

Instructor's Manual to Accompany **Organizational Behavior 7/e** by Steven L. McShane and Mary Ann Von Glinow



Chapter 9: Communicating in Teams and Organizations

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Communicating in Teams and Organizations

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Explain why communication is important in organizations and discuss four influences on effective communication encoding and decoding.
2. Compare and contrast the advantages of and problems with electronic mail, other verbal communication media, and nonverbal communication.
3. Explain how social acceptance and media richness influence the preferred communication channel.
4. Discuss various barriers (noise) to effective communication, including cross-cultural and gender-based differences in communication.
5. Explain how to get your message across more effectively, and summarize the elements of active listening.
6. Summarize effective communication strategies in organizational hierarchies, and review the role and relevance 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

CHAPTER SUMMARY BY LEARNING OBJECTIVE

9-1 Explain why communication is important in organizations and discuss four influences on effective communication encoding and decoding.

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, changing others' behavior, and employee well-being. 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. The effectiveness of this process depends on whether the sender and receiver have similar codebooks, the sender's proficiency at encoding that message to the audience, the sender's and receiver's motivation and ability to transmit messages through that particular communication channel, and their common mental models of the communication context.

9-2 Compare and contrast the advantages of and problems with electronic mail, verbal communication media, and nonverbal communication.

The two main types of communication channels are verbal and nonverbal. Various forms of Internet-based communication are widely used in organizations, with e-mail being the most popular. Although efficient and a useful filing cabinet, e-mail 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. An emerging set of communication channels is social media, which are Internet- or mobile-based channels that allow users to generate and interactively share information. Social media are more conversational and reciprocally interactive than traditional channels. They are "social" by encouraging collaboration and the formation of virtual communities. 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. Some nonverbal communication is automatic through a process called emotional contagion.

9-3 Explain how social acceptance and media richness influence the preferred communication channel.

The most appropriate communication medium partly depends on its social acceptance and media richness. Social acceptance refers to how well the communication medium is approved and supported by the organization, teams, and individuals. This contingency includes 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, technology-based lean media might be almost as effective as rich media for transferring information. This particularly occurs where users can multi-communicate and have high proficiency with that technology, and where social distractions of high media richness channels reduce the efficient processing of information through those channels. These contingencies are also considered when selecting the best channels for persuasion.

9-4 Discuss various barriers (noise) to effective communication, including cross-cultural and gender-based differences in communication.

Several barriers create noise in the communication process. People misinterpret messages because of misaligned codebooks due to different languages, jargon, and the use of ambiguous phrases. Filtering messages and information overload are two other communication barriers. These problems are often amplified in cross-cultural settings, where these problems occur, along with differences in the meaning of nonverbal cues, silence, and conversational overlaps. 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.

9-5 Explain how to get your message across more effectively, and summarize the elements of active listening.

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.

9-6 Summarize effective communication strategies in organizational hierarchies, and review the role and relevance of the organizational grapevine.

Some companies try to encourage communication through workspace design, as well as through Internet-based communication channels. Some executives also meet directly with employees, such as through management by walking around (MBWA) and town-hall meetings, 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.

LECTURE OUTLINE (WITH POWERPOINT® SLIDES)



Communicating in Teams and Organizations

Communicating in
Teams and
Organizations
Slide 1



Communicating at Infosys

Infosys has adopted an “adult–adult” communication strategy by introducing InfyBubble, an in-house social media platform similar to Facebook.

Communicating at
Infosys
Slide 2



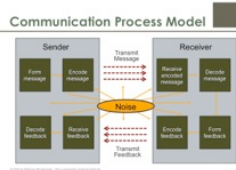
Communication Defined

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

Effective communication – transmitting the sender’s intended meaning

Importance of Communication

1. Coordinating work activities
 - Frequent, timely, and accurate communication is the primary means through which employees and work units synchronize their work
2. Vehicle for organizational learning
 - Means for knowledge to enter the organization and be distributed to employees
3. Decision making
 - Critical ingredient for decision making
4. Influencing others – changing their behavior
 - May be passive e.g. describing the situation or may be a deliberate attempt to change someone’s thoughts/actions
5. Employee well-being
 - Fulfills the drive to bond; validates self-worth; maintain social identity



Communication Process Model
Slide 4

Communication Process Model

1. Sender forms and encodes message into words, gestures, voice intonations, and other symbols or signs
2. Encoded message is transmitted to the intended receiver through one or more communication channels (media)
3. Receiver senses the incoming message and decodes it into something meaningful (ideally, the decoded meaning is what the sender had intended)
4. Sender looks for evidence that the other person received and understood the transmitted message e.g. formal or indirect Note: Feedback repeats the communication process i.e. intended feedback is encoded, transmitted, received, and decoded from the receiver to the sender of the original message

Noise -- Psychological, social, and structural barriers that distort and obscure the sender's intended message

Improving Communication Coding/Decoding

- Sender/receiver have similar codebooks
- Sender is experienced encoding that message
- Sender/receiver are motivated and able to use the selected channel
- Sender/receiver have shared mental models of the communication context



Improving Communication Coding/Decoding
Slide 5

Improving Communication Coding/Decoding

Four main factors that influence the effectiveness of the encoding-decoding process:

1. Sender and receiver have similar codebooks
 - Codebooks are symbols used to convey message content e.g. words and gestures have same meaning
2. Sender has experience encoding the message
 - As a person gains more experience with the subject matter, he/she becomes more proficient at conveying the message
3. Sender and receiver are motivated and able to use the selected communication channel
 - Both know how to use the communication channel effectively (e.g. text messaging proficiently)
 - Both are engaged with the channel -- enjoyment using a channel seems to increase communication vigilance and effort
4. Sender and receiver have shared mental models of the communication context
 - Share common understanding about the setting/environment, so less communication is needed to clarify meaning (e.g. US and Russian astronauts have mutual understanding of space station setting)

Communication Channels

Two main types of channels

- Verbal – uses words and occurs through spoken or written channels
- Nonverbal – any part of communication that does not use words

Atos Origin Replaces Email with Social Media Communication

European information technology company Atos Origin is replacing email completely with other internet-based communication tools within the next couple of years.



Atos Origin Replaces Email with Social Media Communication

Slide 6

Atos Origin Replaces Email with Social Media

Executives at the Paris-based global information technology consulting firm believe that email is creating “information pollution” that stifles productivity and undermines employee well-being. Atos Origin’s strategy is radical—it is completely replacing email with other communication tools that are part of its social media site.

How Email Has Altered Communication

- Preferred channel for coordinating work
- Tends to increase communication volume
- Significantly alters communication flow
- Somewhat reduces status differences and stereotyping



How Email Has Altered Communication

Slide 7

How Email Has Altered Communication

- Preferred channel for coordinating work e.g. scheduling
- Often increases the volume of communication
- Significantly alters the flow of information within groups and throughout the organization -- Increases communication with people up the hierarchy
- Reduces some face-to-face and telephone communication
- Social and organizational status differences are somewhat less apparent

Problems with Email

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



Problems with Email

Slide 8

Problems with Email

Poor medium for communicating emotions

- Email lacks the parallel communication channel that conveys the emotional meaning of words e.g. facial expression

Reduces politeness and respect

- Email messages are often less diplomatic e.g. “flaming”
- People are more likely to write things they would not say in a face-to-face conversation

Poor medium for ambiguous, complex, and novel situations

- Although fine for well-defined situations, email can be cumbersome in ambiguous, complex, and novel situations

Contributes to information overload

- Messages are created and copied to many people with little effort required
-

Communicating Through Social Media

Internet/mobile-based channels with user-generated, interactive content

- Blogs, wikis, tweets, personal sites (e.g. Facebook)
- More conversational and interactive
- Most can develop a public identity
- Encourage communities – links, interactivity, feedback

Serves diverse functions

- Presenting identity, enabling conversations, etc.

Communicating Through Social Media Slide 9

Communicating Through Social Media

Internet- or mobile-based channels that allow users to generate and interactively share information

- blogs, wikis, tweets, personal presentation sites (e.g. Facebook)
- more conversational and interactive between sender and receiver
- typically enable users to develop a public identity
- encourage formation of communities through links, interactive conversations, common space
- audience can be participants (e.g. feedback)

Serves diverse functions

- Presenting individual's identity; enabling conversations; sharing information; sensing others' online presence; maintaining relationships; revealing reputation/status; etc.

Nonverbal Communication

- Influences meaning of verbal symbols
- Less rule-bound than verbal communication
- Most is automatic and nonconscious



Nonverbal Communication Slide 10

Nonverbal Communication

Includes actions, facial gestures, physical distance and even silence

- Most information is communicated nonverbally
- Like a parallel conversation, nonverbal cues signal subtle information to both parties
- Influences meaning of verbal symbols
- Less rule-bound than verbal communication
- More ambiguous and susceptible to misinterpretation
- Most is automatic and nonconscious
- Can communicate the same meaning across cultures e.g. smiling

Emotional Contagion

- The automatic process of sharing another person's emotions by mimicking their facial expressions and other nonverbal behavior

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 as part of drive to bond

Emotional Contagion Slide 11

Emotional Contagion

Nonconscious process of 'catching' or sharing another person's emotions by mimicking that person's facial expressions and other nonverbal behavior

Serves three purposes

1. Provides continuous feedback that we understand and empathize with the sender
2. Increases emotional understanding of the other person's experience – helps experience that emotion more fully
3. Communicates a collective sentiment i.e. social solidarity—people see others share the same emotions that they feel

Choosing Channels: Social Acceptance

Do others support use of that communication channel for that purpose?
Depends on:
1. Firm/team norms for using the channel
2. Individual preferences for using the channel
3. Symbolic meaning of the channel

Choosing Channels: Social Acceptance

Slide 12

Choosing Channels: Social Acceptance

Do others support use of that communication channel for that purpose?

Depends on:

1. Organizational and team norms regarding the use of specific communication channels
 - e.g. email or text messaging is the medium of choice in some organizations, whereas meeting face-to face may be the norm elsewhere
2. Individual preferences for specific communication channels
 - e.g. some co-workers ignore (or rarely check) voice mail, but quickly respond to text messages or email
3. Symbolic meaning of a channel
 - e.g. some may be considered professional vs. casual

Choosing Channels: Media Richness

The channel's data-carrying capacity needs to be aligned with the communication activity
High richness when channel:
1. conveys multiple cues
2. allows timely feedback
3. allows customized message
4. permits complex symbols
Use rich communication media when the situation is nonroutine and ambiguous

Choosing Channels: Media Richness

Slide 13

Choosing Channels: Media Richness

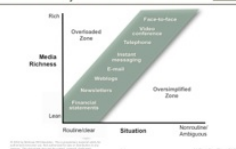
Media richness – a medium's data-carrying capacity i.e. the volume and variety of information that can be transmitted during a specific time

Communication channel has high richness when:

1. It is able to convey multiple cues e.g. both verbal and nonverbal information
2. Allows timely feedback from receiver to sender
3. Allows the sender to customize the message
4. Makes use of complex symbols e.g. words with multiple meanings

Note: Use rich communication media when the communication situation is nonroutine and ambiguous

Hierarchy of Media Richness



Hierarchy of Media Richness

Slide 14

Hierarchy of Media Richness

- Highest for face-to-face – transmit verbal and nonverbal, get almost immediate feedback from the receiver, quickly adjust message and style, use complex language
- Lowest for lean media e.g. financial statements, newsletters, email

Contingencies of media richness:

1. Routine situations – lean media works because the sender and receiver have common expectations through shared mental models
2. Ambiguous situations – requires rich media -- parties must share more information with immediate feedback to resolve multiple and conflicting interpretations

Exceptions to Media Richness

Media richness theory doesn't apply as well to electronic channels because:

1. Able to multi-communicate through lean channels
2. More varied proficiency levels
3. Lean channels have less social distraction than do media rich channels

Computer-Mediated
Exceptions to Media
Richness
Slide 15

Exceptions to Media Richness Theory

Media richness theory doesn't apply as well to electronic communication channels because:

1. Ability to multi-communicate

- Might be able to exchange as much information through two or more lean media simultaneously as through one high media richness channel
- e.g. write text message while listening to a discussion at a large meeting

2. Communication proficiency

- Proficient users can "push" more information through the channel
- e.g. experienced smartphone users can process messages quickly

3. Social presence effects

- Lean channels have less social distraction than do media rich channels

Persuasive Communication

- Changing another person's beliefs and attitudes.
- Spoken communication is more persuasive because:
 - accompanied by nonverbal communication
 - has high quality immediate feedback
 - has high social presence

Persuasive
Communication
Slide 16

Persuasive Communication

Persuasion – changing another person's beliefs and attitudes

Spoken communication (particularly face-to-face interaction) is more persuasive because:

- It is typically accompanied by nonverbal communication e.g. animated hand gestures can amplify the emotional tone of the message
- It offers the sender high quality immediate feedback whether or not the receiver understands and accepts the message – sender can adjust more quickly than with written communication
- It has high social presence so listeners are more motivated to pay attention and consider the sender's idea

Communication Barriers

- Perceptions
- Filtering
- Language
 - Jargon
 - Ambiguity
- Information Overload



Communication Barriers
Slide 17

Communication Barriers

Perceptions

- Receivers don't listen as well as senders assume
- Senders overestimate how well other people understand the message

Filtering

- Delete or delay negative information or use less harsh words so the message sounds more favorable

Language

- Jargon – noise when specialized words and phrases are transmitted to people who do not have the jargon codebook
- Ambiguity – ambiguous language causes misunderstandings, but may be appropriate to minimize emotional responses (e.g. "rightsizing")

Information Overload

- (see next slide)

Information Overload

- job's information load exceeds person's capacity to process it
 - Information gets overlooked or misinterpreted
- Two sets of solutions:
 - Increase information processing capacity
 - Examples: learn to read faster, remove distractions
 - Reduce information load
 - Examples: buffering, prioritizing, summarizing



Information Overload
Slide 18

Information Overload

- Information processing capacity – the amount of information an employee is able to process in a fixed unit of time
- Information load – the amount of information to be processed per unit of time (jobs have a varying information load)
- Noise occurs because information gets overlooked or misinterpreted when people can't process it fast enough -- poorer decisions and higher stress

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 – having incoming information filtered
- Omitting – overlooking messages
- Summarizing – reading executive summaries

Cross-Cultural Communication

- Verbal differences
 - Language
 - Voice intonation
 - Silence/conversational overlaps
- Nonverbal differences
 - Some nonverbal gestures are universal, but others vary across cultures

Cross-Cultural Communication

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Cross-Cultural Communication

Verbal differences

- Language
- Voice intonation
- Silence and conversational overlaps

Nonverbal differences

- Nonconscious/involuntary nonverbal cues tend to have the same meaning across cultures (e.g. smiling), but meaning varies for deliberate gestures

Gender Communication Differences

- Men view conversations more as power, status, functionality
 - Rapport talk
 - Give advice quickly
 - Dominate conversation
- Women consider more interpersonal relations
 - Rapport talk
 - Indirect advice/requests
 - Sensitive to nonverbal cues

Gender Communication Differences

Slide 20

Gender Communication Differences

Men more likely than women to view conversations as negotiations of relative status and power

- Report talk – impersonal and efficient information exchange
- Give advice directly
- Dominate the talk time in conversations with women

Women tend to:

- Engage in more “rapport talk” – relationship building
- Make more use of indirect requests; apologize more often; seek advice from others more quickly than do men
- More sensitive than men to nonverbal cues in face-to-face meetings

Getting Your Message Across

- Empathize
- Repeat the message
- Use timing effectively
- Focus on the problem, not the person



Getting Your Message Across

Slide 21

Getting Your Message Across

1. Empathize

- e.g. being sensitive to words that may be ambiguous or trigger the wrong emotional response

2. Repeat the message

- e.g. rephrase the key points a couple of times

3. Use timing effectively

- Find a time when the receiver is less likely to be distracted

4. Focus on the problem not the person

- When communicating bad news or criticism

Active Listening Process
& Strategies



Active Listening Process
& Strategies
Slide 22

Active Listening Process & Strategies

Sensing

- Postpone evaluation – not forming an opinion until the speaker has finished
- Avoid interruptions – give speaker chance to finish message
- Remain motivated to listen to the speaker

Evaluating

- Empathize – try to understand and be sensitive to the speaker's feelings, thoughts, and situation
- Organize the speaker's ideas during the communication

Responding

- Show interest e.g. maintain sufficient eye contact and send back signals e.g. "I see"
- Clarify the message—rephrase speaker's ideas at appropriate breaks e.g. "So you are saying that...."

Communicating in Hierarchies

- Workspace design
 - Open offices – consider noise, distractions
 - Clustering people in teams
- Internet-based organizational communication
 - Wikis – collaborative document creation
 - E-zines – rapid distribution of company news
- Direct communication with management
 - Management by walking around (MBWA)
 - Town hall meetings

Communicating in
Hierarchies
Slide 23

Communicating in Hierarchies

Workspace design

- Open offices – all employees (including management) work together; increase communication, but may increase stressors (noise, distractions)
- Cluster employees into team spaces

Internet-based organizational communication

- Wikis – collaborative document creation
- E-zines – rapid distribution of company news

Direct communication with management

- Management by walking around (MBWA)
- Town hall meetings/roundtable forums to hear opinions

Organizational Grapevine

- 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
 - Emerging grapevine channels: Email, tweets, etc
 - Social networks are now global, extends grapevine

Organizational
Grapevine
Slide 24

Organizational Grapevine

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

Early research findings

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

Changes due to internet

- Emerging grapevine channels -- Email, social networking, tweets
- Social networks are now global, not local, so grapevine is extended

Grapevine Benefits/Limitations

- Benefits
 - Fills in missing information from formal sources
 - Strengthens corporate culture
 - Relieves anxiety
 - Associated with the drive to bond
- Limitations
 - Distortions might escalate anxiety
 - Perceived lack of concern for employees when company info is slower than grapevine

Grapevine Benefits/
Limitations
Slide 25

Grapevine Benefits/Limitations

Benefits

- Fills in missing information not available through formal channels
- Strengthens corporate culture e.g. communicates stories
- Relieves anxiety – most active during times of uncertainty
- Associated with drive to bond – drive for social interaction

Limitations

- Distortions might escalate rather than reduce anxiety
- Employees develop more negative attitudes toward the organization when management is slower than the grapevine

What should corporate leaders do with the grapevine?

- Listen to the grapevine as a signal of employee anxiety, then correct the cause of this anxiety
- Directly inform employees of news before it spreads through the grapevine



Communicating in
Teams/Organizations
Slide 26

Communicating in Teams and Organizations



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 the sender has experience encoding (sending) the message topic -- This strategy specifically refers to experience with communicating on the topic rather than just experience with the work context. The main recommendation, therefore, is that the sender has practiced communicating the message. This might occur by having one person speak to many others about important matters (e.g. executive “A” communicates new human resource policies whereas executive “B” keep employee informed about financial matters. By specializing the communication role, each communicator becomes an expert at communicating that narrower band of content to employees throughout the organization. In contrast, if Person “A” is responsible for communicating all company matters to one particular employee group, that communicator would have less knowledge and experience about communicating each topic.

Ensure that sender and receiver are motivated and able to use 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. The group might also figure out which media people prefer to use more than others.

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 field 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).

- 2. “An organization comes into being when people can communicate with each other.” Discuss the benefits and limitations of communicating with e-mails among team members.**

Effective communication is vital to all organizations, no company could exist without it. It helps in organizational coordination, organizational learning and decision making. E-mail communication has benefits because messages can be quickly written, edited and transmitted to teams of any size. However, team members may not capture the emotional tone of the message in absence of being able to read the facial expressions and other non-verbal cues. For ambiguous, complex and novel situations, emails can provide an opportunity to write things people would find difficult to communicate in face-to-face conversations. It may allow time to team members to think over issues and then react. For new teams, email conversation may create misunderstandings but as teams get mature, email conversations may actually help in avoiding conflicts, clarifying situations in and resolving them.

- 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 acceptance 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 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 websites 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 wikis 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 generated 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 e-mail to notify an employee that he or she has been laid off or fired? Why is e-mail 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 e-mail 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: 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 Gen-X and Gen-Y members). At school or work, how many regularly (e.g., daily or every few days) send or receive information (not entertainment) using (a) e-mail, (b) instant messages or Twitter tweets, (c) cell phone text messages, (d) reading/ writing blogs, (e) visiting/authoring social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), (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 want to hear 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 Twitter and YouTube videos are gaining popularity, 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.



TEAM EXERCISE: 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: CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION GAME

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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, with four cards provided per page. Copy these pages on thick paper and cut out the four cards per page. Prepare one set of cards for each pair of teams.

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”) have 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

Forty (40) question cards for this exercise appear over the next ten 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. Preferably copy these pages onto somewhat heavier color paper so the cards are stiff to hold and the answers cannot be seen through the cards. For shorter exercises, use any subset of these cards.

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, *Essential Do’s and Taboos* (New York: Wiley, 2007); Goldsmith, B. “Europeans dress most casually for work, Indians dress smartest,” Reuters, 5 August 2010; Mole, J. *Mind Your Manners*, 3rd ed (Nicholas Brealey, London, 2003); Government of Canada. Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. “Cultural Information” various countries. <http://www.intercultures.ca>; Kwintessential. “Country Etiquette Guides,” various countries. <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html>; and additional sources.

Which African or Middle Eastern country has the strongest protocol about business cards, such as having them available, using your right hand to give and receive them, and taking time to read cards received from others?

- a) Kenya
- b) South Africa
- c) Ethiopia
- d) Iran
- e) Chad

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In which of these countries would male professional and management staff be most expected to wear a suit regularly at work?

- a) Sweden
- b) India
- c) Russia
- d) Italy
- e) United States

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In which of these countries is it least appropriate to use colorful or exaggerated words (e.g. “it was a catastrophe”) to emphasize something important?

- a) Switzerland
- b) France
- c) Brazil
- d) Australia
- e) Chile

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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 most likely 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) is showing good manners and respect to you and your proposal.

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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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In which of these countries is it fairly common for the local coworker to ask during your first meeting about your education and age?

- a) South Korea
- b) United States
- c) Thailand
- d) Germany
- e) None of the above

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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.

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

- a) Japan
- b) France
- c) Scotland
- d) Chile
- e) Finland

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Male guests in many Latin American countries often give their visitors an abrazo when greeting them. An abrazo 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.
- e) a firm two-handed handshake, lasting almost one minute.

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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.

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

- a) Germany
- b) Italy
- c) Venezuela
- d) Hong Kong
- e) Japan

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When doing business with clients or meeting coworkers in Thailand, which of the following is considered particularly rude or unprofessional:

- a) looking directly at other people for more than a second or two.
- b) showing the bottom of your feet or shoes.
- c) trying to shake hands with coworkers of your same sex.
- d) for men, attending a meeting without a tie.
- e) asking during the first meeting about types of food they enjoy eating.

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A male American manager arrives in Brazil and greets a female manager from that country. They know each other by email but have never met in person. How should the American greet his Brazilian colleague?

- a) Shake her right hand vigorously with both of his hands.
- b) Kiss the air beside her left cheek, then her right cheek.
- c) Say "Hello" but do not touch; men rarely touch women in Brazilian business settings.
- d) Reach out his right hand to shake her hand, watching that she does the same.
- e) Kiss the air beside her right cheek only.

Steven L. McShane

Several people enter an elevator (lift) in a Japanese company. Who should take responsibility for operating the elevator?

- a) No one in particular
- b) The most senior person unless he/she is far away from the controls.
- c) The employee with the highest technical skills.
- d) The person closest to the controls, no matter what position or status they hold.
- e) The most junior person unless he/she is far away from the controls.

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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) Norway

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While visiting Southern France, the concierge asks you whether the meeting room is satisfactory. You give the OK signal of thumb and fore finger touching to make an “O”. To the concierge, this probably means:

- a) This is a rude gesture meaning that the concierge is an unmentionable orifice.
- 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 these countries are executives most likely to ask employees further down the hierarchy for their opinion about a business matter that might be relevant to them?

- a) Netherlands
- b) Hong Kong
- c) Italy
- d) Taiwan
- e) Venezuela

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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) a rude gesture (“Up yours”)
- e) “Everything is OK!”

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

- a) Bulgaria
- b) Australia
- c) Brazil
- d) China
- e) Pakistan

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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) “Yes, I’m listening.”
- d) “You’re crazy!”
- e) None of the above.

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In which of these countries do people tend to have the least physical distance between them in line-ups, stand-up conversations, and the like?

- a) United States
- b) Germany
- c) Iceland
- d) Malaysia
- e) Argentina

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In which of these countries is it usually inappropriate to set up an important meeting for Friday afternoon?

- a) Australia
- b) Thailand
- c) Norway
- d) Israel
- e) Chile

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You are responsible for giving presentations to company employees in several countries about the new product line. In which country should you subdue your excitement more than the other countries listed here?

- a) Czech Republic
- b) Kenya
- c) United States
- d) Spain
- e) Brazil

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In which country do people typically give brief and not-so-firm (fairly weak) handshakes between men?

- a) Germany
- b) Russia
- c) France
- d) China
- e) United Kingdom

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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) Sweden
- e) Saudi Arabia

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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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Which of these gestures has the specified meaning in virtually every part of the world?

- a) Congratulating someone with a pat on the back
- b) Smiling to show happiness or politeness
- c) Shaking your head to show disagreement
- d) Sticking your thumb up to show everything is OK
- e) Greeting someone by waving (shaking hand back and forth with arm raised)

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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) A rude gesture ("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; never touch it yourself.
- 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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The top management team (CEO and VPs) calls a meeting of sales and marketing staff regarding proposed changes to the company's marketing strategy. In which of these countries is the executive team mainly reporting on the strategic change rather than expecting staff to discuss and consensually decide on those changes?

- a) Ireland
- b) United Kingdom
- c) Turkey
- d) Finland
- e) New Zealand

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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) All of the above
- e) None of the above

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

- a) Brazil
- b) Ethiopia
- c) Greece
- d) Hong Kong
- e) None of the above

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In Japan, who should arrive first at a meeting?

- a) The most senior employees
- b) The most junior employees
- c) Employees who missed the previous meeting.
- d) The oldest employee
- e) No particular order is expected

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SELF-ASSESSMENT: ARE YOU AN ACTIVE LISTENER?

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 three main dimensions of active listening: sensing, evaluating, and responding. Together, these three dimensions represent the total active listening score.

Sensing

Sensing is the process of receiving signals from the sender and paying attention to them. Active listeners improve sensing in three ways. They postpone evaluation by not forming an opinion until the speaker has finished, avoid interrupting the speaker's conversation, and remain motivated to listen to the speaker.

Evaluating

This dimension of active listening includes understanding the message meaning, evaluating the message, and remembering the message. To improve their evaluation of the conversation, active listeners empathize with the speaker – they try to understand and be sensitive to the speaker's feelings, thoughts, and situation. Evaluation also improves by organizing the speaker's ideas during the communication episode.

Responding

Responding, the third dimension of active listening, is feedback to the sender, which motivates and directs the speaker's communication. Active listeners show interest through nonverbal cues (eye contact, nodding, symbiotic facial expression) and by sending back channel signals (e.g. "I see"). They also clarify the message, such as by summarizing or rephrasing the speaker's ideas at appropriate breaks ("So you're saying that . . . ?").

Scores on the three Active Listening dimensions range from 4 to 20. The overall score ranges from 12 to 60. Norms vary from one group to the next. The following table shows norms from a sample of 100 MBA students in two countries (Australia and Singapore). For example, the top 10 percentile for sensing is 17, indicating that 10 percent of people score 17 or above and 90 percent score below 17 on this dimension. Keep in mind that these scores represent self-perceptions. Evaluations from others (such as through 360-degree feedback) may provide a more accurate estimate of your active listening on one or more dimensions, particularly the responding dimension which is visible to others.

Active Listening Norms

Percentile (% with scores at or below this number)	Sensing Score	Evaluating Score	Responding Score	Total Score
Average Score	14.5	14.4	16.7	45.6
Top 10 percentile	17	17	19	53
Top 25th percentile	15	16	18	48
Median (50th percentile)	15	14	17	45
Bottom 25th percentile	13	13	16	43
Bottom 10 percentile	11	12	14	39