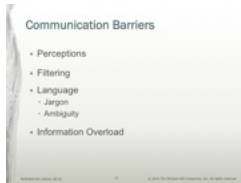
Communication Barriers
Slide 19

Communication Barriers

Perceptions
- Selective attention
- Difficulty empathizing with receiver

Filtering
- May involve deleting or delaying negative information
- To create a good impression

Language
- Jargon
  ‣ words with specialized meaning to specific people
  ‣ potentially improves communication efficiency
  ‣ problem -- receiver might not understand jargon
- Ambiguity
  ‣ symbol has multiple meanings
  ‣ receiver takes wrong interpretation
  ‣ used deliberately by sender to obscure bad news
  ‣ ambiguous language used when communicating with people who have different values and beliefs
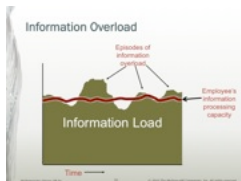
Information Overload
Slide 20

Information Overload

Information processing capacity
- Amount of info that person is capable of processing in a fixed time

Information load
- Amount of info that must be processed per unit of time

Consequences of overload
- Stress, lost information, poorer decisions
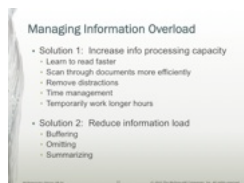
Managing Information Overload

Solution 1: Increase information processing capacity

- Learn to read faster
- Scan through documents more efficiently
- Remove distractions
- Time management
- Temporarily work longer hours

Solution 2: Reduce information load

- Buffering -- others screen person's messages
- Omitting -- discarding junk mail unopened
- Summarizing -- reading executive summaries

Managing Information
Overload
Slide 21

Thumbs Up to the Boss!

In Australia, a co-worker asked Patricia Oliveira why she laughed when he gave the thumbs up that everything is OK. She explained that this gesture "means something not very nice" in her home country of Brazil. After hearing this, several co-workers gave the boss a lot more thumbs up signs!

Thumbs Up to the Boss!
Slide 22

Cross-Cultural Communication

Verbal differences

- Language
- Voice intonation
- Silence and conversational overlaps

Nonverbal differences

- Nonconscious or involuntary nonverbal cues tend to have same meaning, but deliberate gestures vary

Cross-Cultural
Communication
Slide 23

Gender Communication
Differences
Slide 24

Gender Communication Differences

Men tend to:
- report talk -- impersonal and efficient info exchange
- give advice quickly and directly -- using direct statements
- use conversations as negotiations of status
- be reluctant to receive advice
- be less sensitive to nonverbal cues

Women tend to:
- engage on more "rapport talk" -- communicate for relationship
- give advice indirectly and reluctantly
  ‣ less likely to assert status
  ‣ apologize more often
- use conversations as bonding events
- more sensitive to nonverbal cues

Getting Your Message
Across
Slide 25

Getting Your Message Across

1. Empathize
   ‣ think about how receiver will decode message

2. Repeat the message
   ‣ state message in a different way

3. Use timing effectively
   ‣ find a time when receiver not distracted

4. Be descriptive
   ‣ focus on the problem, not on the person
   ‣ avoid attacking receiver's self-esteem

Active Listening Process
& Strategies
Slide 26

Active Listening Process & Strategies

Sensing
- Postpone evaluation -- avoids screening out information
- Avoid interruptions -- give speaker chance to finish message
- Maintain interest -- assume something of value in conversation

Evaluating
- Empathize -- see message from speaker's perspective
- Organize information when getting ahead of speaker

Responding
- Show interest: use eye contact, back channel signals (e.g. "I see")
- Clarify the message—rephrase speaker's ideas

Communicating in Hierarchies

Communicating in
Hierarchies
Slide 27

Workspace design
- Clustering people in teams
- Open office arrangements
  ‣ potentially increases stress --distractions, lack of privacy
  ‣ challenge to find balance

Web-based organizational communication
- Wikis -- collaborative document creation
- Blogs -- personal news/opinion for sharing
- E-zines -- rapid distribution of company news

Direct communication with management
- Management by walking around (MBWA)
- Town hall meetings

Organizational Grapevine
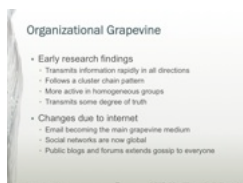
Organizational
Grapevine
Slide 28

Early research findings
- Transmits information rapidly in all directions
- Follows a cluster chain pattern
- More active in homogeneous groups
- Transmits some degree of truth

Changes due to internet
- Email becoming the main grapevine medium
- Social networks are now global
- Public blogs and forums extends gossip to everyone
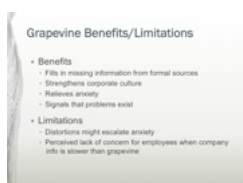
Grapevine Benefits/Limitations

Slide Title
Slide 30

Benefits
- Fills in missing information from formal sources
- Strengthens corporate culture
- Relieves anxiety
- Signals that problems exist

Limitations
- Distortions might escalate anxiety
- Perceived lack of concern for employees when company info is slower than grapevine

Managing the grapevine
- Can't stop it, but don't rely on it for information
- Listen to grapevine as a symptom of problems
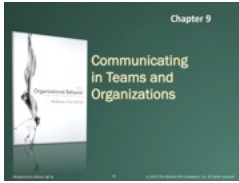
Communicating in Teams and Organizations

Communicating in
Teams and
Organizations
Slide 31

SOLUTIONS TO CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. **You have been hired as a consultant to improve communication between engineering and marketing staff in a large high-technology company. Use the communication model and the four ways to improve that process to devise strategies to improve communication effectiveness among employees between these two work units.**

   The textbook describes four ways to improve communication through coding-decoding. Students can identify various practices to improve communication for each of these general categories:

   Ensure that both parties have similar "codebooks" -- In this scenario, this might occur by having marketing and engineering staff learn basic concepts commonly used by the other profession. Staff in each unit might include people who have double degrees or have spent part of their careers in the other profession, so have acquired the language and meaning of words used by both groups.

   Ensure that both parties have similar mental models about the context of the information -- This can be accomplished by having people in both professions gain experience in specific project areas. For example, if one of the company's work fields is laser technology, then both engineering and marketing staff who communicate with each other should have previous experience working on projects in that area. In contrast, communication problems and inefficiencies will increase when either party is new to working on laser technology (either as engineers or marketing specialists).

   Ensure that both parties are familiar with the message topic -- This category differs from the previous one in that it specifically refers to experience with communicating on the topic rather than just experience with the field of work. Thus, to some extent, a recommendation for this category is similar to the previous category, namely that the parties should gain experience in the field of their joint work. However, another recommendation is that the company would improve communication effectiveness by ensuring that staff gain experience communicating with the other group. So, for example, marketing staff would gain communication effectiveness by gaining work experience on marketing laser technology AND by gaining experience communicating with engineers on projects involving laser technology.

   Ensure that sender and receiver have proficiency with the communication channel -- This category suggests that both engineers and marketing specialists should be familiar with meetings, email, instant messaging, and other channels through which both parties will be communicating. Training and establishing ground rules can also improve communication effectiveness in this regard. For example, before starting a project involving engineers and marketing staff, both groups might receive training in video conference meetings, and they might form rules on when to use this communication channel and what behaviors are required or discouraged when using this communication channel.

2. **A company in a country that is just entering the information age intends to introduce electronic mail for office staff at its three buildings located throughout the city. Describe two benefits as well as two potential problems that employees will likely experience with this medium.**

   One benefit of e-mail is that employees can form and transmit messages quickly across large physical distances. This is useful here, because employees work in different buildings throughout the city. E-mail allows them to send written messages to each other within seconds rather than the much longer time required for inter-office mail delivery.

   A second advantage that this company will likely experience from e-mail is that employees will be more likely to communicate directly with senior management. E-mail is an impersonal medium, so there is less inhibition for employees to send messages directly to people with higher status in the organization.

One likely problem with e-mail is that the volume of information transmitted will increase. Some employees may eventually find themselves flooded with e-mail messages on top of their other forms of communication. Without proper training, many employees will be tempted to transmit their e-mail messages to multiple receivers.

Another problem is that some employees might unwittingly engage in flaming or be the receiver of a flamed e-mail. This will likely be most common during the first few years of the system, because employees need to be more sensitive to their emotional state of mind when sending e-mail messages. They also need to be more sensitive to how receivers interpret the words sent.

3. **Senior management at a consumer goods company wants you to investigate the feasibility of using a virtual reality platform (such as Second Life) for monthly online meetings involving its three-dozen sales managers located in several cities and countries. Use the social influence and media richness factors described in this chapter to identify information you need to consider when conducting this evaluation.**

To answer this question, students need to address the main issues in the section on choosing the best communication medium. For social influence, students should consider the following:

Organization and team norms -- students should ask whether this communication medium is consistent with the team or organization's informal rules of conduct. Maybe it is too informal or sci-fi for their expectations. Or maybe Second Life is too anonymous in an organization that expects plenty of "face time."

Individual preferences -- Are employees competent with information technologies such as Second Life, or are they still stumbling through email? Do enough staff members feel awkward in virtual forms of interaction?

Symbolic meaning of a channel -- How are virtual reality platforms perceived by others? Is a Second Life meeting viewed as a novelty with mostly entertainment value or as a legitimate form of business communication? Do employees treat these meetings as serious events or peripheral to the "real" communication in the organization?

For media richness, students should consider the degree of media richness of virtual reality platforms, and the importance of high or low media richness in communication events involving these sales managers.

4. **Wikis are collaborative Web sites where anyone in the group can post, edit, or delete any information. Where might this communication technology be most useful in organizations?**

This is a useful discussion question -- the answer is not explicitly in the textbook -- which encourages students to think actively about the functions of different communication media (specifically, wikis). Students should mention that wikis refine and add on evolving information, so they work very well to develop repositories of knowledge. in this respect, Wikipedia is well-suited as a wiki, and organizations would have intranet wikipedias where employees add in new knowledge for others to discover. On a smaller scale, wikis may be ideal for teams to prepare project reports. Even where team members are responsible for different sections of the report, they have an opportunity to read over and edit the content of other members. this process potentially improves consistency and integration of the report.

This form of electronic communication has yet to be fully exploited, so it is likely students will have a range of answers to this question. The creativity and innovations expressed by students should be encouraged and expanded upon. It should be kept in mind the wikis referred to in the question are limited to members of selected groups. These are not the public domain type wikis in which anyone can participate. Therefore, some internal controls can be applied. Limited internal wikis could be useful when group members are dispersed geographically. If participants reside in different time zones, the asynchronous aspect would be of benefit. Wikis combine the advantages of electronic chat lines with the asynchronous advantage of email. It would also be possible for managers to have parallel yet heterogeneous groups working on the same question or problem using two different wikis. The ideas generate by each could then be synthesized by the manager.

Instructors may want to reverse this question at some point in the discussion, by asking where wikis would be ineffective as a communication medium. A wiki is a collaborative communication channel, so it is less relevant or useful where most information originates from one person (although a wiki format would allow others to refine

even the work of that person, even if only in terms of grammar or organizing the logical flow of information). Wikis are also difficult where employees hoard information (e.g. competition) or otherwise lack trust in each other.

5. **Under what conditions, if any, do you think it is appropriate to use email to notify an employee that he or she has been laid off or fired? Why is email usually considered an inappropriate channel to convey this information?**

   This is an excellent thinking question because the discussion can go in a variety of directions. With respect to the first part of the question, expect students to connect the communication medium with ethical values and sensitivity to saving face. Students might also mention situations where many people are being laid off, whereby e-mail is more efficient. But of course this raises the concern that the efficiency of e-mail represents its callousness for such personal and sensitive matters.

   Students should also recall the problems with e-mail described in this chapter. E-mail is subject to flaming – the receiver may reply harshly via e-mail to the lay off notice whereas a face-to-face meeting may be more civil. E-mail lacks emotion, so it is difficult for the sender to convey his or her sadness at having to announce the layoff. E-mail is asynchronous, so the sender does not receive instant feedback from the person being laid off. This can be a problem because the sender cannot change the style of message quickly enough to avoid conflict or confusion.

6. **Suppose that you are part of a virtual team and must persuade other team members on an important matter (such as switching suppliers or altering the project deadline). Assuming that you cannot visit these people in person, what can you do to maximize your persuasiveness?**

   The answer to this question relates to the topic of media richness, because persuasion depends on higher media rich communication media. The textbook notes that spoken communication, particularly face-to-face interaction, is more persuasive than e-mails, web sites, and other forms of written communication. If people cannot interact in person, they should attempt face-to-face through video conferencing. Audio conferences have somewhat lower media richness again, but may be persuasive to the extent that voice intonation communication emotionality and more complex information. Students might note that logical explanations assist persuasion, so an online video conference might be followed by written communication.

7. **Explain why men and women are sometimes frustrated with each other's communication behaviors.**

   Although women also engage in report talk, they tend to communicate to build or maintain social bonds (Rapport talk). For this reason, they are less likely to give advice, will use indirect questions. Women are more willing than men to apologize. Finally, women are more sensitive than men to nonverbal cues in face-to-face meetings.

   The result is that women get frustrated with men because they receive impersonal and status-based advice from men when they are trying to form rapport. Men get frustrated because they can't understand why women don't appreciate their advice.

8. **In your opinion, has the introduction of email and other information technologies increased or decreased the amount of information flowing through the corporate grapevine? Explain your answer.**

   This is purely a discussion question, but students should be able to bring out logical foundations for their arguments. The textbook points out that e-mail and other information technologies have changed the nature of grapevine communication such that social networks have expanded as employees communicate with each other around the globe, not just around the next cubicle. Public web sites have become virtual water coolers by posting anonymous comments about specific companies for all to view. This technology extends gossip to anyone, not just employees connected to social networks.

   These changes do not directly mean that the amount of information flowing through the corporate grapevine has increased. However, a couple of arguments suggest that grapevine communication has increased. First, information technologies make it easier to communicate, as well as easier to communicate with more people at a larger distance. Logically, this suggests that there is less of an investment barrier to engage in the grapevine.

Second, information technologies such as e-mail tend to be fairly lean media, whereas the grapevine tends to relate to unique and sometime complex events. As such, it requires more ongoing communication to clarify messages and correct misinterpreted messages.

Third, by sending grapevine messages to more people, the total volume of communication might increase as more people receive the information and either pass the information onward or contact the sender for more clarity or provide personal opinion.

CASE STUDY 9-1: COMMUNICATING WITH THE MILLENNIALS

Case Synopsis

This case describes the apparent differences in how Millennials (people born between 1980 and 1995) communicate compared with others, particularly baby boomers. The case particularly identifies how younger employees communicate more through computer-mediated technology, as well as the problems this can create. The case also describes how corporate leaders at BT (British Telecom) are attempting to communicate more effectively with Millennials.

Suggested Answers to Case Questions

1. **Take a poll of your class (at least, the GenX and GenY members). At school or work, how many regularly (e.g. daily or every few days) send or receive information (not entertainment) using (a) email, (b) instant messages (such as MSN), (c) cell phone text messages, (d) reading/writing blogs, (e) visiting/authoring social network sites (e.g. Facebook), (f) watching/creating online videos (e.g., YouTube)?**

   My experience is that students thoroughly enjoy polls on topical issues, such as the use of emerging technologies. The larger the class, the more interested students are in the results. The poll can occur through a show of hands in class, but this question is very well suited to "clicker" technology. If your class has mandatory online activities between classes, consider taking a poll online and posting the results in class. Along with these poll results, consider asking students which communication channels are gaining and losing popularity. For example, most students will likely say that Facebook is gaining, whereas blogs are losing losing popularity.

2. **Even within this generation, there are different preferences for communication media. After conducting the poll above, ask students who don't regularly use one or more of these methods why they don't like that particular communication medium. Ask those who very often use these sources to give their point of view.**

   This question offers an excellent opportunity to develop a list of contingencies of communication, including media richness, social acceptance, and amount of effort required. For example, few students in most classes would have posted YouTube videos because it takes time to develop a good quality video and because there may be few situations where that effort is justified. A important part of this question is how often students receive rather than send information through these channels. For example, only a few people write blogs, yet many people read them. This is an opportunity to ask the "few" who write blogs or post YouTube videos what motivates them to do so.

3. **Companies have been slow and reluctant to adopt new forms of communication, such as social network sites, IM, and online videos. If you were a senior manager, how would you introduce these communication technologies in the workplace to share information and knowledge more effectively?**

   This is a good discussion question on strategic communication, in particular how to introduce and reinforce the use of new forms of communication. One key issue is when, where, and who to use the communication channel. As the chapter describes, many companies have struggled to find the right balance of individual freedom to use a communication medium, such as blogs and social networks. This case also identifies the challenges of text messaging in organizations.

BusinessWeek CASE STUDY 9-2: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE FACE-TO-FACE

Case Synopsis

If there is one thing corporate globetrotters agree on, it's that there is no substitute for face time. "I don't want to sound like a whirling dervish," says Paul Calello, Credit Suisse's investment banking chief. "But in a global world you have to get in front of your employees, spend time with your clients, and show commitment when it comes to joint ventures, mergers, and alliances. The key is thoughtful travel--traveling when necessary."

Many predicted that technology and globalization would bring the end of face time. Instead, these conditions have made personal interaction all the more important. Executives increasingly feel the inhuman pull of having to be in two, three, four places around the world at the same time. Those who master this new reality are able to strategically identify their face-to-face priorities and finesse tight travel schedules to make these event happen with a reasonably sane schedule.

This BusinessWeek case study relates stories and advice from executives who tolerate outlandish travel schedules to meet others eyeball to eyeball rather than from a distance.

Suggested Answers to Case Questions

1. **Identify the main reasons raised in this article why executives meet employees and clients face-to-face rather than through other communication channels. Are all of these reasons logical or are some overstated?**

   This case nicely outlines reasons why face-to-face communication is important in the business world. The overarching explanation for each of them is persuasion or trust. However, here are specific benefits mentioned or implied by each person in the case:

   Paul Calello, Credit Suisse's investment banking chief -- face-to-face is important because (a) it is more persuasive by communicating emotions, (b) the person's presence communicates commitment, and (c) it bonds people for social networking.

   Muhtar Kent, Coca-Cola president -- face-to-face forms better relationships and gives you more detailed information about what is happening on the ground

   Bill Roedy, the chief of MTV Networks International -- face-to-face helps form/maintain trust across cultures and provides more detailed information about the situation

   Mark Sullivan, CEO of WhittmanHart Consulting -- face-to-face communicates stronger social support to reduce employee stress or aid bereavement

Valerie E. Germain, a managing partner at global headhunting shop Heidrick & Struggles -- meeting face-to-face symbolizes the client's or employee's importance. It also is better for persuasive communication.

This questions promoted debate among students regarding some of the statements made in this case study. Personally, I think all of the executives in this case study make sound arguments for traveling and meeting face-to-face. Students might argue that some of these activities could be done well with video conferencing, but there is still a large degree of social separation through online channels.

2. **In this world of globalization and information technology, discuss the skills and knowledge that these world-traveling executives require to make face-to-face communication work effectively.**

One skill is the ability to think strategically about use of a scarce resources -- the individual's time These people are constantly working through the logic of who should be seen in person, who should be seen by a subordinate, and who should receive less costly forms of communication (e.g. telephone call).

A second skill is emotional intelligence. Several of these executives referred to casing out the situation, which would include empathizing and having social awareness through observation of the other party. This requires quick evaluation of the situation. A related competency would be a global mindset, in which they quickly develop an understanding of the culture and perspectives of others.

A third skill of these people is undoubtedly their ability to organize their time and manage the physiological and psychological stress of global travel.

TEAM EXERCISE 9-3: ANALYZING THE BLOGOSPHERE

Purpose

This exercise is designed to help students to understand the dynamics of corporate blogs as a way to communicate around organizations.

Instructions

This activity is usually conducted in between classes as a homework assignment. The instructor will divide the class into teams (although this can also be conducted as individuals). Each team will identify a corporate blog (written by a company or government executive and aimed for customers, employees, or the wider community). The team will analyze content on the selected blog and answer the following questions for class (preferably with brief samples where applicable):

1. **Who is the main intended audience of the selected blog?**

2. **To what extent do you think this blog attracts the interest of its intended audience? Please explain.**

3. **What are the main topics in recent postings about this organization? Are they mostly good or bad news? Why?**

Comments for Instructors

This exercise offers a rich opportunity for students to see blogs in action. Of course, there are numerous blogs with varying intended audiences, so keep in mind that the results of this exercise will vary from one group or individual to the next.

The debriefing works best when student presentations include quoted material from the website threads to illustrate the topics on the blog they studied. The quotations often reveal how "polished" the blogs are – whether they seem to be written casually, or are really fine-tuned by a marketing department. The writing style (as well as content) should be discussed in the context of the first two questions. The discussion can become quite interesting – such as how casual or formal should be the writing to relate to various audiences.

Another interesting aspect of this exercise is the level of opinion versus fact in these blogs. (These are "corporate" blogs, but even here some bloggers quite freely express their thoughts on various matters.)

TEAM EXERCISE 9-4: ACTIVE LISTENING EXERCISE

These teaching notes were prepared by the author of this exercise, Mary Gander, Winona State University

Purpose

This exercise is designed to help students to understand the dynamics of active listening in conversations and to develop active listening skills.

Materials

None

Instructions

For each of the four vignettes presented in this exercise, student teams (or students working individually) will compose three statements that demonstrate active listening. Specifically, one statement will show empathy for the situation; the second asks for clarification and detail in a nonjudgmental way; the third statement will provide nonevaluative feedback to the speaker. Here are details about each of these three types of responses:

Showing empathy – Acknowledge feelings. Sometimes it sounds like the speaker wants you to agree with him/her but, in reality, they mainly want you to understand how they feel. "Acknowledging feelings" involves taking in their statements, but looking at the "whole message" including body language, tone of voice, and level of arousal, and trying to determine what emotion they are conveying. Then you let them know that you realize they are feeling that emotion by just acknowledging it in a sentence.

Asking for clarification and detail while withholding your judgment and own opinions. This conveys that you are making a good effort to understand and not just trying to push your opinions onto them. To formulate a relevant question in asking for more clarification, you will have to listen carefully to what they say. Frame your question as someone trying to understand in more detail, often asking for a specific example is useful. This also helps the speaker to evaluate his/her own opinions and perspective.

Providing non-evaluative feedback – feeding back the message you heard. This will allow the speaker to determine if he/she really got the message across to you and help prevent troublesome miscommunication. It will also help the speaker become more aware of how he/she is coming across to another person (self-evaluation). Just think about what the speaker is conveying and paraphrase it in your own words, and say it back to the speaker (without judging the correctness or merit of what they said), asking him/her if that is what they meant.

After teams (or individual students) have prepared the three statements for each vignette, the instructor will ask them to present their statements and explain how these statements satisfy the active listening criteria.

Comments to Instructors

This exercise is beneficial after a lecture/presentation on the purposes and method of Active Listening as an effective communication and conflict management tool in the work place.

During debriefing, teams may be asked to volunteer their responses, and the class, as a whole, can discuss the sample responses – if they fit the requirements or not, and why. If the response is not fitting, the class may be asked to suggest what might be a more fitting response, and why

One suggestion is to have students earn up to 12 points for completing the exercise in class (one point per response). This motivates them to concentrate on it more and do a more serious job on it. Also, it is a good mechanism for

checking attendance in class that day. Less than 12 points may be given to teams who obviously do not put much effort into the exercise, or obviously do not understand some of the principles involved. If many students have difficulty with the exercise, the instructor may consider the possibility they need to review the concepts and principles of Active Listening again.

This exercise can be followed with an out-of-class assignment requiring students to try Active Listening skills in an actual situation in their lives and write up a brief description of the interaction with another person (or persons) and what happened. This strategy of (1) teaching the method, (2) practicing the skills, and (3) applying the method in one's life, tends to be quite effective for most students.

Vignettes with Examples of Effective Answers

Vignette #1

A colleague stops by your desk and says, "I am tired of the lack of leadership around here. The boss is so wishy washy, he can't get tough with some of the slackers around here. They just keep milking the company, living off the rest of us. Why doesn't management do something about these guys? And YOU are always so supportive of the boss; he's not as good as you make him out to be."

(1) Showing Empathy:
  ‣ "You sound kind of frustrated."
  ‣ "It sounds like you are feeling kind of taken advantage of"

(2) Asking for clarification:
  ‣ "Could you help me understand better what you mean by the term 'slackers'?"
  ‣ "Can you give me an example of when I was too supportive of the Boss?"

(3) Providing nonevaluative feedback:
  ‣ "You think there are a lot of employees around here who are not doing their share of the work."
  ‣ "You think I am being too supportive of the boss."

Vignette #2

Your co-worker stops by your cubicle, her voice and body language show stress, frustration, and even some fear. You know she has been working hard and has a strong need to get her work done on time and done well. You are trying to concentrate on some work and have had a number of interruptions already. She just abruptly interrupts you and says, "This project is turning out to be a mess, why can't the other three people on my team quit fighting each other?"

(1) Showing Empathy:
  ‣ "You seem to be under a lot of stress today."
  ‣ "The lack of agreement on your team is very frustrating."

(2) Asking for clarification:
  ‣ "Specifically, what seems to be going wrong with the project?"
  ‣ "Specifically, what is it your team members disagree about?"

(3) Providing nonevaluative feedback:
  ‣ "You think the project you are working on is going to be a failure."
  ‣ "The people on your team are not handling their differences of opinion very productively, is that right?"

Vignette #3

One of your subordinates is working on an important project. He is an engineer who has good technical skills and knowledge and was selected for the project team because of that. He stops by your office and appears to be in quite agitated, his voice is loud and strained and his face has a look of bewilderment. He says, "I'm supposed to be working with four other people from four other departments on this new project, but they never listen to my ideas and seem to hardly know I'm at the meeting!"

(1) Showing Empathy:

‣ "You feel un-listened to and unappreciated."

‣ "You seem frustrated with not being able to get your ideas communicated."

(2) Asking for clarification:

‣ "Could you briefly explain a situation in which they wouldn't listen?"

‣ "How do you usually go about communicating your ideas at a meeting?"

(3) Providing nonevaluative feedback:

‣ "The four people from different departments, on your project team, don't seem to be listening to your ideas."

‣ "Do you mean to say that cross functional communication is a challenging aspect of your project?"

Vignette #4

Your subordinate comes into your office in a state of agitation, and asks if she can talk to you. She is polite and sits down. She seems calm and does not have an angry look on her face. However, she says, "It seems like you consistently make up lousy schedules, you are unfair and unrealistic in the kinds of assignments you give certain people, me included. Everyone else is so intimidated they don't complain but I think you need to know that this isn't right and it's got to change."

(1) Showing Empathy:

‣ "You are concerned about the fairness and appropriateness of assignments given certain people."

‣ "You feel the need to speak up for other employees who may be frightened to speak up."

(2) Asking for clarification:

‣ "Could you help me understand by giving me a couple of specific examples of assignments that were given unfairly or unrealistically?"

‣ "Help me understand, more specifically, how I might be acting that makes employees feel intimidated."

(3) Providing nonevaluative feedback:

‣ "You believe a lot of employees are intimidated by me."

‣ "You think the schedules I make up are consistently unfair and unrealistic."

TEAM EXERCISE 9-5: CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION GAME

Purpose

This exercise is designed to develop and test student knowledge of cross-cultural differences in communication and etiquette.

Materials

The instructor will provide one set of question/answer cards to each pair of teams. (Master pages for these cards are provided on the following pages.)

Instructions

Step 1: The class is divided into an even number of teams. Ideally, each team would have three students. (Two or four student teams are possible if matched with an equal-sized team.) Each team is then paired with another team and the paired teams (team "A" and Team "B") are assigned a private space away from other matched teams.

Step 2: The instructor will hand each pair of teams a stack of cards with the multiple choice questions face down. These cards have questions and answers about cross-cultural differences in communication and etiquette. No books or other aids are allowed.

Step 3: The exercise begins with a member of Team A picking up one card from the top of the pile and asking the question on that card to both people on Team B. The information given to Team B includes the question and all alternatives listed on the card. Team B has 30 seconds after the question and alternatives have been read to give an answer. Team B earns one point if the correct answer is given. If Team B's answer is incorrect, however, Team A earns that point. Correct answers to each question are indicated on the card and, of course, should not be revealed until the question is correctly answered or time is up. Whether or not Team B answers correctly, it picks up the next card on the pile and asks it to members of Team A. In other words, cards are read alternatively to each team. This procedure is repeated until all of the cards have been read or time has elapsed. The team receiving the most points wins.

Comments to Instructors

Thirty-six question cards for this exercise appear over the next nine pages. This information originates from the sources listed below. Please make one copy of each page for each group and cut along the lines to make the four cards on each page.. Try copying these pages onto somewhat heavier colored paper so that the answers cannot be seen through the cards. Alternatively, you might photocopy a random design (such as a cross-hatching) on the back of each page.

The textbook provides a limited amount of information pertaining to the questions in this exercise. Rather, students must rely on past learning, logic, and luck to win. The instructor can, of course, change some of the rules of the game, such as how points are awarded or how much time is allowed for each question. Based on my previous experience, this is one of the most memorable exercises in the course. It works for second year undergraduate students, MBA students, and military officers. . It is educational, competitive, and humorous. Don't be surprised if you see students giving strange hand signals for several days after this activity! This exercise mainly intended as a game without debriefing. However, the instructor can pull the class together after the game is over to discuss which questions students had the most difficulty answering correctly.

Sources of Card Material

R. Axtell, *Gestures: The Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World* (New York: Wiley, 1991); R. Mead, *Cross-Cultural Management Communication* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 1990), Chapter 7; J. V. Thill and C. L. Bovée, *Excellence in Business Communication* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), Chapter 17.

In many Chinese cultures, a direct order such as "Get me the Amex report" is most likely to be given by:

a. senior management to most subordinates

b. a junior employee to a peer

c. <u>senior management only to very junior employees</u>

d. junior employees to outsiders

e. none of the above

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Managers from which country are least likely to tolerate someone being 5 minutes late for an appointment?

a. United States

b. Australia

c. Brazil

d. <u>Sweden</u>

e. Saudi Arabia

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Your car breaks down in Saudi Arabia and needs repair. What is the best approach to getting the job done most quickly?

a. <u>Stop by every 30 minutes to ask the mechanic how much is done.</u>

b. Compliment the mechanic on his good reputation, then don't return for several hours.

c. Ask the mechanic when the car will be ready and return only at that time.

d. Tell the mechanic that you will move the car to another repair shop if the work isn't done when he promises.

e. Tell the mechanic where you can be reached, then leave for several hours.

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You want to do business with a Greek company, but the representative insists on examining every detail of your proposal for several hours. This time consuming detail means that the Greek representative:

a. doesn't trust the accuracy of your proposal.

b. is being polite, and really doesn't want to go ahead with the deal.

c. is signaling you to consider a more reasonable offer, but doesn't want to ask directly.

d. is uncomfortable with detailed proposals and would prefer a simple handshake.

e. <u>is showing good manners and respect to you and your proposal.</u>

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Japanese clients visit you at your office for a major meeting. In the meeting, where should the top Japanese official be seated?

a. closest to the door.

b. as close to the middle of the room as is possible.

c. anywhere in the room; seating location isn't important to Japanese business people.

d. somewhere away from the door with a piece of artwork behind him/her.

e. always beside rather than facing the host.

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While visiting a German client, you make a compliment about the client's beautiful pen set. What will probably happen?

a. The client will insist very strongly that you take it.

b. The client will tell you where to buy such a pen set at a good price.

c. The client will accept the compliment, then get on with business.

d. The client will probably get upset that you aren't paying attention to the business at hand.

e. The client will totally ignore the comment.

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In which countries does holding your nose with thumb and forefinger mean "It smells bad!"

a. Jamaica

b. United States

c. Japan

d. Russia

e. All of the above

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Inuit people (Eskimos) are well known for rubbing noses as a sign of personal closeness. What other group rubs noses as a sign of friendliness?

a. Latvians

b. French

c. Maori

d. Nicaraguans

e. Japanese

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You visit a Tibetan tribesman, who sticks out his tongue at you. The tribesman is signaling that:

a. you are not welcome here.

b. he has prepared a delicious meal for you.

c. you wear ugly clothes.

d. you are welcome here.

e. this is not an opportune time to visit.

People (particularly men) from which of these countries tend to shake hands the most?

a. Japan

b. France

c. Scotland

d. Chile

e. Finland

Male guests in many Latin American countries often give their visitors an abrazzo when greeting them. An abrazzo is:

a. a light kiss on the nose.

b. a special gift, usually wine or food.

c. clapping hands in the air as the visitor approaches.

d. a strong embrace, or kiss with hand on shoulder.

e. a firm two-handed handshake, lasting almost one minute.

A polite way to give your business card to a Japanese business person is:

a. casually, after several hours of getting to know the person.

b. when first meeting, presenting your card with both hands.

c. at the very end of the first meeting.

d. casually during the meeting, with the information face down to show humility

e. never; it is considered rude in Japan to give business cards.

In which of these countries is it important to show respect to guests by bowing when greeting them?

a. Taiwan

b. Italy

c. Venezuela

d. Hong Kong

e. None of the above

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In The United States, having one's arm extended, palm up, with fingers bending back and forth is usually interpreted as "come here." In which country does a similar gesture mean "good-bye"?

a. France

b. China

c. Brazil

d. Hong Kong

e. Italy

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In Saudi Arabia, someone extends his hand out at you, palm down, fingers splayed outward, and middle finger facing straight down. What does this mean?

a. "Let's stop here to rest."

b. "Kiss my hand to show respect!"

c. "I do not want to be disturbed."

d. ""F--- You!" (i.e., the impudent digit)

e. "I'm glad to see you again."

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While visiting West Africa, you decline another drink by putting you hand out, palm up and facing out with fingers spread -- like a police officer's signal to stop. To the West African, this might mean:

a. "I don't want any more to drink."

b. "Bring me just half of a glass of that drink."

c. "You could have any one of five fathers" (i.e., you are a bastard)

d. "Bring me five more glasses to drink, please!"

e. "No more; I've already had five glasses to drink."

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In which of the following countries are two male business associates most likely to hold hands or be arm-in-arm in public?

a. Saudi Arabia

b. United Kingdom

c. Australia

d. Tibet

e. Scandinavia

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While visiting Southern France, you are asked by the concierge whether the meeting room is satisfactory. You give the OK signal of thumb and fore finger touching. To the concierge, this probably means:

a. "Screw you!"

b. "How much does it cost?"

c. "It's worthless!"

d. "It's OK, just fine, thanks"

e. This gesture has no meaning in Southern France

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In which of the following countries are office arrangements NOT usually an indicator of the person's status

a. United Kingdom

b. Germany

c. Saudi Arabia

d. China

e. United States

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In which country is it most appropriate to mention (and indicate on your business card) that your organization has been in business for many years?

a. United States

b. Peru

c. Germany

d. Nigeria

e. Mexico

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For most Americans, sticking your thumb up with a closed fist means "Everything is OK". In Australia, it means:

a. Get me one of those (i.e., signaling one)

b. "Look up, mate!"

c. the person is about to shake your hand.

d. "Up yours!"

e. <u>"Everything is OK!"</u>

Nodding your head up and down tends to mean "No" in which country?

<u>a. Bulgaria</u>

b. Australia

c. Brazil

d. China

e. Pakistan

In many parts of India, when people rock their head slowly back and forth, side-to-side, it usually means:

a. "Yes, I agree with you"

b. "No, I disagree with you."

c. <u>"Yes, I'm listening."</u>

d. "You're crazy!"

e. None of the above.

In the United States, patting your stomach with your hand usually means "I'm full". What does this gesture mean in Brazil?

a. "You are my friend for life."

b. "You think with your stomach!"

c. <u>"I'm full"</u>

d. "Bring me more food, please!"

e. "You've got a deal!"

In which country is grasping one's ear a sign of apology?

a. India

b. Taiwan

c. Mexico

d. Australia

e. Portugal

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One of the most universal gestures is:

a. A pat on the back (congratulations)

b. A smile (happiness or politeness)

c. Scratching your chin (thinking)

d. Closing your eyes (boredom)

e. Arm up, shaking back and forth (waving)

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In Chile, the fist slap (slapping the closed fist of one hand with the open palm of the other) means:

a. "Up yours!"

b. "What a great idea"

c. "I think we can reach agreement."

d. "You're crazy!"

e. "Congratulations!"

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Most Americans interpret the finger touching thumb in an "O" shape as "OK". In which country is this gesture very rude?

a. Russia

b. Greece

c. Brazil

d. All of the above

e. None of the above

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A German colleague makes two fists with thumbs tucked inside and makes a slight up-and-down or pounding motion. This says:

a. "I'm angry with you."

b. "Good luck!"

c. "Let's get down to business."

d. "Up yours!"

e. "Hurry up!"

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When trying to point to an object, Japanese people tend to:

a. raise their noses in the direction of the object.

b. point with their thumb.

c. point with their index finger (as in the U.S.).

d. point with their right elbow.

e. point with an open hand.

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In Saudi Arabia, you are asked to pass a dish of food to someone. Which of the following should you do?

a. Pass the dish using your left hand.

b. Pass the dish using your right hand.

c. Pass the dish using both hands.

d. Ask a servant/waiter to pass the dish.

e. Any of these actions is acceptable.

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In the United States, scratching your head usually means that the person is confused or skeptical. In Russia, it means:

a. "You're crazy!"

b. "I am listening carefully."

c. "I want to get to know you better."

d. "I'm confused or skeptical."

e. None of the above

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How do most people in Holland interpret the "fig" gesture (a clenched fist with thumb coming through between the knuckle of the index and middle fingers)?

a. It means "Good luck!"

b. It shows anger.

c. It is a subtle way of pointing to something.

d. <u>It symbolizes sexual behavior between a man and woman.</u>

e. It means, "I'm not telling the truth."

Which of the following gestures have the same meaning in almost every part of the world?

a. Shaking your fist (anger)

b. Making a circular motion with the hand over the stomach (hunger)

c. Yawning (showing tiredness)

d. <u>All of the above</u>

e. None of the above

In which country is it usually <u>not</u> necessary to spend several hours discussing network-related topics before turning to business issues?

a. Brazil

b. China

c. Japan

d. <u>Hong Kong</u>

e. None of the above

In Japan, who should arrive first at a meeting?

a. The most senior employees

b. <u>The most junior employees</u>

c. Employees who missed the previous meeting.

d. The oldest employee

e. No particular order is expected

SELF-ASSESSMENT 9-6: ARE YOU AN ACTIVE LISTENER?

> NOTE: This self-assessment may be completed at the Online Learning Center.

Purpose
This self-assessment is designed to help students estimate their strengths and weaknesses on various dimensions of active listening

Instructions
Students are asked to think back to face-to-face conversations they have had with a co-worker or client in the office, hallway, factory floor, or other setting. Using the scale, they should indicate the extent that each item describes their behavior during those conversations. They are asked to answer each item as truthfully as possible so that they get an accurate estimate of where their active listening skills need improvement.

Feedback for the Active Listening Skills Inventory
The textbook describes several dimensions of active listening. Five of these dimensions are estimated in this self-assessment: Avoiding Interruption, Maintaining Interest, Postponing Evaluation, Organizing Information, and Showing Interest. Together, these five dimensions represent the total active listening score. Each subscale has a potential score ranging from 0 to 9 points; the total active listening score has a range from 0 to 45 points. Higher scores indicate that the person perceives that he or she has a higher level of each skill. The following tables and information compare the student's results to the range of scores among a sample of over 200 MBA students.

Avoiding Interruption
People with high scores on this dimension have a strong tendency to let the speaker finish his or her statements before responding. The average score among a sample of MBA students was 5.9.

Score	Interpretation
8 to 9	High score
6 to 7	Average score
0 to 5	Low score

Maintaining Interest
People with high scores on this dimension have a strong tendency to remain focused and concentrate on what the speaker is saying even when the conversation is boring or the information is well known. The average score among a sample of MBA students was 4.6.

Score	Interpretation
6 to 9	High score
3 to 5	Average score
0 to 2	Low score

Postponing Evaluation

People with high scores on this dimension have a strong tendency to keep an open mind and avoid evaluating what the speaker is saying until the speaker has finished. The average score among a sample of MBA students was 5.4.

Score	Interpretation
7 to 9	High score
4 to 6	Average score
0 to 3	Low score

Organizing Information

People with high scores on this dimension have a strong tendency to actively organize the speaker's ideas into meaningful categories. The average score among a sample of MBA students was 6.4.

Score	Interpretation
8 to 9	High score
5 to 7	Average score
0 to 4	Low score

Showing Interest

People with high scores on this dimension have a strong tendency to use nonverbal gestures or brief verbal acknowledgements to demonstrate that they are paying attention to the speaker. The average score among a sample of MBA students was 5.7.

Score	Interpretation
7 to 9	High score
5 to 6	Average score
0 to 4	Low score

Active Listening (total)

People with high scores on this total score have a strong tendency to actively sense the sender's signals, evaluate them accurately, and respond appropriately. Scores on this active listening total score range from 0 to 45. The average score among a sample of MBA students was 27.9.

Score	Interpretation
37 to 45	Excellent active listening
29 to 36	Good active listening
21 to 28	Moderate active listening
0 to 20	Active listening needs improvement