Kathryn Colter, the Chief Executive Officer of GMV, arrives at her Los Angeles office at 8 a.m. sharp. She has cleared her schedule today to devote her attention to planning a very important message: her annual speech to shareholders.

This past year has been a mixed bag for GMV. The company’s newspaper and television holdings have suffered a drop in readers and viewers, while the film production unit seems to be holding its own. Surprisingly, GMV’s publishing division has fared the best, with the release of several autobiographies by high-profile politicos and a couple of political diatribes by television pundits.

However, the biggest challenge the company has faced this year was the well-publicized lawsuit that was brought against one of GMV’s division presidents for sexual discrimination and harassment. After the announcement, stock prices took a dive and have not yet fully recovered.

discussion...

1. Ms. Colter must decide how much time, if any, she wants to spend on each of these issues in her speech. What is your recommendation? How should she address each topic, if at all?

2. What should Ms. Colter’s primary purposes be in her speech? How should she achieve these purposes?

3. What other topics might Ms. Colter address to help her achieve the purposes of her speech?
In this chapter, you will learn about the first element you should consider when devising a business communication strategy: purpose. After reading this chapter, you should have a good understanding of the importance of identifying the purposes of your communication, how to identify those purposes, and then how to apply what you have learned in communication practice.

Hundreds of years ago, the Greek philosopher and writer Aristotle (384–322 BC) identified three purposes of communication: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. Although entertainment is the purpose of much of the communication that occurs in the culture of the United States today, it is not highly emphasized in communication for business purposes. In fact, communication that is intended to entertain can have a negative effect on the relationship you have with others or can damage your credibility. For example, if you use humor in oral presentations or e-mail messages at work, you take the risk of offending others who might not share your sense of humor or creating an image of yourself as unprofessional. Some attempts at humor may even violate the law if they are considered racist, sexist, ageist, or otherwise discriminatory of others.

For these reasons, entertainment will not be considered one of the foundational purposes of communication in organizational settings. However, four purposes of communication still exist in the professional workplace. These are:

- To inform
- To persuade
- To convey goodwill
- To establish credibility
Many writers group credibility and goodwill into a single category, but those purposes have been separated in this text to emphasize the importance of both aspects in achieving your purposes of communication and to help you better understand their nuances.

**Communicating to Inform**

When asked the purpose of communication, most of us respond with one simple answer: to inform. Our common sense tells us that we communicate to tell someone about something. To inform is to pass on information. In the world of work, you are informing when you explain something to your colleagues, your employees, or your customers and clients. If you tell an employee how to operate the copy machine, you are informing; if you tell a customer how to fill out a form, you are informing. You also inform when you tell another person what happened. Perhaps you received a phone call from a customer who is angry about his or her service, and you need to describe the call to your supervisor to learn what to do next. This situation is another example of communicating to inform.

**Communicating to Persuade**

Although we may believe that most of our communication is intended to inform others, in the business world almost all communication is persuasive. In other words, you are trying to get another person to do or believe something. In business, you are almost always selling: selling your ideas, yourself, your products, or your services. Selling and persuading are nearly synonymous in the business world. You may be trying to persuade your supervisor to give you a raise, you may be attempting to persuade a colleague to change a portion of a project on which you are both working, or you may be trying to sell a customer your company’s service or product. All of these are examples of persuasion at work.

In order to succeed at persuasion, you must generally give good reasons for the person you are communicating with to do or believe what you intend. That is one reason why it is generally important to identify your purposes for communicating in the workplace before you communicate. If you believe you are only informing, you may fail to provide the good reasons or evidence necessary to persuade, if that is indeed your primary purpose.

Evidence consists of a variety of types of information, such as facts, anecdotes, examples, and statistics. These types of evidence and their usage are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6: Content.

According to Conger (1998), persuasion is a difficult and time-consuming activity. But it is a skill that is necessary in today’s business environment, since the old “command-and-control” managerial model now often results in poor or unwanted outcomes.

*As AlliedSignal’s CEO Lawrence Bossidy said recently, “The day when you could yell and scream and beat people into good performance is over.*
Today you have to appeal to them by helping them to see how they can get from here to there by establishing some credibility and by giving them some reasons and help to get there. Do all those things, and they’ll knock down doors.” (Conger, 1998, p. 86)

According to Conger (1998), there are four essential steps to effective persuasion.

1. **Establish credibility.** For Conger, credibility has two aspects: expertise and relationships. People are considered to have high levels of expertise if they have a history of sound judgment or have proven themselves knowledgeable and well informed about their proposals (Conger, 1998, p. 88). On the relationship side, people with high credibility have demonstrated *over time* that they can be trusted to listen and to work in the best interest of others (Conger, 1998, p. 88).

2. **Frame for common ground.** In order to strengthen the appeal of your proposal to others, you must first identify its tangible benefits to the people you are trying to persuade. In order to accomplish this task, you must thoroughly understand your audience and its needs and concerns.

3. **Provide evidence.** According to Conger (1998), effective persuaders should use a variety of types of evidence—numerical data, examples, stories, metaphors, and analogies—to make their positions come alive (p. 92).

4. **Connect emotionally (convey goodwill).** In our culture, we may like to believe that people make decisions based upon reason; however, emotions always are at play (Conger, 1998, p. 93). In fact, Conger claims that emotions play a primary role in persuasion. To connect emotionally with an audience, Conger suggests that the communicators show their own emotional commitment to the proposal being made and that they adjust their arguments to their audience’s emotional state. However, in showing their own emotional commitment to their proposal, communicators must use some restraint.

Conger attempts to reconceptualize our understanding of persuasion from simply the act of convincing and selling to one of persuasion as learning and negotiating. This claim is based upon his 10 years of observing people attempting to persuade. According to Conger’s approach, persuasion involves stages of discovery of information, preparation, and dialog. Dialog must happen before and during the persuasive process. “A persuader should make a concerted effort to meet one-on-one with all the key people he or she plans to persuade” (Conger, 1998, p. 89). In some cases, through this dialog, effective persuaders may find that they need to adjust their positions in order to better achieve their goals. This approach supports and underscores the importance of the dialogic model discussed in Chapter 1 to achieve our communication purposes.

In Conger’s approach, interpersonal communication is critical to effective persuasion. In interpersonal and small-group communication situations, persuasion is often referred to using another term: influence. Influence is defined in a very similar manner as persuasion: it is the power that a person has to affect other people’s thinking or actions (Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth, & Harter, 2003).
Compliance-gaining
Compliance-gaining refers to attempts a communicator makes to influence another person to do something that the other person might otherwise not do.

Compliance-resisting
Compliance-resisting is the refusal to comply with another person's attempts at influence.

Interpersonal dominance
Interpersonal dominance is the relational, behavioral, and interactional state reflecting the achievement—by means of communication—of control or influence over another person.

In the area of interpersonal influence, one area of research focuses on compliance-gaining and compliance-resisting behaviors. Compliance-gaining is defined as those attempts made by a communicator to influence another to “perform some desired behavior that the [other person] otherwise might not perform” (Wilson, 1998, p. 273). Compliance-gaining occurs whenever we ask someone to do something for us. For example, we may ask our supervisor to give us a raise or promotion or a coworker to switch days off with us. Like Conger’s view that effective persuasion takes time and may consist of several stages, research into compliance-gaining shows that its success also often involves a series of attempts.

Research on compliance-gaining indicates that people generally prefer socially acceptable, reward-oriented strategies (Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1977). In other words, people are more apt to be persuaded or influenced if they are offered some kind of reward or benefit for doing so. Conversely, people do not respond well to negative, threatening, or punishing strategies to gain compliance. This is where some scholars draw the line on the similarities between persuasion, influence, and compliance-gaining. Compliance-gaining behaviors that rely upon coercion and threats can be seen as abuses of power rather than the ethical pursuit of persuasion or influence. Studies indicate that as more resistance is encountered, compliance-gaining efforts generally move from positive tactics to more negative ones. It is at this point that compliance-gaining efforts may move from persuasion to coercion.

Compliance-resisting is defined as the refusal to comply with influence attempts (Pearson, et al, 2003). When resisting requests, people tend to offer reasons or evidence to support their refusal (Saeki & O’Keefe, 1994). People who are more sensitive to others and who are more adaptive are more likely to engage in further attempts to influence (Ifert & Roloff, 1997). They may address some of the obstacles they expect when they initiate their request and adapt later attempts to influence by offering counterarguments.

For example, if you are preparing to ask your supervisor for a raise, you might consider some of the reasons he or she might refuse. Your supervisor might respond by saying money isn’t available, you don’t deserve a raise compared to your peers’ contributions, or you have not performed in such a manner as to deserve a raise. In such a case, a person who is adaptive and sensitive to his or her audience’s needs and concerns will respond with information or evidence intended to counter these claims.

Another term that is closely related to compliance-gaining is interpersonal dominance. Interpersonal dominance is defined as “a relational, behavioral, and interactional state that reflects the actual achievement of influence or control over another via communicative actions” (Burgoon, Johnson, & Koch, 1998, p. 315). Dominance is often viewed negatively, especially when the objective is to control others, but Burgoon argues that it may involve positive qualities that include aspects of social competence.

This idea is better understood by examining the four dimensions of interpersonal dominance. Persuasiveness and poise refer to a person’s ability to act influentially
and to behave with dignity. *Conversational control and panache* refer to the individual’s presence and expressiveness. *Task focus* refers to an individual’s ability to remain focused on the task at hand, and *self-assurance* refers to a person’s level of confidence and ability to avoid either arrogance or timidity.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the recent flattening of organizational hierarchies and resulting interdependency of work tasks among employees have resulted in a greater need for excellent interpersonal skills. Because of these changes, Bernard Keys and Thomas Case (1990) claim that “influence must replace the use of formal authority in relationships with subordinates, peers, outside contacts, and others on whom the job makes one dependent” (p. 38). What this means is that since positional authority is no longer sufficient to get the job done, a web of influence or a balanced web of relationships must be developed. “Recently managers have begun to view leadership as the orchestration of relationships between several different interest groups—superiors, peers, and outsiders, as well as subordinates” (Keys & Case, 1990, p. 39).

Just as managers must learn how to foster and orchestrate relationships between people, often through the process of influence, so must subordinates. According to Keys and Case (1990), of the types of influence that subordinates use on superiors, *rational explanation* is the most frequently used type. Rational explanation includes some sort of formal presentation, analysis, or proposal. A host of other tactics—such as arguing without support, using persistence and repetition, threatening, and manipulation—were not found to be effective. In fact, Keys and Case (1990) found that subordinates who used these tactics usually failed miserably. Nevertheless, no one influence tactic will be best in all situations; instead, the subordinate must learn to tailor his or her approach to the audience he or she is attempting to influence and the objective that is sought (Keys & Case, 1990).

Similarly, Riley and Eisenberg (1992) claim that the primary skill individuals must cultivate in managing their bosses is advocacy—the process of championing ideas, proposals, actions, or people to those above them in the organization. Advocacy requires learning how to read your superior’s needs and preferences and designing persuasive arguments that are most likely to accomplish your goals. (Analyzing audiences is discussed in Chapter 3: Audience Analysis.) Successful advocacy involves the following steps:

1. **Plan.** Think through a strategy that will work.

2. **Determine why your boss should care.** Connect your argument to something that matters to your boss, such as a key objective or personal value.

3. **Tailor your argument to the boss’s style and characteristics.** Adapt your evidence and appeal to those things that are persuasive to your boss, not those things that are persuasive to you.

4. **Assess prior technical knowledge.** Do not assume too much about your boss’s level of knowledge and vocabulary or jargon.
5. **Build coalitions.** Your arguments need the support of others in the organization.

6. **Hone your communication skills.** An articulate, well-prepared message is critical to build your credibility with your boss.

As you may notice, these steps mirror the elements of message formulation introduced in Chapter 1 and that are addressed in the chapters of this text. Analyzing your audience is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, and selecting and adapting the evidence to meet your audience’s needs is discussed further in Chapter 6.

An additional component of successful persuasion is the ability to sell yourself effectively. This latter idea is where the third purpose of business communication—goodwill—comes in.

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**Think about a time that you were unsuccessful at persuasion. Why were you unsuccessful? In retrospect, what could you have done to improve your chances of succeeding?**

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**Communicating to Convey Goodwill**

According to *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, goodwill has three definitions: “1. friendly disposition; kindly regard; benevolence; 2. cheerful acquiescence or consent; 3. an intangible, salable asset arising from the reputation of a business and its relations with its customers.” For those of you who have taken accounting courses, you are probably familiar with the third definition of **goodwill**; in business contexts, goodwill is considered an asset. As a purpose of business communication, goodwill can be thought of as the ability to create and maintain positive, productive relationships with others.

As discussed earlier, Conger (1998) has studied how individuals use language to motivate people. His research indicates that people with high credibility on the relationship side have demonstrated that they can be trusted to listen and to work in the best interests of others. They also have consistently shown strong emotional character and integrity. In other words, they do not exhibit mood extremes or inconsistent performance. “Indeed, people who are known to be honest, steady, and reliable have an edge when going into any persuasive situation” (Conger, 1998, p. 88).

Many of you who have work experience probably would agree with this statement. The ability to establish and maintain relationships is indeed what makes the business world go around. Establishing and maintaining relationships with others, or networking, is one of the most successful forms of job hunting, for example. Likewise, the best form of advertisement is word-of-mouth, not only because it is inexpensive, but because you are more likely to trust the judgment of people you already know. When working with others or in groups, you are more likely to cooperate with people whom you know, like, and trust.
Having a positive relationship with another person or being an expert in a relevant field often enables us to be more successful at persuasion. As long ago as the middle of the fourth century BC, Aristotle made this assertion in *On Rhetoric*. For Aristotle, the problem of communication essentially boiled down to seeing the available means of persuasion in each particular case. According to Aristotle, in order to persuade successfully, communicators must know the extent to which they enjoy the trust, respect, and liking of the people with whom they are communicating. Aristotle recognized that the importance of the character of the speaker (or writer) is a legitimate concern in effective communication.

This idea is easy to see in practice in our day-to-day activities. You are more likely to trust someone you know, and that trust may make it easier for that person to persuade you. If your neighbor sees you leaving for the store and asks for a ride, you are probably more likely to take him or her along than a stranger who makes a similar request. You are also more likely to trust and believe an expert. If the server at the fast-food window tells you that your car sounds like it needs a new transmission, you will probably take the comment with a grain of salt. But if your auto mechanic makes the same statement, you will likely believe it, since he or she is presumably an expert in auto repair—someone with credibility (which is discussed in the next section, “Creating and Maintaining Credibility”)—and someone with whom you may have established a relationship of trust based upon his or her past performance.

From an organizational perspective, relationships can play an important role in producing effective supervision, promoting social support among employees, building personal influence, and ensuring productivity through smooth work flow. The need for good interpersonal relationships in organizations is particularly important from both the standpoint of the individual, who requires social support in an increasingly turbulent world, and the organization, which must maintain high levels of cooperation among employees to meet customer demands and remain competitive.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the recent flattening of organizational hierarchies and resulting interdependency of work tasks among employees, as well as the increasing diversity of the workplace, requires a need for corporate cultures of trust built on respect for differences and mutual cooperation. According to Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1989), informal interpersonal relationships and communication networks are the most dynamic sources of power in organizations today. (Communication networks are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4: Channels of Communication.) In contrast, more formal relationships are slower and less trustworthy sources of information. Most decision makers rely heavily on verbal information from people they trust.

This need is echoed in the 2003 *Wall Street Journal* survey cited in Chapter 1, in which recruiters said that interpersonal skills and the ability to work well in a team were the top two characteristics they found most attractive in prospective employees. Interpersonal skills and the ability to work well in a team are founded upon trust. *Trust* can be understood as the confidence that our peers’ intentions...
are good (Lencioni, 2002). In other words, we must believe that those with whom we work will not act opportunistically or take advantage of us and others to narrowly pursue their own self-interest.

Recent studies indicate that trust has five components: integrity, competence, consistency, loyalty, and openness (Robbins, 2001). Integrity refers to a person’s ethical character and basic honesty. In order to feel that our peers are competent, we must be convinced that they have the technical knowledge and interpersonal skills to perform their job. If you don’t believe a coworker is competent, you are unlikely to depend upon him or her or respect her opinion on work-related matters. We are more able to trust those who appear consistent in their behavior or who are reliable, predictable, and demonstrate good judgment. We tend to trust others who are loyal and willing to protect and help others to save face. Finally, we tend to trust those who are open and conversely, find it difficult to trust those who appear evasive, deceptive, or secretive.

Additional factors affect our ability to forge the relationships businesspeople depend upon so much: valuing relationships, assertiveness, and active listening (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993, p. 252). The first step in building interpersonal relationships at work is learning to recognize the importance of relationships in business—if you haven’t already. For many individuals, interpersonal communication is the work, particularly among managers.

The importance of assertiveness becomes obvious when you consider the alternatives. On one hand, the avoiding, passive-aggressive individual whines, complains, and frets about problems at work, but when asked directly what is wrong, says nothing (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993, p. 252). This strategy, known as avoidance, is defined as a conscious attempt to avoid engaging with people in the dominant group (Pearson, et al, 2003, p. 214). Avoidance is also considered passive, which is an attempt to separate by having as little to do as possible with the dominant group. The result of an avoiding, passive approach is a consistent inability to raise and resolve problems, needs, issues, and concerns.

At the other extreme, aggressive individuals sabotage their ability to meet their needs and to establish supportive relationships by creating defensiveness and alienating others (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993, p. 252). Aggressiveness includes those behaviors perceived as hurtfully expressive, self-promoting, and attempting control over the choices of others (Orbe, 1996, p. 170). Aggressive individuals are also described as argumentative. Not only are such individuals more aggressive, they are more insecure and less likely to be well regarded or happy at work (Infante, Trebling, Shepard, & Seeds, 1984).

In contrast to avoidance and aggression, assertiveness is defined as “self-enhancing, expressive communication that takes into account both the communicator’s and others’ needs” (Orbe, 1996, p. 170). Assertiveness involves

### Avoidance
Avoidance is the strategy of knowingly avoiding engagement with those in the dominant group.

### Aggressiveness
Aggressiveness is a series of behaviors and characteristics including hurtful expressiveness, self-promotion, attempting to control others, and argumentativeness.

### Assertiveness
Assertiveness is self-enhancing communication that takes into account not only the communicator’s needs, but those of others as well.
clearly articulating what you want from others in terms of behavior. It is direct, yet not attacking or blaming. Assertiveness is associated with positive impressions and overall quality of work experience.

Like assertiveness, listening is a learned skill and one that very few individuals ever master. Talking to someone who really knows how to listen actively makes you feel valued, important, and free to speak your mind (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993, p. 252). (Active listening is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7: Verbal, Vocal, and Nonverbal Expression.) In an ideal communication situation, assertiveness and active listening go hand in hand as people are able to express their own perceptions and desires and at the same time attend to the perceptions and desires of others. As you may recognize, these two skills are the foundation of the dialogic model of communication introduced in Chapter 1.

**Communicating to Establish Credibility**

Aristotle recognized that the importance of the character of the speaker—or writer—is a legitimate concern in effective communication. In our time, when the facts are often complex and hard to determine for ourselves, and when television brings speakers “up close and personal” for our inspection, the importance of credibility has been magnified several times that of ancient Greece.

Credible people demonstrate that they have strong emotional character and integrity; they are known to be honest, steady, and reliable. Credibility is akin to reputation. Increasingly, at an organizational level, reputation is becoming more important. Sophisticated customers do not make financial decisions based solely on an organization’s competitive advantage in the marketplace (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993). Instead, customers are increasingly sensitive to a company’s reputation. In fact, public relations has developed as a functional area to manage the reputations of companies.

In contrast to reputation, which is the view outsiders have of an organization, image has to do with insiders’ assessments of an organization.

Although these terms are applied to organizations in management literature, they are equally applicable to individuals. Just as organizations understand that their reputation and image can affect their successful continuation, savvy employees are aware of the applicability of these concepts in their own careers. One study indicates that 92 percent of more than 2,300 executives said that if a person loses credibility with them, it would be very difficult to gain it back (Pagano & Pagano, 2004).

To make matters worse, most managers overestimate their own credibility considerably (Conger, 1998). In the worst-case scenario, they may revert to the old “command-and-control” style of leadership, which studies have shown damages productivity and morale in skilled, well-educated workers and creates frustrated, silenced employees who steal pencils and sabotage the company’s computer system. Lack of or ignorance of the importance of credibility may ultimately lead to a Machiavellian game of terror and threats, in which strong
tactics of domination and control are used to gain influence rather than softer, less destructive methods.

Factors that help to build credibility include:

- Expertise and competence
- Personal ethics and integrity, our trustworthiness
- Control of emotions
- Development and maintenance of a professional image

**Expertise and Competence**

Clearly, your relevant job knowledge and ability to perform your job well affect your credibility. Skill levels and competency are also important for the effective functioning and performance of small groups and teams. Attitude and personality characteristics can also improve your reputation as a competent, conscientious employee. For example, those who complain without offering solutions to the problem are perceived more negatively than those who discuss problems in terms of their solutions. The former may be seen as “whiners,” while the latter become known as problem solvers. These perceptions contribute to your overall image within a company.

Competence also extends to communication skills. Speaking correctly and articulately generally enhances our credibility by indicating to others that we are well educated and intelligent. The same goes for our written communication. If our written messages are full of errors, we may be perceived as undereducated, lazy, or not detail-oriented. All of these negative judgments can affect our credibility. In one case, a résumé or letter with a grammatical error eliminated an applicant from consideration and in another, the same company asked an applicant with a doctoral degree to provide samples of reports and other documents he had written (Kroepels & David, 2003).

This situation provides an opportunity for those who can communicate well in today’s competitive business environment. In other words, one way you can positively distinguish yourself from others is to demonstrate excellent communication skills. Employees who can write clearly can create a better impression of a firm with customers, suppliers, and outsiders than any public relations program ever devised. “If you send out a sales letter that is filled with errors, you’re losing credibility. You send the message that your company is careless” (Tayler, 2003, p.87).

**What competencies and areas of expertise do you possess that can help you to build your feelings of confidence as well as your credibility with professional audiences? What skills in communication can help you to do the same?**
Effective business writing skills have become crucial for both personal performance and organizational productivity. With the proliferation of personal computing, more and more employees at all levels in the company are producing documents that represent an organization, and the quality of this written material can have a significant impact on both perceptions and performance. Technology has also created a problem of exposure. Voice mail, e-mail, faxes, audio-video conferencing, and other technologies expose businesses to an ever-growing array of diverse audiences.

E-mail is a particular problem because of its wide use. “Your company's voice is often judged by what pops into your client's inbox. That first impression better be a good one,” says Adam Chandler, national account director for Yahoo! (Moerke, 2004, p. 63). Jonathan Herschberg, a communications developer based in New York, says, “If I get an e-mail that's full of errors and I know nothing else about you, there's no reason for me not to think you'll handle my business in the same way you handled that writing” (Moerke, 2004, p. 63).

Discuss your greatest challenges regarding the achievement of grammatical correctness in your written and oral communication. Have these affected your confidence or your credibility with your communication audiences? Have you taken steps to become more correct and confident in your written and oral communication? If not, what steps might you take?

Not all errors in writing are created equal, however. In the table below, writing errors are categorized from the most severe to the least in terms of their effects on message clarity and writer credibility.

The Varying Severity of Mechanical Errors in Communication

Mechanics/ Error Interference: assesses if errors interfere with a writer's clarity and credibility. A writer's communication may be judged partly on how closely the language follows conventions in sentence structure, grammar, usage, mechanics, spelling, and so on. Severe and frequent errors (and in some circumstances even milder forms and degrees of error) can negatively impact both clarity and credibility. All errors are not equally intrusive or offensive to all readers, however. Below, errors are categorized by severity, beginning with the most severe and ending with the least.

Disruptive errors may interfere with communication, preventing the reader from comprehending what the writer means. These include unintelligible sentences, unclear pronoun references, incorrect verbs, run-on sentences, fragments, and the use of wrong words.

Credibility errors don't usually disrupt communication, but tend to reflect negatively on the writer's credibility, reducing the reader's confidence in what a writer has to say. These include faulty subject/verb agreement, passive voice, and punctuation and spelling errors.
Unfortunately, there is no quick fix for grammar and mechanical problems. Achieving correct grammar usage takes time and some effort; it takes practice. To improve the correctness of your writing:

1. Read—often and about diverse topics. Reading helps us to subconsciously recognize and internalize correct grammar usage in writing.

2. Solve word games and puzzles. These activities can help you build your vocabulary and learn the meanings of words.

3. Become aware of the common mistakes you make in your writing. This knowledge will streamline the process of proofreading if you can more quickly identify the areas that you need to double-check for correctness.

4. Edit others’ writing. This activity can improve your analytical skills, which are necessary to proofread your own writing.

5. Learn how to properly use the spell-checking and grammar-checking tools available in most word processing programs. It is important to recognize that these computer tools do not recognize all writing errors. You will also need to proofread your written messages carefully, so it is essential to keep a good writing handbook and dictionary on hand.

6. For very important messages, it is often a good idea to ask a literate friend or colleague to review and provide feedback about their correctness.

As mentioned earlier, this attentiveness to accuracy should be reflected in a greater sensitivity to grammatical correctness in speaking, too. By exerting some time and energy toward the goal of achieving correctness, greater confidence, competence, and credibility will be your reward.

**Personal Ethics and Integrity**

The *Wall Street Journal* poll referenced earlier in this text also indicates that personal ethics and integrity are among the top five characteristics sought by recruiters. The attractiveness of ethical employees may be a result of the recent and continuing discovery of unethical and illegal practices by U.S. businesses:

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**Etiquette errors** are errors that many readers—but not all—hardly notice, especially if reading quickly for meaning. However, etiquette errors can reduce a writer’s credibility, especially with those readers who are concerned about professional image or those who believe that critical thinking is reflected in the observance of grammar rules. These include pronoun usage, false subjects, and misplaced apostrophes.

**Accent errors** commonly characterize the writing of nonnative speakers or the use of local idioms and dialects. Accent errors, which are nearly impossible for nonnative speakers to correct in the short term, may be ignored by readers. These errors rarely interfere with communication and usually do not damage the writer’s credibility. These generally entail missing or wrong articles or prepositions.

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**Table 2.1. Continued**

Enron was found to have improved its financial image by moving debt off its books and using other illegal accounting practices. As a result, thousands of Enron employees lost not only their jobs but their retirement investments, while company executives made millions of dollars from stock sales before the company’s problems became public.

WorldCom also engaged in illegal accounting practices, such as registering a single sale many times, thus overinflating company revenues by millions of dollars.

Andersen Worldwide suffered financial collapse following disclosures that it failed to report widespread fraudulent accounting practices among its clients.

Such cases are not a recent development or the exception. “Between 1975 and 1985, two-thirds of the Fortune 500 firms were convicted of serious crimes ranging from fraud to the illegal dumping of hazardous wastes. A much larger number were convicted of misdemeanors after extensive plea bargaining, and a still larger number settled suits out of court” (Conrad, 1990, p. 15).

The causes of such unethical behavior have been widely studied. For example, Lehman and Dufrene (2002) claim unethical behavior stems from a number of causes, including:

- Excessive emphasis on profits by managers. According to Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, “infectious greed” ultimately pushed companies, such as Enron, Global Crossing, and WorldCom, into bankruptcy.

- A misplaced sense of corporate loyalty may cause an employee to do what seems in the best interest of the corporation, even if it is illegal or unethical.

- An obsession by employees to gain personal advancement.

- An expectation that illegal or unethical actions will not be caught.

- An unethical tone set by top management.

- Uncertainty about whether an action is wrong.

- Unwillingness to take a stand for what is right.

Eisenberg and Goodall (1993) claim that another possible reason for the common practice of unethical communication behavior may be the increased pressure to compete. The increasing complexity of organizations may also lead to lies or distortion, turf building, and cover-up (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993, p. 333).

Terence Mitchell and William Scott (1990) attribute unethical behavior to the United States’ “ethic of personal advantage.” This ethic has three themes:

- A present versus future orientation.

- An instrumental as opposed to a substantive focus.

- An emphasis on individualism contrasted with community.
Other scholars agree with this assessment. For example, Eisenberg and Goodall (1993) state that the “greatest weakness of businesspeople in the past two decades has been short-term thinking, or the willingness to trade off long-term value for immediate gain (p. 333).

Likewise, in his study of the Los Angeles riots, Michael Lerner (1992) contends that the looters were merely “living out the cynical American ethos” (p. B7). Lerner claims that we live in a culture of looting, where the highest goal is to “look out for number one” and to “get what you can when you can” (p. B7). This assessment echoes that of Mitchell and Scott, who advance the case that unethical behavior is caused in part by an emphasis on individualism and instrumentalism.

Any cost to others is acceptable as long as you don’t get caught or don’t hurt your own future chances. . . . Within this ethos, concern for the future—of the planet, of one’s own country or even of one’s own children—seems naive and silly, something to be left to “do-gooders.” The ethos of looting is the “common sense” of the society. (Lerner, 1992, p. B7)

The unethical practices of corporations and their employees can have far-reaching consequences. Those affected by the decisions, the stakeholders, can include people inside and outside the company, as the Enron case indicates. Not only were employees negatively affected, but the entire citizenry of the state of California suffered from the company’s illegal and unethical practices in the sale of electricity. Financial markets can suffer from an erosion of public confidence, as was the case after the recent spate of corporate scandals.

Even though the lapses in ethics that we see around us may seem overwhelming at times, you can do something to ensure that your communication is ethical. Putting ethical practices first will not only benefit your employer, colleagues, clients, and customers, it will also enable you to maintain your credibility and create a reputation of fairness and good judgment that can positively impact your ability to communicate and succeed in your career goals.

In the table below, you will find the “Nine Commandments” of the National Communication Association to help ensure ethical communication practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The National Communication Association Credo for Communication Ethics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well-being of individuals and the society in which we live. Therefore, we, the members of the National Communication Association, endorse and are committed to practicing the following principles of ethical communication:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.</td>
</tr>
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Continued on next page.
Communication is inherently ethical. This is because whenever people interact with one another, ethics invades every exchange because the manipulation of symbols involved in language use also involves a purpose that is external to, and in some degree manipulative of, the audience for or interpreter of the message (Barnlund, 1986, p. 40). Communication thus can be intended to prevent, restrict, or stimulate the cultivation of meaning. In the first case, messages can be intended to coerce others by choosing symbols that are threatening to the audience or interpreter of the message. The values of the listener are ignored in this type of communication. In the second, messages can be intended to exploit by arranging words to filter information, narrow the choices, or obscure the consequences, so that only one meaning becomes attractive or appropriate. The values of the listener are subverted in this type of message. Finally, messages can be facilitative. In such communication, words are used to inform, to enlarge perspective, to deepen sensitivity, to remove external threat, or to encourage independence of meaning (Barnlund, 1986, p. 41). The values of the listener are respected in this type of interaction.

Just as certain communicative behaviors are considered ethical, it is easy to identify those that are considered unethical. W. Charles Redding (1991) has developed a typology of unethical messages in organizations, which is shown in the table on the following page.

Messages can be used to harm or mislead others. Persuasive messages particularly always contain the potential for unethical practices. This is because persuasion involves:

- A person or group attempting to influence others by altering their beliefs, attitudes, values, and overt actions.
- Conscious choices among ends sought and means used to achieve those ends.
- A potential judge (any and all receivers of the message).
Because of the potential for unethical communication practices, both senders and receivers of messages hold responsibilities. Responsible communicators carefully analyze claims, assess probable consequences, and weigh relevant values (Larson, 1995, p. 29). In addition, responsible communicators exercise the ability to respond and are responsive to the needs and communication of others in sensitive, thoughtful, fitting ways (Larson, 1995, p. 29). More specifically, both parties in an interaction bear mutual responsibility to participate actively in the process. This active participation occurs through two steps: reasoned skepticism and appropriate feedback.

**Reasoned skepticism**
Reasoned skepticism is the process of searching actively for meaning, analyzing and synthesizing information, and judging the worth of that information.

**Appropriate feedback**
Appropriate feedback is honest, reflecting the communicator’s true understanding and judgment, and is appropriate for the subject, audience, and occasion or context.

Have you been on the receiving end of the types of unethical messages listed in the table below? How did you feel? What might be appropriate responses to such unethical communication practices?

### Typology of Unethical Messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coercive</td>
<td>An employee criticizes the boss’s “pet” development program in a meeting and is fired on the spot for her remarks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destructive</td>
<td>A supervisor makes a sexist joke at the expense of an employee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceptive</td>
<td>Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employees falsify employee work records to justify the firing of air traffic controllers during their 1981 strike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrusive</td>
<td>Electronic surveillance of employees is conducted through hidden video cameras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretive</td>
<td>The asbestos industry suppressed information that left little doubt about the health hazards posed by its product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulative/Exploitative</td>
<td>Management threatens union members with a plant closing if they don’t ratify a contract.</td>
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Employees are expected to maintain a professional demeanor while in the office, or when they represent their office in the field. Part of our ability to accomplish that goal often has to do with our ability to control our emotions. According to a
study done by the University of Missouri–Columbia, “many employees do not want their coworkers to express any type of strong emotion—positive or negative” (Dealing with emotions, 2003, p. 1). In this study, the employees were asked to describe situations where they believed coworkers acted appropriately and inappropriately. The consensus of the employees was that negative emotion should never be expressed, and positive emotion should be shown in moderation.

Expressions of negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and anger, tend to be unacceptable except under fairly specific conditions. For example, verbal anger is direct, aggressive, and intentional. When you allow anger to control your communication, the results are generally unproductive. Outbursts of anger tend to make people uncomfortable, especially when the person exhibits irrational forms of anger. If construed as harassment in the workplace, excessive displays of anger can lead to disciplinary measures.

Anger can also be communicated in our written communication. We should never write a message when we are feeling a negative emotion but should wait until we have calmed down to express ourselves. Although it can feel good to vent negative feelings, we should immediately delete or erase messages written in anger. Unfortunately, with the popularity and proliferation of e-mail, it is easy to pound out our frustrations in an electronic message. “Then we click ‘send.’ In a frenzied span of 15 minutes we have managed to do some real psychological damage, usually more to ourselves than to anyone else” (Manley, 2001). That damage may come in the form of a loss of credibility and damaged relationships.

When we become angry, we are typically upset because we have not gotten our needs met. “We are blaming someone or something else for not getting what we want” (Rosenberg, 2003). Unfortunately, in these cases, we may speak or act in a way that guarantees we will not get what we want.

However, negative emotions can be tamed. Kristin Anderson, president of Say What? Consulting recommends that you maintain a neutral body and voice. Keeping your body loose and your voice tone neutral will help to maintain a calm demeanor (McCune, 2003, p. 1). A second tactic is to listen without trying to judge if the situation is good or bad.

Janice Arenofsky offers some additional suggestions:

1. Put yourself in the other person’s shoes. See if you can imagine how he or she feels.
2. Exercise to get rid of the tension. Ride your bike, play soccer, or, if you are at work, go for a long walk.
3. Do not jump to quick conclusions. Listen carefully to what the other person says.

Following these simple techniques can help any aggressive situation turn positive. If confronted by anger, you may feel like retreating or become defensive. However, being defensive and yelling back may cause more harm. Instead,
empathize with the person. Doing so will help you maintain your credibility by showing that you act reasonably, rationally, and respectfully in stressful situations.

**Developing a Professional Image**

All the aspects of credibility discussed thus far help us to cultivate a professional image: our expertise and competence in a variety of job skills, our ability to control our emotions, and our integrity. Our communication skills, both written and oral, can enhance our image as a professional. Personality traits can also contribute to a more credible and professional image. If we show ourselves to be dependable, reliable, careful, thorough, able to plan, organized, hardworking, persistent, and achievement-oriented, we are more likely to be perceived as professional and competent. (Personality is discussed further in the section that follows, “Self-Awareness and Communication.”)

Our appearance, through dress and posture, also communicates to others. Every time you walk into a room, you communicate who you are before you speak, through your appearance (Buhler, 1991). For example, it would not be expected for your company president to walk into a business meeting wearing Bermuda shorts. On the other hand, a fishing guide would not show up for work in a three-piece suit. Dressing appropriately for a particular situation can affect whether others perceive you as professional and credible. It also sends the message that you are a part of the group, that you belong. This message can help you in the relationship area of communication.

Some people are better able to consciously cultivate a professional image. Impression management is the attempt to control the impression of ourselves that we present to others in any communication situation.

**High self-monitors**

High self-monitors are people who are acutely aware of their impression management efforts.

**Low self-monitors**

Low self-monitors are people who have little awareness about how others perceive them, and little knowledge about how to interact appropriately with others.

**Anticipatory socialization**

Anticipatory socialization is the process we use to develop our expectations and beliefs about how people communicate in various formal and informal work situations.

Impression management is one aspect of a natural and productive process called anticipatory socialization. Anticipatory socialization is the process through which most of us develop a set of expectations and beliefs concerning how people communicate in particular occupations and in formal and informal work settings.
(Jablan, 2001). The business communication course you are now enrolled in—as well as some of the other university courses you are now taking—is part of that process. If you are involved in internships or other job-related activities, these also contribute to that process. In fact, learning how to work in a position probably begins in early childhood.

Since anticipatory socialization is a process that probably begins in childhood, it is also a part of our self-concept. Most discussions of anticipatory socialization recognize that as people mature, they use the information they gather about jobs from their environment to compare against their self-concept. This comparison helps them to make judgments about choosing occupations and specific jobs (Jablan, 2001). This process may be likened to a self-inventory, such as the SWOT analysis that was discussed in Chapter 1, to determine career opportunities that best match an individual’s skills and attitudes.

Some people believe that impression management is unethical or deceptive. However, according to the theory, impression management can help others and ourselves save face or avoid embarrassment. When we act in ways that are appropriate to the situation, we are respecting the expectations of others. In these cases, impression management is a matter of politeness. Like many matters of communication, the ethics of impression management come down to intent. If we change our behaviors and presentation style in an attempt to deceive or mislead others, such actions can be judged as unethical. Even in their least offensive form, we may be seen as superficial, pretentious, lacking integrity, or a “suck-up.”

Discuss your own application of the four purposes of business communication. Do you agree that in business contexts, you generally should consider and apply all four? Why or why not?

Self-Awareness and Communication

How you view yourself can make a great difference in your ability to communicate and achieve your purposes. Many scholars believe that communication also forms our self-concept. In other words, people are the products of how others treat them and of the messages others send them. Dean Barnlund (1970) introduced the idea that individuals “construct” themselves through the relationships they have, wish to have, or perceive themselves as having. Barnlund developed the idea that “six persons” are involved in every two-person communication. These six persons emerge from:

- How you view yourself
- How you view the other person
- How you believe the other person views himself or herself
Barnlund’s model emphasizes the relational nature of communication and the centrality of the self and our perception of the self in communication. From this model comes the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy, or the idea that you behave and see yourself in ways that are consistent with how others see you (Wood, 1997, p. 383).

Another term that refers to the way you think about yourself is self-awareness, which is an understanding of the self, including your attitudes, values, beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses (DeVito, 1986, p. 274). As Barnlund’s model indicates, self-awareness develops in our communication with ourselves as well as our interaction with others. Communication with ourselves is called intrapersonal communication, which includes “our perceptions, memories, experiences, feelings, interpretations, inferences, evaluations, attitudes, opinions, ideas, strategies, images, and states of consciousness” (Shedletsky, 1989). According to Gardner (1993), intrapersonal intelligence is the capacity to form an accurate model of oneself and to be able to use that model to operate effectively in life.

Self-awareness is important for communication, since it can affect how well we communicate with others and how we are perceived by others. According to Gardner (1993), intrapersonal intelligence is a correlative ability to interpersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them. Essentially, Gardner claims that we must have self-awareness in order to be able to understand others.

For example, if our self-concept does not match the perception that others have of us, we may misinterpret their responses to our messages. We may also misinterpret the way that our communication is interpreted by others. For instance, we may believe that we are highly reliable; however, others may believe the opposite about us. These contradictions can negatively impact our ability to work with others and in groups. If we are unaware of these contradictions, then we are unable to change our communicative behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, to better correspond with the message we want to send about ourselves. It is important that the messages we send through our actions correspond to those we send verbally and in writing, since people are more likely to believe nonverbal cues.

A related concept and outgrowth of Gardner’s and others’ work is that of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to an assortment of noncognitive skills, capabilities, and competencies that influence a person’s ability to successfully cope with environmental demands and pressures. Emotional intelligence consists of five dimensions:

- **Self-awareness.** The ability to be aware of what you are feeling.
- **Self-management.** The ability to manage one’s emotions and impulses.
■ **Self-motivation.** The ability to persist in the face of setbacks and failures.

■ **Empathy.** The ability to sense how others are feeling.

■ **Social skills.** The ability to handle the emotions of others.

Emotional intelligence can help us to establish relationships with others as well as our credibility. As was discussed earlier, having the ability to control our emotions can contribute to the creation of a credible and professional image. Such an ability is also one aspect of emotional intelligence. Emotional control or the ability to delay gratification and resist impulses can greatly affect our career success and ability to communicate with others. Studies have shown that those who were able to resist temptation as small children are more socially competent as adolescents (Mischel & Peake, 1990). They were more personally effective, self-assertive, and better able to cope with life’s frustrations. They were less likely to be negatively affected by stress or to become disorganized when pressured; they embraced challenges, were self-reliant and confident, trustworthy and dependable, and took initiative. More than a decade later, they were still able to delay gratification. Those who were less able to delay gratification were more likely to shy away from social contacts, to be stubborn and indecisive, to be easily upset by frustrations, to think of themselves as unworthy, to become immobilized by stress, to be mistrustful and resentful about not getting enough, to be prone to jealousy and envy, and to overreact to irritations with a sharp temper, thus provoking arguments.

Other personality attributes mirror many of the findings of research on emotional intelligence, including a person’s proclivity to self-monitor. Another dimension, **locus of control,** has to do with how much control we believe we have over our lives. Those labeled as **internals** believe they control their own destiny, while those called **externals** believe their lives are controlled by outside sources (Rotter, 1966). Your behaviors and communication are clues to whether you are an internal or an external. For example, studies have shown that externals often do not believe they have control over the grades they earn in school, so they blame the teacher, their group members, the grading system, and so on.

The self-fulfilling prophecy also applies to locus of control. For example, internals tend to believe that their health is under their control, so they take more responsibility for their health and have better health benefits. Internals generally perform better on the job because they have a tendency to search more actively before making a decision, are more motivated to achieve, and tend to take action. Locus of control is a part of emotional intelligence, as is the ability to self-monitor. High emotional intelligence involves the ability to self-motivate, which is a characteristic of someone with an internal locus of control.

Another widely used measure of personality is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The test measures four characteristics: whether a person is introverted or extroverted (I or E), sensing or intuitive (S or N), thinking or feeling (T or F), and perceiving or judging (P or J). These classifications are then combined into 16 personality types. For example, the ENTP is a conceptualizer. He or she is innovative, individualistic, versatile, and entrepreneurial. ESTJs are organizers,
Chapter 2  The Purposes of Business Communication

Communication

Emotional intelligence is proving to be the deciding factor on who will win the dream job with Donald Trump on the hit NBC show The Apprentice, according to a leadership professor at the University at Buffalo School of Management.

“Success in today’s business world depends not only on our training and expertise, but also on how well we handle ourselves and others and our ability to learn and adapt to new and changing situations,” says Muriel T. Anderson, who teaches the School of Management’s Leadership PACE (Personal Achievement through Competency Evaluation), a course designed to help MBA students identify their personal limitations and develop a plan to overcome them.

Anderson points out that the main difference between outstanding and average leaders is linked to emotional intelligence—the ability to manage one’s emotions and those of others.

“Several of the contestants, namely Sam, Tammy, and Omarosa, were self-assured in their abilities, but they failed to recognize how their behaviors negatively affected others,” says Anderson in her analysis of the 2004 season show. “It was this lack of emotional self-awareness that probably led to their firings.”

“Emotionally intelligent leaders work well with others, remain calm under pressure, and can motivate themselves and others,” she says, noting that most of the contestants who remained longer on the 2004 season show exhibited a higher level of emotional intelligence when appropriate.

“Nick doesn’t hesitate to bring up ethical concerns and falls back on his values to guide him in his decision making. Troy has been chosen most often by his peers as project manager due to his strong communication skills and ability to encourage others. And Amy has shown that she can easily build bonds with team members and clients, as well as keep her emotions and impulses in check when faced with high-pressure situations,” she explains.

After the worst offenders are eliminated, it becomes more difficult to predict who will succeed and who will fail, but Anderson expects, “It’s going to come down to emotional intelligence.” Then the real challenge begins: The winner must learn how to manage having “The Donald” as a real-life boss, Anderson says.

Discussion

1. Think about groups in which you have worked or been involved. Do Anderson’s observations hold true in those situations?

2. How might you alter your own behaviors in group or other social situations to exhibit greater emotional intelligence?

Adapted from an article entitled “Emotional Intelligence Key to Winning on ‘The Apprentice’” published by Ascribe Health News Service, March 22, 2004, p. NA.

who are realistic, logical, analytical, and decisive. ESTJs make good businesspeople or mechanics. INTJs are visionaries, who have original minds and a great drive for their own ideas and purposes. They are skeptical, critical, independent, determined, and often stubborn.

Although there is no hard evidence that the MBTI is a valid measure of personality, it is a helpful exercise in giving you some insight into your strengths
and weaknesses, your aptitudes, career preferences and fit, and how you communicate with and are perceived by others.

Many of these dimensions have already been discussed in this chapter in terms of their importance in helping you achieve your communication purposes. Studies also indicate that high levels of emotional intelligence are better indicators of job performance than academic IQ (Robbins, 2001).

Using an Internet search engine, look for Web sites that offer free self-assessments, including those for locus of control, self-monitoring, emotional intelligence, the MBTI, and other personality traits. One useful Web site for this purpose is http://www.queendom.com, which offers a variety of personality, career, and IQ assessments, many free of charge.

**Types of Messages**

Just as business communication can be broken into four purposes, it can also be categorized into types of messages that generally correspond to those purposes. Business messages can be categorized as being primarily informative, persuasive, or goodwill in nature. For example, a simple e-mail telling your colleagues of the time and place of next week’s meeting is considered a routine informative message. Not all informative messages are simple, however. A special type of informative message, the negative or “bad news” message, often requires additional considerations so as not to damage your credibility or relationship with the receiver. A memo intended to motivate your supervisor to give you a promotion, or an oral presentation intended to move a client to buy your company’s product, are examples of a persuasive message. A thank-you note is an example of a message intended solely for goodwill purposes.

These different types of messages require, to some degree, unique considerations as to the kind of information each should contain. These considerations are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6: Content.
The purposes of business communication are to inform, to persuade, to convey goodwill, and to establish credibility. These purposes should be considered whether you are planning to communicate in writing, in person, using the phone, or via e-mail. It is also important to recognize that most business communication is generally not intended solely to achieve one purpose. Since most business communication includes some aspect of sales or persuasion, and since successful persuasion also often depends upon your relationship with your audience, i.e., goodwill and your credibility, you should pay attention to achieving all four purposes in many, if not all, of your messages.

Your ability to establish credibility and create and maintain relationships with others depends a great deal upon your perception by others. Consequently, to be an effective communicator, you must have a large measure of self-awareness as well as insight into how others perceive and respond to you. If you become aware of weaknesses in certain areas that may negatively affect your abilities to communicate with others and ultimately your attainment of career goals, you have an opportunity to change for the better.

Many textbook writers like to group message types in the same categories as the purposes of communication. These broad types of messages are informative, persuasive, and goodwill. A special type of informative message is the “bad news” message. Formulating these messages is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6: Content.

Key Terms
Aggressiveness, 32
Anticipatory socialization, 42
Appropriate feedback, 40
Assertiveness, 32
Avoidance, 32
Compliance-gaining, 28
Compliance-resisting, 28
Emotional intelligence, 44
Goodwill, 30
High self-monitors, 42
Impression management, 42
Influence, 27
Interpersonal dominance, 28
Interpersonal intelligence, 44
Intrapersonal communication, 44
Intrapersonal intelligence, 44
Locus of control, 45
Low self-monitors, 42
Reasoned skepticism, 40
Self-fulfilling prophecy, 44

Discussion Questions
1. What characteristics do you look for to determine the credibility of your classmates or other speakers? What strategies can speakers use to establish credibility?

2. Instructors use a variety of compliance-gaining tactics in the classroom. What are some of these tactics? What are some strategies that students use to resist instructors’ compliance-gaining efforts? Have you seen examples of these tactics used in the workplace or in other organizations of which you are a part?

3. What are the five components of trust? What role do these components play in your
relationships with family members? Friends? Coworkers?

4. How can self-esteem affect communication in interpersonal, small-group, and public speaking situations?

**Applications**

1. Observe a live or recorded speech or oral presentation in which the speaker is attempting to persuade. How credible was the speaker? What did he or she say or do that helped to enhance or to detract from his or her credibility? How effective was the speaker in conveying goodwill or establishing a relationship with his or her audience? What did the speaker say or do that helped to build or detract from his or her goodwill? Finally, how persuasive was the speaker? What did he or she say or do that supported or detracted from the talk’s persuasiveness? How did the speaker’s credibility or ability to convey goodwill affect his or her persuasiveness?

2. Find a persuasive business message at least one page in length. Do the content and appearance of the document enhance or detract from the writer’s credibility? Did the writer use language or style to establish or maintain a relationship with the reader? If so, how? Were there words or phrases that detracted from the writer’s goodwill? How successful was the writer in his or her attempts to be persuasive? What contributed to that success or detracted from it?

3. Using the Internet, search for free online self-assessments of emotional intelligence, locus of control, and self-monitoring. One place to start is at http://www.queendom.com. After completing the assessments and reading the results, summarize them and then write three goals for self-improvement for each personality measure, including your plan for achieving each of them.

4. Observe a group or watch an episode of a television show that focuses on group dynamics, such as *The Apprentice* or *Survivor*. Identify each of the group members, then analyze their behaviors, looking for clues to their level of emotional intelligence, their locus of control orientation, and their ability to self-monitor. How do these behaviors affect their membership in and relationship to others in the group?

5. Find an example of each of the following types of written messages: informative, persuasive, goodwill, and bad news. How are they alike? How do they differ in tone, content, and organization?

**InfoTrac Activities**

1. Using the keyword option in InfoTrac College Edition, type “corporate reputation.” After reviewing some of the articles that are identified by your search, discuss the importance of reputation in the business world.

2. Using the keyword option in InfoTrac College Edition, type “emotional intelligence.” Find and read the article entitled “Immature Execs: Hurting Results? Emotional Intelligence: Some Firms Measuring Manager’s Self-Awareness,” which was published in the May 3, 2004 edition of *Investor’s Business Daily* on page A09. How might the observations made in this article be applied to your own career preparation?
Case Analysis

Although the revelations of accounting fraud, executive greed, and other questionable behavior by such companies as Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Andersen, Boeing, Ernst & Young, and Merrill Lynch happened more than three years ago, the public’s trust in corporations is still low. In fact, in 2002, a public opinion survey of corporate reputation found people incredibly cynical about the latter company. “In my opinion,” one respondent said, “Merrill Lynch is ethically on a par with Las Vegas and the Mafia” (Alsop, 2004, p. 21).

And while these scandals have brought attention to the need for greater efforts aimed at managing and maintaining reputation, corporations have been slow to effectively respond. According to a Harris Interactive and The Reputation Institute study conducted in 2003, three quarters of the respondents judged corporate America’s image as either “not good” or “terrible” (Alsop, 2004). One respondent said, “I’m very disappointed in how money can rob the goodness in people” (Alsop, 2004).

The illegal and questionable practices of some corporations can taint the reputations of all of them. Ron Sargent, the CEO of Staples, was surprised by the questions he received from students while visiting a high school in suburban Boston. One student, who had apparently heard of the WorldCom scandal, asked, “Do you have a $6,000 shower curtain?” (Alsop, 2004).

According to Ronald Alsop, author of *The 18 Immutable Laws of Corporate Reputation: Creating, Protecting, and Repairing Your Most Valuable Asset*, organizations must respond to this situation by making reputation management a fundamental part of the corporate culture and value system. Reputation must be central to the corporate identity. However, just creating an ethics code may not effect such a transformation, as is evidenced by Enron, whose code and its cover letter contained the following statements:

- “We want to be proud of Enron and to know that it enjoys a reputation for fairness and honesty and that it is respected”;
- “Ruthlessness, callousness and arrogance don’t belong here”;
- “We work with customers and prospects openly, honestly and sincerely”; and
- “We are dedicated to conducting business according to all applicable local and international laws and regulations . . . and with the highest professional and ethical standards.”

According to Alsop, companies in crisis could avoid damage to their reputations if they were honest from the start and willing to apologize for their indiscretions or mistakes (2004). However, organizations may be hesitant to make such statements, since it may increase their risk of legal liability.

Still, some organizations have been willing to take such a risk. Such was the case of Texaco, when employees alleged that CEO Peter Bijur made prejudicial racial and religious comments about his colleagues in 1996 (Alsop, 2004). “I want to offer an apology to our fellow employees who were rightly offended by these statements; to men and women of all races, creeds and religions in this country; and to people throughout America and elsewhere around the world,” Bijur stated. “I am sorry for this incident” (Alsop, 2004).

Demonstrating corporate responsibility may pay even bigger dividends, as was the situation when the manufacturer of Tylenol pulled their product from store shelves to protect consumers, even though in the end, it was not responsible for bottles of painkillers that had been tampered with. Stock prices for the company rose shortly after the announcement.

As the Tylenol situation shows, such actions may be worth the risk when it comes to
maintaining a company’s reputation. A more recent study by Harris Interactive and The Reputation Institute found that demonstrations of sincerity are the strongest indicator of a positive corporate reputation (Alsop, 2004). Unfortunately, when it comes to sincerity, organizations that demonstrate it are in the minority. Only about one third of the respondents indicated that they believed the 60 companies reviewed in the study were sincere in their communications (Alsop, 2004).

**Discussion**

1. How important is corporate reputation to you in terms of its effects on the products you purchase or organizations you may wish to work for?

2. Like some of the respondents of the surveys cited above, are you skeptical of some of the messages sent by organizations accused of illegal or unethical dealings?

3. Do you agree that honest and sincere communication is the best way for companies to deal with mistakes and potential scandals? Why or why not?