

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Course Overview

This course is designed to provide students with an overview of communication, its scope and importance within organisations. The units provide a comprehensive approach to the study and application of written and oral business communication. Throughout the course, students will explore the foundations of effective business communication. The norms, behaviours and practices that are expected in the business world shall be analysed. Additionally, the course provides opportunities to emphasise on how communication takes place within globalised business landscapes where diverse cultures are working within the same environment. The various types of business communication challenges are covered. Succinct written expression to modern business communication shall be uncovered which would allow you to improve your communication skills.

Course Goal

The goal of this course is to provide students with knowledge on principles, concepts and techniques that are essential for oral and written communication within an organisational context.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. apply business communication theories to solve workplace communication issues.
2. demonstrate the communication skills required in the workplace.
3. navigate within intercultural work environments.
4. understand complex ideas in written and spoken formats.

Course Introduction

Pre-requisite: None

Minimum Technical Skills: Students must have access to digital devices such as laptops or tablets to access and interact with the units.

Reading Material

"Business Communication: A Problem-Solving Approach" by Kathryn Rentz and Paula Lentz: This e-book focuses on applying problem-solving strategies to business communication. It is available as an open educational resource from Open Textbook Library: [Business Communication for Success – Open Textbook \(umn.edu\)](https://openstax.org/r/business-communication-for-success)

Disclaimer: Please note that if you identify any content that has not been properly referenced, you are encouraged to contact the University of Technology, Mauritius for clarification or correction.

Unit 1: Introduction to Business Communication

This unit covers the communication basics to understand what communication is about and how it is related to business environments.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of Unit 1, the learner should be able to understand:

- the different types of Business Communication
- the purposes of Business Communication
- the importance of effective business communication at the workplace

1.1 Defining Communication

The root of the word “communication” in Latin is *communicare*, which means to share, or to make common (Weekley, 1967). Communication is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000).

At the center of our study of communication is the relationship that involves interaction between participants. This definition serves us well with its emphasis on the process, which we’ll examine in depth across this text, of coming to understand and share another’s point of view effectively.

Business Communication is the understanding and sharing of meaning (Pearson and Nelson 2000). Communication allows the various stakeholders of a particular organisation to pass on work related messages from a person (the sender) to another individual (the receiver) through a designated channel. For example an employee of an organisation may communicate with a customer over the phone to answer queries that the customer may have.

Sharing means doing something together with one or more person(s). In communication, sharing occurs when you convey thoughts, feelings, ideas, or insights to others. You also share with yourself (a process called intrapersonal communication) when you bring ideas to consciousness, ponder how you feel about something, figure out the solution to a problem, or have a classic “Aha!” moment when something becomes clear.

The second keyword is **understanding**. “To understand is to perceive, to interpret, and to relate our perception and interpretation to what we already know.” (McLean, 2003) Understanding the words and the concepts or objects they refer to is an important part of the communication process.

Finally, **meaning** is what you share through communication. For example, by looking at the context of a word, and by asking questions, you can discover the shared meaning of the word and better understand the message.

1.2 Types of Communication

- interpersonal
- written
- verbal or oral
- nonverbal communication.

Business communication includes the sharing of information such as ideas, feelings among people within the organisation structure. This is known as **intrapersonal communication**. Once information is shared from the sender to the receiver, the message needs to be understood. In the context of a businesses, ideas, feelings or messages are interpreted by the receiver. Finally, the receiver will make meanings of the message communicated.

Communication Skills Are Desired by Business and Industry

Oral and written communication proficiencies are consistently ranked in the top ten desirable skills by employer surveys year after year. In fact, high-powered business executives sometimes hire consultants to coach them in sharpening their communication skills. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the following are the top five personal qualities or skills potential employers seek:

1. Communication skills (verbal and written)
2. Strong work ethic
3. Teamwork skills (works well with others, group communication)
4. Initiative
5. Analytical skills

Knowing this, you can see that one way for you to be successful and increase your promotion potential is to increase your abilities to speak and write effectively.

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1.3 Importance of Communication

Communicating effectively is important for developing and maintaining relationships, for representing you and your employer professionally, for moving forward in your career, and for solving problems. Miscommunication, on the other hand, can negatively impact your business relationships.

Business communication allows organisations to :

1. Pass on relevant messages to key stakeholders
2. Enhance decision making
3. Solve problems
4. Avoid duplication of work
5. Improve customer relationships
6. Limits uncertainty amongst employees

Effective communication is crucial in the workplace for numerous reasons. Here are some key points highlighting the importance of effective communication:

- **Team Collaboration:** Communication is essential for successful collaboration among team members. Clear and open communication helps employees understand their roles, responsibilities, and project objectives. It enables them to share ideas, ask questions, provide feedback, and work together towards common goals. Effective communication fosters teamwork, boosts productivity, and ensures the smooth flow of information within the organization.
- **Employee Engagement:** When employees feel informed and involved, they are more engaged in their work. Regular communication from management about organizational updates, goals, and strategies helps employees understand their contribution to the overall success of the company. Engaged employees are more motivated, committed, and satisfied, leading to higher productivity and reduced turnover rates.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Conflict is inevitable in any workplace. However, effective communication plays a vital role in resolving conflicts before they escalate. Clear and respectful communication allows individuals to express their concerns, listen to different perspectives, and find mutually agreeable solutions. It helps in maintaining a positive work environment and fostering healthy relationships among employees.
- **Decision Making:** Communication is critical in the decision-making process. Effective communication ensures that relevant information is shared with the right

individuals or teams. It allows for the exchange of ideas, viewpoints, and feedback, enabling informed decision-making. Without proper communication channels, decision-making can be delayed, uninformed, or biased, leading to potential issues and inefficiencies.

- **Customer Satisfaction:** Communication is at the heart of delivering exceptional customer service. Whether it's answering inquiries, addressing complaints, or providing updates, effective communication with customers builds trust, enhances relationships, and improves satisfaction levels. Clear and prompt communication demonstrates professionalism, attentiveness, and a commitment to meeting customer needs.
- **Leadership and Management:** Effective communication is a fundamental skill for leaders and managers. It enables them to articulate a clear vision, set expectations, provide guidance, and motivate employees. Leaders who communicate effectively can inspire and influence their teams, foster a positive work culture, and drive organizational success.
- **Organizational Reputation:** The reputation of an organization can be greatly influenced by its communication practices. Transparent and honest communication builds trust and credibility both internally and externally. A well-communicated vision, values, and mission help create a positive brand image. Conversely, poor communication or a lack of communication can lead to misunderstandings, rumours, and damage to the organization's reputation.

1.4 The Communication Process

In basic terms, humans communicate through a process of **encoding** and **decoding**. The encoder is the person who develops and sends the message. As represented in the video below, the encoder must determine how the message will be received by the audience, and make adjustments so the message is received the way they want it to be received.

Encoding is the process of turning thoughts into communication. The encoder uses a 'medium' to send the message — a phone call, email, text message, face-to-face meeting, or other communication tools. The level of conscious thought that goes into encoding messages may vary. The encoder should also take into account any 'noise' that might interfere with their message, such as other messages, distractions, or influences.

The audience then 'decodes', or interprets, the message for themselves. **Decoding** is the process of turning communication into thoughts. For example, you may realize you're hungry and encode the following message to send to your roommate: "I'm hungry. Do you want to get pizza tonight?" As your roommate receives the message, they decode your communication and turn it back into thoughts to make meaning.

There are 8 important components of the communication process:

1. **Sender:** is also known as the source who will create the message to communicate.
2. **Message:** consists of words (verbal) or gestures (non-verbal) that is coded and passed on from the sender to the receiver.
3. **Channel:** is the means through which the message will be passed from the sender to the receiver. This can be digital or non-digital medium used.
4. **Receiver:** the individual or group of individuals who receive the message and decoded the message that the source has sent.
5. **Feedback:** is the expected response from the receiver to the sender to acknowledge how accurately the message has been understood.
6. **Environment:** This can be the physical or digital environment where communication takes place.
7. **Interference:** also known as noise which explains the disturbances that limits the understanding of the message.
8. **Context:** is the situation in which communication takes place; for instance the business environment, online platforms that business meetings take place, the culture of the audience.

1.5 Business Communication Types

Understanding the different types of Business Communication

Business communication can be categorized into several different types based on the medium, purpose, or direction of communication. Here are some common types of business communication:

- **Internal Communication:** This type of communication occurs within an organization and involves interactions among employees, departments, and management. It includes memos, emails, meetings, team discussions, company newsletters, intranet platforms, and other channels used to share information, coordinate tasks, and foster collaboration among employees.
- **External Communication:** External communication takes place between an organization and its external stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, investors, government agencies, media, and the general public. It includes customer service interactions, marketing and advertising messages, press releases, annual reports, social media engagement, public speeches, and other means of conveying information and building relationships with external parties.
- **Formal Communication:** Formal communication follows established protocols, procedures, and hierarchies within an organization. It includes official announcements, company policies, reports, job descriptions, performance evaluations, and other communication governed by rules and organizational structure. Formal communication often occurs through written channels, such as emails or official documents.
- **Informal Communication:** Informal communication is casual, spontaneous, and unofficial in nature. It occurs through conversations, informal meetings, watercooler chats, social gatherings, and other non-structured interactions. Informal communication plays a significant role in building relationships, sharing ideas, and maintaining a positive work environment.
- **Written Communication:** Written communication involves the exchange of information through written text. It includes emails, letters, memos, reports, presentations, and other written documents. Written communication allows for clarity, documentation, and reference, ensuring a clear and consistent message.
- **Verbal Communication:** Verbal communication refers to the spoken word and includes face-to-face conversations, phone calls, video conferences, meetings, and presentations. Verbal communication allows for immediate feedback, clarification, and the ability to convey tone and emotion.
- **Nonverbal Communication:** Nonverbal communication involves the use of body language, facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice to convey messages. It plays a crucial role in complementing verbal communication and conveying emotions, attitudes, and intent.
- **Cross-Cultural Communication:** Cross-cultural communication focuses on interactions between individuals or organizations from different cultural backgrounds. It considers cultural differences in communication styles, customs, and norms to ensure effective understanding and avoid misunderstandings.

- **Digital Communication:** Digital communication encompasses various forms of communication facilitated by digital technology. It includes email, instant messaging, video conferencing, virtual collaboration platforms, social media, and other digital tools that enable quick and efficient communication across distances.

These are some of the common types of business communication. The choice of communication type depends on the specific context, objectives, and target audience of the communication.

Unit 2.0: Business Etiquette

Section outline

Business etiquette refers to a set of expected behaviors, customs, and social norms that govern professional interactions in a business environment. It encompasses the proper conduct, manners, and protocols that individuals are expected to follow while conducting business or representing their organization.

2.1 Business Etiquette Fundamentals

Good manners and a professional attitude is an important intangible skill in the work environment. Employers want to hire and your peers will want to work with friendly, pleasant, and polite people. These intangible skills are called **Business Etiquette**.

Business etiquette are rules, standards and manners that are used in the workplace. It reflects what people in your business environment expects out of you. This may include the way you dress, speak and behave in a business setting. This may differ from one business environment to another. Hence you will be judged on your professionalism through your business etiquette.

Business etiquette plays a crucial role in establishing a positive impression, building relationships, and enhancing professional reputation. It demonstrates respect, professionalism, and cultural awareness, contributing to effective communication and successful business interactions.

Your personal behaviour is important in establishing and maintaining harmony and contributing to a positive and energetic work environment. Our earlier examination of specific writing skills (e.g., using courteous, polite, and passive language) touched on this concept in written language. Here, we will examine specific applications of etiquette associated with how you present yourself in social situations, what type of telephone manners you have, your professional appearance and other areas of business etiquette.

Business Etiquette in Social Settings

From business lunches to conferences, you may need to represent your company in a variety of social settings. If you are at such an event, remember your manners will be assessed. Though it may not be obvious, people will observe whether you use your utensils correctly, chew with your mouth closed, use your cell phone when others are speaking, or dress appropriately. Why does all this matter?

You may think all of this has nothing to do with the quality of work; however, your business etiquette shows the extent to which you developed appropriate habits and are self-aware. Someone who chews with his/her mouth open, for instance, either lacks self-awareness or does not care what people think. Either way, that lack of self-awareness can lead to behaviors that will ruin the reputation of the company you represent.

Business is often conducted over meals. (etiquettescholar.com, 2019)

Here are some tips on proper etiquette in social situations.

1. Get to know the culture of your audience. For example, in Canada a firm handshake is expected, while in Japan a bow of the head is expected
2. Include a brief description of your role in the company when introducing yourself to others
3. Know basic dining etiquette: don't order alcohol, order food that is easy to eat, leave business documents under your chair or in your briefcase until the entree plates have been removed
4. Don't use your cell phone until the meeting has concluded
5. Stay away from controversial topics, like politics, religion and personal matters
6. Don't speak poorly of your employer or job
7. Avoid profanity and be careful with humour

(Adapted from *Business Communication Essentials*, 2016).

Dressing Appropriately for the Workplace

In an office environment, clients, coworkers, and managers expect to see employees in either suits or a business-casual style of dress depending on the workplace. In such situations, conformity is the order of the day, and breaking the dress code can be a serious infraction.

Though some infractions are becoming less serious in many places because the general culture is becoming more accepting of tattoos, piercings, and dyed hair as more and more people use these to express themselves, you might need to be careful. Consider the following points:

- **Tattoos:** Though a significant proportion of the population has tattoos and therefore they are more acceptable across the board, overly conspicuous tattoos are still considered taboo. Tattoos on the face, neck, or hands, for instance, are

considered risky because of their association with prison and gang branding. Tattoos that can be covered by a long-sleeved shirt with a collar and slacks are a safe bet. However, if you have tattoos on your forearms depicting scenes of explicit sex or violence, consider either getting them removed or never rolling up your sleeves if you want to get hired and keep your job.

- **Piercings:** Of course, earrings are *de rigueur* for women and acceptable on men as well. However, earlobe stretching and piercings on the nasal septum or lips are still generally frowned upon in professional settings. Any serious body modification along these lines is acceptable in certain subcultures, but not in most workplaces.
- **Dyed hair:** As with tattoos and piercings, hair dye is becoming more acceptable generally, but extreme expression is inadvisable in any traditional workplace. Where customer expectations are rigid (e.g., in a medical office), seeing someone with bright pink hair will give the impression of an amateur operation rather than a legitimate health care facility.

Because conformity is the determining factor of acceptability in proper attire in any particular workplace, the best guide for how to dress when you are not given a specific uniform is what everyone else wears. Observe closely the style of your co-workers and build a similar wardrobe. If the fashion is slacks with a belt that matches the color of your shoes and a long-sleeve, button-up, collared shirt for men and a full-length skirt and blouse for women, do the same. You might be against conformity, but consider this: according to a recent report a majority of managers report that an employee's attire affects his/her chances of receiving a promotion ([SHRM.org](https://www.shrm.org) 2020).

Telephone Etiquette

The telephone is an essential communication medium that you will use frequently throughout your career. Business conversations over the phone are often direct and time-sensitive. Just like a letter, memo, or email, you don't want to make a phone call unless there is a reason. Thus, knowing some general rules around making business calls will ensure you are always prepared for all your telephone conversations.

- Give each phone call your full attention. Try not to have side conversations or answer other calls during your conversation.
- Plan what you will say. People are busy so use your time and their time efficiently.
- Leave clear messages. If someone is not available, leave a message with your contact information and the reason for the call.
- Have telephone manners. Don't do things like chewing gum while speaking with someone.
- Use a professional tone. Remember, the receiver can not see your body language. Therefore, non-verbal cues, such as tone of voice, become even more important in effectively communicating a message.
- Excuse yourself when you step away from the phone. If you need to leave your desk, inform the receiver.
- Apply active listening skills. Pay close attention to what the receiver is saying.

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2.2 Importance of Business Etiquette

In this globally connected world, meeting people from different cultural backgrounds is a highly propable. As such, one would be required to acquire the relevant skills to treat everyone respectfully so as to build a trustworthy environment for business to prolifer.

Business etiquette is important as it allows employees to:

- better **build relationships** with people, which brings long term value for the business
- creates builds confidence and self-esteem which allows for better verbal and non-verbal communication resulting into **positive personal and corporate image**
- increase **transactional activities** that is provides more opportunities for the business
- fosters **trust** towards your organisation since you showed respect and professionalism

Click on the link below to know more on how to behave professionally:

<https://hbr.org/2014/04/behave-yourself>

2.3 Digital Etiquette

Business Etiquette in the Digital Age

People sometimes forget that good digital communication etiquette is as important as non-digital communication etiquette and can have as many potential pitfalls. Just as you represent your organization in face-to-face interactions, you do the same through your digital interaction with your company's stakeholders. Thus, learning the basics of professional etiquette in the digital world will be beneficial to your career.

Virtual Meetings

Many things about how business is conducted have changed. One of the areas most impacted is the rise and prevalence of virtual meeting. Virtual meetings are here to stay. Learning how to organize and participate in them will prove beneficial.

Email Etiquette

Good email etiquette includes the following:

- Include a meaningful subject line. This will encourage recipients to open the message and can help them find the email again later. If you leave the subject line blank, most email clients will deliver it to the recipient saying "(no subject)" and

some will display an email warning when you try to send it asking if you are sure you want to send an email without a subject.

- Include the appropriate email recipients. It is best to not send messages to recipients who do not need to receive it to avoid confusion and wasting others' time.
- Keep your message clear and concise. Even though there is not a word limit or character limit on emails, it's best to keep your message concise. Sometimes it takes longer to write a clear, concise message, but it's worth it to improve communication.
- Use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation improve readability and will help your recipients understand your message and respond appropriately.
- Use a tone that is friendly and professional. Although your emails should be professional, they can also be friendly and sound like they were sent by a human, not a robot.
- Change the subject line if changing topics when replying to an email. Again, a meaningful subject line will encourage recipients to read the message and help them find it later.
- Do not use "Reply All" unless it is crucial that everyone on the email receive the reply.

Here are some additional tips to help you avoid making mistakes when using email:

- Add the email recipients last. This will help you avoid the mistake of sending the email before you are finished drafting it.
- Double check that you have the proper attachments if you say you are attaching something. Some people like to add attachments first before composing the message to make sure they don't forget. Some email clients may also display a popup message asking if you've forgotten to attach an item.
- If you cannot describe the message in a few short paragraphs, consider asking for a phone call or meeting with the person.
- Put yourself in the recipient's shoes. After you've finished drafting your email, do a final check and read through the message as though you were the recipient. This can help you to make sure that the subject line is properly descriptive, the message is clear and appropriate, you have attached any necessary attachments, and you are sending the message to the appropriate person.

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Unit 3.0: Intercultural Communication

Section outline

- Intercultural communication refers to the process of exchanging information, ideas, and messages between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. It involves understanding and effectively navigating the complexities of diverse cultural perspectives, norms, values, and communication styles.
- Intercultural communication refers to the process of exchanging information, ideas, and messages between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. It involves understanding and effectively navigating the complexities of diverse cultural perspectives, norms, values, and communication styles. The term "intercultural communication" may conjure in your mind a picture of two people from different continents speaking or writing to one another.

The cultural phenomenon is translated into attitudes, beliefs, values and traditions that are commonly shared by a group of people. Communication and culture interlink in terms of the chosen words used, the tools used to communicate (face to face or digital communications); non-verbal communication used (e.g. gestures, signs). The aim of intercultural communication is to create understanding among people in the organisations with different cultural identities.

Ethnocentrism is often a common term raised within intercultural communications. It implies that we tend to view our own culture as correct and benchmark other cultures from us. For effective communication to occur within a business context, cultural relativism should be used where everyone in the organisation needs to understand another culture's beliefs and perspectives.

- Always approach intercultural communication as an opportunity to overcome cultural differences and achieve the cross-cultural understanding you need to be a better person and do your job effectively in a multicultural environment. Engaging with other cultures with simplistic, preconceived notions informed by media stereotypes reducing everyone in a culture to a one-dimensional character or prop will lead you into serious error. Intercultural communication requires openness to difference, patience in overcoming cultural and language barriers, and the desire to learn about other cultures and points of view.
- If your work brings you into contact with cultures that you know little about, forget the stereotypes and learn about their culture by both researching it and talking to them respectfully. Along these lines, this chapter provides some basic principles for conducting intercultural communication in the modern workplace by considering what you share in common with the people you interact with, what to look for in terms of cultural differences, and how to act in either case.

3.2 Importance of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication plays a crucial role in the business environment for several reasons:

1. **Globalization:** In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, businesses are operating in diverse cultural contexts. Effective intercultural communication allows organizations to navigate cultural differences, establish successful international collaborations, and expand into new markets.
2. **Building Relationships:** Business success often relies on establishing strong relationships with clients, partners, and employees from different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication helps in building trust, understanding expectations, and demonstrating respect for diverse perspectives, which are essential for cultivating positive and productive business relationships.
3. **Effective Negotiations:** Negotiations are a common part of business interactions, and cultural differences can significantly impact negotiation styles, approaches, and expectations. Understanding the cultural context and communication preferences of the parties involved enhances the chances of successful negotiations and mutually beneficial outcomes.
4. **Avoiding Misunderstandings:** Miscommunication and misunderstandings due to cultural differences can lead to conflicts, delays, and costly mistakes in the business environment. Intercultural communication skills enable individuals to clarify meanings, interpret messages accurately, and avoid misinterpretations or offense.
5. **Adapting Marketing and Advertising:** Businesses need to tailor their marketing and advertising strategies to effectively reach diverse audiences. Intercultural communication helps in understanding the cultural values, beliefs, and preferences of different target markets, allowing for the development of culturally appropriate and resonant campaigns.
6. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Intercultural communication fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion within organizations. By valuing and leveraging diverse perspectives, businesses can enhance innovation, problem-solving, and decision-making. Effective intercultural communication ensures that employees from different cultural backgrounds feel included, respected, and valued in the workplace.
7. **Managing Virtual Teams:** With remote work and virtual teams becoming more prevalent, intercultural communication skills are crucial for managing teams spread across different locations and cultures. By understanding and adapting to the communication styles and cultural norms of team members, leaders can promote collaboration, engagement, and productivity in virtual environments.
8. **Ethical and Responsible Business Practices:** Intercultural communication promotes ethical business practices by fostering respect for diverse cultural values, social norms, and legal frameworks. It helps businesses understand and navigate ethical dilemmas in different cultural contexts, ensuring responsible behavior and avoiding cultural insensitivity or unintended harm.

In summary, intercultural communication is essential in the business environment to facilitate successful global collaborations, build strong relationships, avoid misunderstandings, adapt to diverse markets, foster diversity and inclusion, manage virtual teams, and promote ethical and responsible business practices. Developing intercultural communication competence is crucial for businesses to thrive in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

3.3 Reinforcing Intercultural Communication

In order to ensure effective business communication, some key factors must be emphasized. According to Weinland, these are:

1. Motivation
2. Knowledge
3. Uncertainty avoidance
4. Competence

In today's globalized world, intercultural communication has become increasingly important due to the interconnectedness of societies and the frequent interactions between people from various cultures in business, education, travel, and other domains. It plays a vital role in promoting understanding, collaboration, and harmony in multicultural environments.

Key aspects of intercultural communication include:

- **Cultural Awareness:** Intercultural communication requires individuals to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity. This involves recognizing and understanding one's own cultural biases, assumptions, and values, as well as being open to learning about and appreciating different cultural perspectives.
- **Verbal and Nonverbal Communication:** Language is a fundamental aspect of intercultural communication. Understanding language barriers, nuances, idioms, and cultural meanings is essential for effective communication. Nonverbal communication, including body language, facial expressions, and gestures, also varies across cultures and can greatly impact intercultural interactions.
- **Context and Etiquette:** Cultural contexts and etiquettes influence communication norms and expectations. Different cultures may have varying degrees of directness, formality, and hierarchy in communication. Being aware of and adapting to cultural context and etiquette is important to avoid misunderstandings and foster positive connections.
- **Cultural Values and Beliefs:** Every culture has its own set of values, beliefs, and norms that shape communication patterns. These include attitudes toward time, individualism versus collectivism, power distance, and gender roles. Understanding and respecting cultural differences in values and beliefs helps to bridge communication gaps and build stronger relationships.
- **Stereotypes and Prejudice:** Intercultural communication requires individuals to challenge stereotypes and overcome prejudice. Stereotypes can lead to biases and

misinterpretations, hindering effective communication. Promoting inclusivity, empathy, and respect for diversity are essential in overcoming these barriers.

- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Successful intercultural communication requires adaptability and flexibility. Being open to different ways of thinking, embracing ambiguity, and adjusting communication styles to accommodate cultural differences contribute to effective intercultural interactions.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Intercultural communication often involves navigating conflicts arising from cultural misunderstandings or clashes. Effective conflict resolution in intercultural settings requires cultural sensitivity, active listening, empathy, and a willingness to find mutually acceptable solutions.

Developing intercultural communication competence is vital for individuals and organizations in today's multicultural world. It fosters effective collaboration, enhances relationships, promotes mutual respect, and enables successful interactions across cultures. By embracing cultural diversity and understanding the intricacies of intercultural communication, individuals can bridge cultural gaps and build meaningful connections.

3.4 Dimensions of culture

Successfully communicating across cultures requires understanding and respecting how the culture or cultures you represent differ from those of the people you're communicating with. While you may think that you should just follow the golden rule and treat everyone else the way you would like to be treated yourself, the more you travel to distant lands, the more you realize that cultural conventions and expectations for how people would like to be treated are relative. One culture will place a high value on a friendly handshake and eye contact, while you would come off as aggressive or awkward if you did those things well in another.

Though you can't be expected to know every little custom across the planet, having a general sense of large-scale cultural differences and a willingness to learn the details as necessary can save you from embarrassing yourself or offending people of different cultures when interacting with them. An open approach to cultural differences can also impress your audiences in ways favourable to your reputation and the organization you represent. With this goal in mind, let's examine five broad categories of culture.

Context

Cultures can be divided into two distinct context categories: low and high context cultures. Low context cultures are said to be logical, analytical and action oriented. A direct and straightforward communication style tends to be the communication pattern. Countries in North America and many European countries are considered low-context in orientation. High context cultures on the other hand are more intuitive in their communication style. Non-verbal communication: voice tone, eye contact, gestures, and posture, plays a more important part in communication. Speakers use indirect communication to communicate messages. Asian, African, and many Latin American cultures are considered high-context cultures.

Individualism

Individualism refers to a culture's attitude towards independence and control. People in low context cultures tend to be very individualistic, that is, they value independence, freedom, initiative, personal responsibility and resist many forms of control. Competition and personal achievement is hardwired into the culture as people try to stand out from one another. On the other hand, people in high context cultures tend to be group oriented. Acceptance of group values, duties, and responsibilities is encouraged. High context cultures resist independence, freedom, and competition. People would rather blend than stand out.

Formality

Formality is the degree to which a culture places emphasis on tradition, ceremony, and social rules. In low context cultures, tradition is not an important value. This lack of value is exhibited in a more casual business attire, use of informal language to address superiors and the elderly, and lack of rituals. In low context cultures, social mobility is more possible and likely to occur. On the other hand, high context cultures value tradition. This value is exhibited is the wearing of formal business attire, the use of formal greetings with superiors and the elderly, and observance of rituals. In high context cultures, social mobility is often very difficult and unlikely to occur.

Communication Style

Communication style refers to the value place on verbal or non-verbal communication. Low context cultures place a high degree of importance on verbal communication. Low context cultures take words literally and value straightforward communication, words are supposed to mean what they say. On the other hand, high context cultures place more importance on the surrounding context than on the actual words. Words are only part of the message, and a lesser part of the message than all the other information connected to the message.

Time Orientation

Time orientation refers to the degree to which a culture considers time limited. In low context cultures, time is limited and considered a commodity. Time is connected to productivity, efficiency, and money. The saying "time is money" is part of commonplace. Waiting is wasting time and considered rude. On the other hand, time is unlimited in high context cultures. Time is a resource to be enjoyed. Decisions take time, meetings do not always start on time, and it is not considered rude to keep someone waiting.

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Unit 4.0 : Business Writing

Business writing refers to the style and format of written communication used in various business contexts. It encompasses a wide range of documents, including emails, reports, memos, proposals, presentations, business letters, and more. The primary purpose of business writing is to convey information and ideas clearly, concisely, and effectively within a professional setting.

4.1 Characteristics of business writing

Business writing typically follows certain conventions to ensure clarity and professionalism. These conventions include using a formal tone, organizing information in a logical manner, using clear and concise language, and adhering to standard grammar, punctuation, and formatting rules. The goal is to convey information accurately, build professional relationships, persuade or inform the reader, and achieve specific business objectives.

Business writing can vary depending on the audience and purpose of the communication. For instance, writing an email to a colleague may be more informal compared to crafting a formal report for upper management. Regardless of the specific form, business writing should always strive for clarity, coherence, and professionalism to effectively communicate ideas, proposals, recommendations, or any other relevant information.

The characteristics of business writing typically include the following:

1. **Clarity:** Business writing should be clear and easily understood by the reader. It should avoid jargon, acronyms, and ambiguous language. Complex ideas should be explained in a straightforward manner.
2. **Conciseness:** Business writing should be concise and to the point. It should convey information efficiently, without unnecessary repetition or wordiness. Long-winded sentences and paragraphs should be avoided.
3. **Professional tone:** Business writing should maintain a professional and formal tone. It should be respectful and appropriate for the audience and the context. Avoiding slang, colloquialisms, and overly casual language is essential.
4. **Accuracy:** Business writing should be accurate and factually correct. Information, data, and statistics should be verified and properly referenced. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation should be accurate as well.
5. **Organization:** Business writing should be well-organized and structured. It should have a logical flow, with clear headings, subheadings, and paragraphs. Information should be presented in a coherent and sequential manner.
6. **Audience focus:** Business writing should be tailored to the specific audience. It should consider the reader's level of expertise, background knowledge, and interests. Writing should address their needs and concerns effectively.
7. **Professional formatting:** Business writing should adhere to professional formatting standards. This includes using appropriate fonts, font sizes, and margins. Additionally, consistent and well-structured document layouts enhance readability.

8. Purpose-driven: Business writing should have a clear purpose or objective. Whether it is to inform, persuade, request, or report, the writing should align with the intended purpose and achieve the desired outcome.
9. Use of visuals: Business writing may incorporate visuals such as graphs, charts, tables, or diagrams when appropriate. These visuals can help illustrate data, trends, or complex concepts, enhancing the clarity and understanding of the content.
10. Proofreading and editing: Business writing should be carefully proofread and edited to ensure accuracy, clarity, and professionalism. Spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting errors should be eliminated to maintain a polished final product.

By embodying these characteristics, business writing can effectively convey information, promote professionalism, and achieve its intended purpose within a business context.

4.2 Reporting Business Information

Organization

Much like correspondence, you may choose between the direct and indirect methods to structure your reports. The direct method is used when you have a receptive audience; whereas, the indirect method is used when you must persuade your audience. Whichever you decide to use will depend on the context, audience, and your purpose. Pay attention to these essential considerations when thinking of your stakeholders. Stakeholders may include the person(s) the report is about, whom it is for, who has an interest in the matter, and the organization overall. Ask yourself who the key decision makers are, who the experts will be, and how your words and images may be interpreted.

Reports vary by size, format, and function. You need to be flexible and adjust your report to the needs of the audience and to your purpose as there are several types of reports, including, for example, proposals, recommendations, problem-solving, and progress. Reports are typically organized around six key elements:

- Who the report is about and/or prepared for
- What was done, what problems were addressed, and the results, including conclusions and/or recommendations
- Where the subject is situated
- When the situation occurred
- Why the report was written (function), including under what authority, for what reason, or by whose request
- How the subject operated, functioned, or was used

When you write, your goal is not only to complete an assignment but also to write for a specific purpose—perhaps to inform, to explain, to persuade, or a combination of these purposes. Your purpose for writing should always be in the back of your mind, because it will help you decide which pieces of information belong together and how you will order

them. In other words, choose the order that will most effectively fit your purpose and support your main point.

Order	Purpose
Chronological Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explain the history of an event or a topic • To tell a story or relate an experience • To explain how to do or make something • To explain the steps in a process
Spatial Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help readers visualize something as you want them to see it • To create a main impression using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
Order of Importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To persuade or convince • To rank items by their importance, benefit, or significance

While there is no universal way for a report to be developed, conventions relating to the organization of the detail has evolved over time and is recognized in all business contexts, whether you are creating a direct or indirect document.

Direct Method	Direct Method 2	Indirect Method
Introduction with purpose statement	Introduction with purpose statement and background	General introduction suggesting the subject or problem
Background		Background
Details	Conclusion/Recommendations	Details
Conclusion/Recommendations	Details	Purpose statement/main message
References	References	Conclusion/Recommendations
		References

Formats

Business documents are typically created using conventional formats that are recognized in professional contexts. For example, letters have a familiar look because of the standard components that are used to format such documents. These formats serve to signal the level of formality and the purpose of the documents. They also help to create a degree of standardization in the documentation that circulates within and outside of organizations. Formats also inform readers on how to read the documents. When you create a document in the workplace, it is expected that you will use formats and styles customarily used within the organization. The different types of business reports and their typical usage and contents are:

1. Short reports
2. Long reports
3. Slide reports
4. Infographics

Infographics are reports that look like posters. They are created with digital templates or slide deck software to report information using visual narratives or stories. Infographics combine visual elements like icons, graphs, images, and/or charts, along with concise text, to promote an idea or to convey information in an engaging way. Software, such as PowerPoint, Adobe Spark, or Canva can be used to create infographics.

If you are seeking one specific type of format for infographics, you will be disappointed. Here, you can let your creative side flourish as you customize backgrounds, fonts, and formats to suit your subject and purpose. Some software, like Canva, offers free and premium ready-made templates that you can adapt to your own content. The key is to have done your research, mapped or sketched out your ideas, and planned the visuals you will be using to support them. Once you have done this, go into the software and design your document using a variety of background, font, and chart options.

When creating an infographic choose a template that aligns with your content. For example, if you are showing data related to geographic areas, choose a map template; if you are making a comparison, choose a two-column format.

Below are links to three examples of infographics. Note the sparse use of text, which offers only key information, and relevant images to highlight key ideas.

Infographic example with data and map: [Direct Marketing in Canada: Agriculture](#) (Statistics Canada 2017).

Map infographic example: [An Overview of Canada's Forest Sector](#) (Statistics Canada, 2018).

Text-based infographic example: [From Email To Bots: The Future of Customer Communication](#) (D'Adamo, 2017).

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4.3 Presentation Skills

Oral presentations may be one of the most anxiety-inducing prospects for many students and professionals alike. Yet the ability to plan your presentation, use available technologies, and speak clearly and confidently in public is an important competency in the workplace.

Since there is an enormous amount of information on this topic available on the internet, and since “showing” is often more effective than “telling,” links to several online resources are included to help you sort through and find credible and authoritative sources of information and sample presentations to help you learn more and develop your own presentations.

Building Confidence as a Presenter

In this section, you will find some practical steps for becoming an effective public speaker, based on the principle that no matter how much of a novice or an expert you are, there’s always something to learn and room to improve. If you feel anxious about speaking in front of others—and, admittedly, most people do—then the steps, information, and additional resources provided here will help build your confidence, give you some stage tools to work with, and direct you to resources to further solidify your learning.

Developing Presentation Skills

Like any kind of advanced communication skill, the art of giving effective presentations is not in-born; it requires [deliberate practice](#).

An excellent way to learn more about delivering effective presentations is to follow a systematic process:

1. **Observe others.**

You can learn a lot simply by observing how successful public speakers “work the room” and engage their audience. Observe what they do. How do they use their voice to make it work as a tool of communication? How do they deploy tone, pausing, pacing, and projection? What do they do with their hands? How do they make use of the physical space around them? Take note of how speakers physically operate, either in person or in media: Identify what they do, make note of what you feel works well and what doesn’t, then put what you’ve learned into practice.

As a student, you might start by observing your professors. Aim to identify what makes one professor a great lecturer and another less engaging. Compare what they do with

their voice, their hands, their gestures, their movements. Pay attention to how they pace their talk to draw you in and create emphasis. Reflect on what they do to convey a sense of enthusiasm for what they're talking about—or fail to do so. You want to know what kinds of things to avoid—a dull monotonous tone, for example—as well as what kinds of things to adopt to ensure your voice comes across as a powerful tool for communicating your ideas clearly and emphatically.

Activity: Observation in action

Whether observing your favourite professor give a lecture; watching your favourite podcaster, TV or YouTube presenter; or viewing the videos linked below, turn your observations into an active learning experience: Create a list of what the speakers do well *as speakers*, and then use them as role models. The goal is to create a toolkit of practical tips, approaches, and ideas for building confidence, developing your own “spark” as public speaker, and engaging your audience. In short, watch, observe, and learn.

Thus, your presentations should include:

1. **Openings:** How do the presenters open their speeches? How do they introduce the topic? Do they straight-away announce their main point, or do they engage the audience first and gradually lead into their thesis or purpose?
2. **Transitions:** How do the presenters move from one idea to the next? Do they pause and announce the next topic, or do they smooth the flow of ideas by using transition devices and thematic content?
3. **Tone and style:** What tone is used to present the information? Super serious? Humorous? A balance of both? Is the content high-information focused, or does it consist of a balance of high information and story-telling?
4. **Voice and facial expression:** How is voice used to support the tone and the content? Is the speaker using a mono-tone, or is the speaker modulating voice for emphasis and engagement? Do you *feel* the ideas as well as *hear* them? Is the speaker smiling and showing enjoyment in the speaking process? Is the speaker looking down and reading text, or is the speaker looking outwards and making eye contact with the audience?
5. **Gestures:** How is the speaker making use of the body and gestures to emphasize ideas and engage the audience?
6. **Closing:** How does the speaker close the presentation? Are you left with a memorable statement that will help you remember the key point?

Designing Your Presentation

How you organize the contents of your presentation and how you design your slide deck will help to determine whether or not your message is conveyed in its most powerful form. This chapter will focus on speech structure and on slide design.

Speech Structure

You are by now familiar with the conventions of business correspondence and report structure: introduction, background, details, conclusion. This structure forms the backbone for most messaging in business. Many presentations are created using this simple structure as well, often melding the introduction and background together to save on time. The key message would constitute the high point of the presentation, followed by information that supports that point. This “triangle-shaped” structure is used commonly.

To determine how your presentation should be constructed, consider your purpose. In business, the purpose often falls within the following (adapted from David McMurrey, 1997-2017):

- **Informative purpose:** A presentation can be primarily informative. For example, as a member of a committee involved in a project to expand your department, your job might be to give a presentation on the rationale behind the expansion, how financing will occur, and what infrastructure will be needed.
- **Directive or instructional purpose:** A presentation can be primarily directive. Your task might be to direct employees on how to perform their tasks using a new process or method, or you might instruct employees on how to use a new customer relations platform.
- **Persuasive purpose:** A presentation can be primarily persuasive. You might want to convince members of local civic organizations to support a city-wide recycling program. You might appear before city council to persuade its members to reserve certain city-owned lands for park areas, softball and baseball parks, or community gardens.

When creating a presentation that has a persuasive message, you have structural options. You can organize your content using the traditional “triangle” method, or you can use the “what is, what can be” comparative method shared by Nancy Duarte in her presentation below: [The Secret Structure of Great Talks](#) (2011). In this presentation, which offers a great example of effective persuasive presentation structure and design, Duarte reveals that speeches that have changed society make use of this “what is, what can be” structure, which compares what the current situation is to what the situation can be in its improved form after your great idea is implemented. Keep this structure in your toolbox for times when you want to persuade the reader to implement a new procedure, accept a proposed project, or sell a new product, for example.

Designing Slides that Convince

You will probably be most familiar with the slide design illustrated above, with each slide containing a title and content consisting of bullet points. You will see this design in most of your professors' lectures. Though it is the most commonly used slide design, it has also been criticized as being too rigid and resulting in poor long-term information retention. When this traditional slide design was compared to the assertion-evidence slide design discussed below, researchers discovered that using assertion-evidence slide structure resulted in deeper learning and understanding (Garner, et al. 2011).

Assertion-evidence slide structure, pioneered by Michael Alley at Penn State University, consists of a statement, or assertion, usually placed where the slide title would normally be placed. Among other types of content, the body of the slide would then include (excerpted from McMurrey, 1997-2017):

- **Drawing or diagram of key objects:** If you describe or refer to any objects during your presentation, show visuals of them so that you can point to different components or features.
- **Tables, charts, graphs:** If you discuss statistical data, present them in some form or table, chart, or graph. Many members of your audience may be less comfortable "hearing" such data as opposed to seeing them.
- **Other research data or information:** Usually presented in text or charts.

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