Chapter 12

Public Speaking in Various Contexts

Public speaking doesn't just occur in communication classes or in academic settings. Most communication instructors try to connect the content of their course to the real world and to other courses, but many students fail to follow up on that connection. To get the most out of this course, you should be able to see how communication skills in general, and speaking skills in particular, integrate into various parts of your lives. This book approaches communication from an integrative learning perspective that encourages teachers and students to apply the content of a class to other courses, personal contexts, and professional contexts and then reflect on those connections. Integrative and reflective thinking about communication helps us realize that the expectations for speaking are context specific. When we can draw on particular skills in order to adapt to our communication situation, we will be more successful in our classes, workplaces, and communities. This chapter highlights these connections and can hopefully serve as a resource and a reminder, once you have completed this course, of the important roles that speaking plays in various aspects of your life.

12.1 Speaking in Personal and Civic Contexts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. List three general guidelines for ceremonial speeches.
2. Identify strategies for effectively composing and delivering the following ceremonial speeches: speech of introduction, presenting an award, accepting an award, toast, speech of tribute, and eulogy.
3. Identify strategies for effectively composing and delivering a "This I Believe" speech.
4. Explain the connection between public advocacy and speaking.

Speaking in personal contexts includes elements of all three general purposes we learned earlier. You may inform an audience about an upcoming speaker during a speech of introduction or use humor to entertain during a toast. People are also compelled to speak about issues they care about, which may entail using persuasive strategies to advocate for a person, group, or issue.

Speaking on Special Occasions

Ceremonial speaking[1] refers to speeches of praise, tribute, and celebration that bring audiences together on special occasions. Although most communication classes cover informative and persuasive speaking more than ceremonial speaking, I have had many students tell me after taking the class that the guidelines they learned for speaking on special occasions have been very useful for them. Before we get into specific examples of ceremonial speeches, we'll discuss three general guidelines for ceremonial speeches: be prepared, be brief, and be occasion focused.

Speakers should always be prepared for a speech, but this can be challenging with special-occasion speaking because it is often unexpected. Even though most special occasions are planned, the speaking that goes on during these events isn't always as planned. One reason for this lack of preparation is that people often, mistakenly, think they can "wing" a toast, introduction, or acceptance speech. Another reason is that special occasion speeches can "sneak up" on you if the person in charge of the event didn't plan ahead for the speaking parts of the program and has to ask people to participate at the last minute. More than once, I have been asked to introduce a guest speaker at an event at the last minute. Given these reasons, it should be clear that even though ceremonial speeches are brief and don't require

1. Speeches of praise, tribute, and celebration that bring audiences together on special occasions.

the research of other speech types, they still require planning, good content, and good delivery.

Special-occasion speeches should always be brief, unless otherwise noted. With only a couple exceptions, these speeches are shorter than other speech types. Special occasions are planned events, and a speaker is just one part of a program. There may be a dinner planned, a special surprise coming up, other people to be honored, or even a limit on how long the group can use the facility. So delivering a long speech on such an occasion will likely create timing problems for the rest of the program.

A special-occasion speech should focus on the occasion. You will almost always be speaking about someone or something else like a group, organization, or event, so don't make the speech about you. Strategies for effective delivery still apply to special-occasion speeches. Since these occasions are often celebratory, it is important to be enthusiastic or reverent to the tone of the occasion. A toast may be lighthearted and jovial, a eulogy somber, a tribute stirring, or an acceptance speech celebratory. Even when accepting an award, speakers will spend most of their speech talking about others rather than them.

Ceremonial speeches usually occur as part of a program, so brevity is important.

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Speech of Introduction

Five minutes after I felt a tap on my shoulder, I was introducing the provost of the university. I didn't know before the tap that I was going to introduce him, and I didn't know that much about him. This is just one example of how special-occasion speeches can sneak up on you. Knowing this can help you "expect the unexpected." As we learned earlier, speaking anxiety increases when there is little time to prepare and practice a speech. Despite the lack of notice and my lack of knowledge about the person I would soon introduce, I drew on my knowledge of special-occasion speaking and made the most out of my five minutes of prep time.

A **speech of introduction**[2] is a speech in which one speaker briefly introduces an upcoming speaker who is usually the focus of the occasion. Such speeches are usually only one to two minutes long. The first step in preparing a speech of introduction is to get to know the person you're introducing. If you've been asked to introduce someone, you are likely part of the team planning the event or you have a relationship with the person. If you already know the person and have a relationship with them, then this step is easily checked off the preparation list. If

2. A ceremonial speech in which one speaker briefly introduces an upcoming speaker who is usually the focus of the occasion.

you've just been asked to introduce the guest because you are involved in the planning of the event, then you have hopefully been asked in advance and can take some time to get to know the person. You can find biographical information about many people online, through their professional or personal websites or social media profiles. The guest may have already sent a bio (a biographical sketch with information about their life and accomplishments) to put in the program. You want to make sure the information is up to date and valid, so it's good to verify any information found on the Internet or just contact the person directly to ask for a bio. While these are good places to start to get to know the person you will introduce, it's good to have some personal connection, too. You may want to communicate directly with the person and ask them a couple questions that you think the audience might find interesting but aren't included in the typical bio. Such direct communication might also allow you to make the introduction more personal, as you can note the lunch, phone call, or e-mail exchanges during your speech. In my situation, since I wasn't able to get to know the person, I had to rely on the information from the bio included in the program.

During the speech of introduction, make sure to say the person's name, correctly, several times. It so happened that the person I was introducing unexpectedly had a last name that was difficult for me to pronounce. So, after reviewing the bio and picking out highlights, I confirmed the pronunciation of his name with a couple people at the event who knew how to say it and then spent much of the remainder of my time saying the last name over and over. Mispronouncing someone's name is embarrassing for the speaker and the audience.

You should also establish the speaker's credentials and credibility. Do not read the person's bio to the audience, especially if that bio is already included in the program. Remember, you are engaging in public speaking, not public reading. A bio that you pull from the Internet may also include information and accomplishments that aren't relevant to the occasion or the speaker's content. If you were introducing a speaker at a civic organization, it might be more relevant to focus on her community engagement and service rather than her academic accomplishments. Keep in mind the introduction sets up an audience's expectations for the speaker. You want to share his or her relevant credentials and your personal connection, if there is one, but make sure you don't "over sell" it, as in the following example: "Marko is one of the smartest and funniest people I have ever met. I have no doubts that he will both enlighten and entertain you with his presentation today!"

A speech of introduction also helps set the tone for the upcoming speaker and establish a relationship between the audience and speaker.Toastmasters International, "Introducing a Speaker: What Should You Say?" accessed March 17, 2012, http://www.toastmasters.org/MainMenuCategories/FreeResources/

NeedHelpGivingaSpeech/BusinessPresentations/IntroducingaSpeaker.aspx. It is important that the tone you set matches with that of the upcoming speaker. Just as a heavy metal warm-up band wouldn't be a good setup for Celine Deon, a humorous and lighthearted introduction for a speaker with a serious topic would create an inconsistency in tone that could be uncomfortable for the speaker and the audience. By setting the tone, you help establish a relationship between the speaker and the audience. If you're unsure of the tone or content of the person's speech, you should contact that speaker or the event planner to find out. You also want to establish your own credibility and goodwill by being prepared in terms of content and delivery and expressing your thanks for being asked to introduce the speaker.

A welcome speaker introduces the audience to upcoming events.

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A speech of welcome is similar to a speech of introduction, but instead of introducing an audience to an upcoming speaker, you introduce the audience to upcoming events. If you are asked to deliver a speech of welcome, you're likely a representative of the group that planned or is hosting the event. Since a welcome speaker is usually the first speaker of the day and the proceeding sessions are timed, this is definitely an occasion where brevity will be appreciated. Getting behind schedule on the first presentation isn't a good way to start the day. Aside from graciously welcoming the audience, you should also provide key information about upcoming events and acknowledge key participants. In terms of previewing the events, do not read through a program or schedule if it's something that audience members already have in their possession. You can reference the program, but allow them to read it on their own. You may want to highlight a couple things on the program like a keynote speaker or awards ceremony. Definitely make sure to announce any changes in the schedule so people can plan accordingly. Thank any sponsors, especially if they are in attendance, and acknowledge any VIP guests.

Welcome speakers should also convey logistical information that audience members may need to know, which helps answer questions before the audience needs to ask them. Many people may not be familiar with a facility, so it may be necessary to inform them where the coffee and snacks are, where the restrooms are, or other simple logistics. Welcome speeches are often allotted more time than is needed, but do not feel obligated to fill that time. Audience members will not be upset if you finish early, as they may have some last-minute things to do before the event gets started, and it doesn't hurt to get a little ahead of schedule, since things will inevitably get behind later on.

For the speeches previously discussed, just as with all speeches, it's important to know your audience. The nature of ceremonial speaking occasions helps facilitate audience and situational analysis. If you're asked to speak at such an occasion, you can usually get information from the event planner or coordinator, who should know the expectations for the tone and the general makeup of the audience.

Presenting an Award

If you have a leadership role in an organization, you may end up presenting an employee, a colleague, or a peer with an award. There are several steps in **presenting an award**[3], but the main goal of this speech is to enhance the value of the award and honor the person receiving it. As with other special-occasion speeches, it should be focused on the occasion and the particular award. Start by stating the name of the award and providing a brief overview of its purpose. Also share some information about the organization or group that is bestowing the award. Connect the values of the organization with the purpose of the award. You may also want to describe the selection process. If there were many qualified nominees and the decision was difficult to make, then stating that enhances the value of the award. Such statements also recognize others who were nominated but didn't win.

Once you've covered the background of the award and the selection process, you are usually at a good point to announce the winner, since the remaining information is specific to the person being honored with the award. Announce the winner and pause to allow the audience to acknowledge him or her before continuing on with the speech; however, don't bring the person up until you are ready to hand over the award, as it creates an awkward situation.WestsideToastmasters.com, "Presenting an Award for Maximum Impact," accessed November 9, 2012, http://westsidetoastmasters.com/article_reference/presenting_awards_for_maximum_impact_2005-01.html. Next, share the qualifications of the person receiving the award. This helps explain to the audience why the winner is deserving of the honor. Then connect the winner to the legacy of the award by saying how they are similar to previous winners. For example, "This year's winner joins a select group of other college seniors who have been recognized for their dedication to community service and outreach." You can also say what the person adds to the legacy of the award. For example, "Nick helped establish an alternative spring break program that will continue to service communities in need for many years to come." It can be an honor to present an award, but most of us would like to be on the other side of this speech.

3. A ceremonial speech meant enhance the value of an award and honor the person receiving it.

Accepting an Award

Congratulations, you won an award! When you deliver a speech **accepting an award**[4], be brief, gracious, and humble. Before you begin speaking, take a moment, pause, smile, and make eye contact with the audience.Patricia Fripp, "Accepting an Award with Class," Toastmasters International, accessed November 9, 2012, http://www.toastmasters.org/Members/SpotlightArticles/AcceptAwardClass.aspx. You may know ahead of time that you're going to win the award, or you may not. Either way, take time to write out an acceptance speech. Try to memorize most of the content to make the speech look genuine and spontaneous. If you have a lot of people to thank, you may write that information out on a small card to reference, just so you don't leave anyone out. Make sure to thank the group giving the award and the person who presented you with the award. Also compliment the other nominees, and thank those who helped make your accomplishment possible. In 2002, Halle Berry won an Academy Award for Best Leading Actress, making history as the first African American woman to earn that honor. The acceptance speech she delivered acknowledged the magnitude of the situation, keeping the focus on actresses who came before her and the people who helped her achieve this honor. The video and text of her speech can be accessed in Video Clip 12.1.

Video Link

Halle Berry's Oscar Acceptance Speech

http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/halleberryoscarspeech.htm

Toast

Cheers, *slainte*, *skal*, *prost*, and *salud*! All these words could form the basis for a **toast**[5], which is a ceremonial speech that praises or conveys goodwill or blessings in honor of a person, accomplishment, or event.

4. A ceremonial speech in which a person briefly, graciously, and humbly accepts an award.
5. A ceremonial speech that praises or conveys goodwill or blessings in honor of a person, accomplishment, or event.

Toasts are usually the shortest special-occasion speech, which is good since people's arms get tired if they have to hold their drink up in the air for too long. The degree of preparation needed for a toast varies more than any other special-occasion speech type. Some toasts are practically spontaneous and will therefore have to be impromptu. People can toast an accomplishment, completion of a task, a holiday such as New Year's Eve, a favorite sports team winning, or the anniversary of a special event. Wedding toasts are more formal and more preparation is needed and expected. Although toasts are generally supposed to be conversational and appear spontaneous, because that makes the content seem more genuine, in situations that are more formal or where there is much at stake, brief notes are OK. You wouldn't want to see a person giving a toast pull out a stack of note cards, though.

Coworkers may toast the successful completion of a big project.

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Toasts are definitely a time to include a brief personal anecdote and/or humor, but always make sure to test your story or joke out on someone who knows you and knows the person or people you will be toasting. As I've already warned, using humor in a speech can be dangerous, since most people who try to use humor publicly think they are funnier than they actually are. Not having someone else vet your toast material can lead to embarrassment for many people. Aside from having someone review your content, it's also a good idea to not get too "toasty" before you deliver your toast, or the story or joke that you decided to leave out earlier may find its way back into the speech. Awkward and embarrassing toasts make funny scenes in movies and television shows, but they usually go smoother in real life, especially if you follow the previous advice. You can also spice up your toast by adding a cultural flair. You can see how to say "Cheers!" in many different languages at the following link: http://www.awa.dk/glosary/slainte.htm.

Speech of Tribute

A **speech of tribute**[6] is a longer and more formal version of a toast that establishes why a person, group, or concept is worthy of praise. Speeches of tribute can honor a group, organization, or concept but usually focus on one person. To effectively pay tribute to someone, introduce the personality of the individual, the values of the group, or the noble history of the event in order to initiate a relationship between the audience and the person, group, or idea that is being honored. Speeches of tribute shouldn't be biographical sketches. Most people can look up a person's bio or the history of a group or event quickly using the Internet, so sharing that information doesn't show that you've done any more work than an audience member could do in the five or ten minutes of the speech. People, groups, or events

6. A longer and more formal version of a toast that establishes why a person, group, or concept is worthy of praise.

worthy of speeches of tribute have usually accomplished great things and have enriching lessons to share. As a speaker, use a narrative style to convey to the audience a lesson or a "moral of the story." It's important to focus on the positive aspects of a person or group's history; this is not the occasion to offer criticism.

Eulogy

A **eulogy**[7] is a speech honoring a person who has died. The emotions and grief surrounding the loss of a loved one are difficult to manage and make this one of the most challenging types of speech. However, being asked to deliver a eulogy is an honor. Such speakers are usually chosen because the family and friends of the deceased person see the speaker as someone they can depend on in difficult situations and as someone who can comfort and be an example to others. In the short amount of time you have to prepare a eulogy, usually a day or two, it is important to put time into organizing the speech, just as you would for a professional speech. Create an outline, and structure the speech with an introduction, a body with about three main points, and a conclusion. A eulogy, like a speech of tribute, shouldn't be a chronological outline of a person's life or a biographical sketch.Theodore Lustig, "The Most Difficult Speech: The Eulogy," Toastmasters International, accessed November 9, 2012, http://www.toastmasters.org/ToastmastersMagazine/ToastmasterArchive/2009/December/Articles/The-Eulogy.aspx. As with a speech of tribute, focus on the person's personality and demonstrate why the person was likable and what he or she added to your life and the lives of others.

Depending on the situation, you may also want to share some of the deceased's accomplishments. Accomplishments can usually be broken up into three categories, and you may focus on one or more depending on your relationship with the person. Family accomplishments usually entail discussing the loved ones the person is leaving behind or conveying the roles he or she played as a member of his or her family and friendship circles. Professional accomplishments deal with academic and career achievement and would be especially relevant if the person speaking worked with or had a mentoring relationship with the deceased. Community accomplishments include civic engagement, community service, and local involvement. Most people have too many accomplishments to include, so include those that are relevant to your relationship with the deceased and that you think will elicit similar fond memories in others. Focus on the positives of a person's life, and acknowledge and share in the sorrow of the other people in attendance. Remember, as the person chosen to deliver a eulogy, you set an example and provide comfort to others, which is a difficult but important role to play.

7. A speech honoring a person who has died.

Speaking as an Advocate in Personal and Civic Contexts

People are often required or expected to speak as part of their academic or professional duties. However, there may also be times when you are compelled to speak or choose to speak because you care about a topic or an issue. Advocacy speaking occurs in contexts that are civic and/or personal, such as at a city council meeting, at a student group meeting, when you post a link on your Facebook page asking your friends to sign a petition, or when you encourage your friends to vote.

In the 1950s, radio broadcast pioneer Edward R. Murrow hosted a brief radio segment on which people read essays about their beliefs and lives. Fifty years later, the concept was reborn on National Public Radio and is now an ongoing national project that still produces radio segments, has a free podcast, and produces books. **This I Believe speeches**[8] encourage people to use the power of their voice to speak from a personal context in a way can inspire, motivate, and resonate with others. In such cases, we can see that personal speeches can cross into civic contexts. Using personal narratives as a basis for advocacy and social change is not new, as stories have been used to move people to action in many historical situations. Personal testimony, witnesses of injustice, and people sharing their everyday experiences can have a powerful effect on the world. I have enjoyed having my students do This I Believe speeches, and even if this isn't a speech assignment in your class, it is a good way to practice your speaking and writing skills, and it can be fun and inspirational.

Advocacy speaking brings attention to a particular cause or issue in order to raise awareness and create social change.

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Here are some guidelines for the This I Believe speech. Tell a story with your speech and make it personal. Since this speech is about you and your belief, use personal pronouns like *I* and *we* and connect to your audience by using *you*, *us*, and *our*. Even if the belief you are focusing on is abstract, and many are, ground it in events from your life that your audience can relate to. Such events or moments may include instances when your belief was formed, tested, or changed. The core belief should be something that can be easily summed up as a thesis statement and elaborated on and supported in the main points. Be positive in your speech by focusing on what you believe, not what you don't believe. Don't make this a soapbox speech, and don't use the speech to preach or editorialize."This I Believe—Essay Writing Guidelines," accessed March 17, 2012, http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines. You can listen to and/or read many examples of these speeches at the following National Public Radio link: http://www.npr.org/series/4538138/this-i-believe. The following is the text of a This I Believe speech delivered by one of my students.

8. Speeches that encourage people to use the power of their voice to speak from a personal context in a way can inspire, motivate, and resonate with others.

The Power of the Voice: by Matthew Cain

I believe in the power of the voice. The human voice transforms and changes a person's life. I am an example of the voice's power to change.

When I was young, I didn't use my voice to speak at first. I would use my hands to gesture what I wanted or needed. It was not until the age of two that I started to talk. Right away, my parents knew my voice was different. I stammered, stuttered, and could not say my Rs. My parents thought, however, that this was just a phase. It wasn't until I started school that problems arose. As kindergarten started, I felt different. I did not fit in. I don't mean fitting in socially, but fitting in with my voice. As each of my schoolmates stood to say the alphabet, I did not want to. It wasn't because I didn't know it, but because I couldn't say it. However, I stood up and began to speak: A,...B,...C,...D, and so on. As I finally reached Q, my teacher stopped me. "What are you doing?" she asked. So, I started to say it over; I failed.

I went through the next months in embarrassment. Even though students pointed and laughed, no one outside the school knew of the embarrassment I was feeling. It wasn't until my teacher gave me my progress report that my parents saw how my voice altered my education. The first meeting my parents had with my teacher proved that my voice did have an effect on my education. I listened outside as a peaceful meeting turned into a shouting match. With words flying, my parents and the teacher finally reached a conclusion. The conclusion was that I needed speech therapy. It would begin the next year.

Starting on the first day of first grade, I would go to speech therapy every other day. My embarrassment grew with every grade that I moved through. When my speech teacher came to my classroom to get me, everyone looked at me. What was in their mind, I could only guess. Thoughts like "What a freak!" or "What's wrong with him?" flew through my mind. However, over the next five years, my speech did improve. My stuttering slowed and my speech became clearer. By the time I reached middle school, life was getting better. Speech after speech, I became less sensitive to my impairment and to people's reaction.

During my last year of middle school, I was required to take a public speaking class. I feared this class. I feared the class because I would be giving up to four speeches, the most I have ever done. My teacher told us we could pick the topic for our last speech. Being a fan of history, I chose to talk about World War Two. When I completed my eight-minute speech, everyone looked at me with disbelief. My friend, Garrett, told me, "You did not stutter!" It was then that I realized that when I talk about things I enjoy, I don't stutter...as much. High school caused a dramatic change in my life. After a few more speeches about history, I decided to become a teacher. I knew I would not let my speech affect the rest of my life.

The power of the human voice shaped my life. Every time I give a speech, I remember the past. I learned not to judge others for their speech because I know how it feels. As my voice continues to shape my life, it will undoubtedly change others. That power will not just change the people around me, but the whole world. This I believe.

There are many opportunities to engage in **public advocacy**[9], which is engaging people through responsible communication that seeks to make a better world for our loved ones and our communities.John T. Warren and Deanna L. Fassett, *Communication: A Critical/Cultural Introduction* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2011), 39. This view of communication acknowledges the power of our words to transform the world around us and that we have an ethical responsibility to advocate for a world that better serves the interests and needs of us all. Speaking as an advocate requires a person to take pause and think about his or her own commitments and responsibilities.John T. Warren and Deanna L. Fassett, *Communication: A Critical/Cultural Introduction* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2011), 37. When you are compelled to speak up in the face of an injustice that was committed against you or that you have witnessed being committed against others, you are choosing to take a stand, making a commitment to an issue, and accepting responsibility for your words and actions. Your first steps toward advocacy may be small and uncomfortable. You may not even be sure what issues or causes you care about. Once you know, you can take small steps, as Gandhi noted, to be the change you want to see in the world. As you take steps to model a desired change and speak out, you will begin to learn more about yourself, your place in the world, and the issues that move you. You will likely then feel more compelled to share that information with others.

Speaking as an advocate doesn’t mean you argue for your community or your view at the expense of others. Advocates invite their listeners to engage with them and consider the complexity of an issue. As speakers we have to be open to the perspectives of others as we expect them to be open to ours. This creates an opportunity for growth. Change happens when people choose to change, not when they are forced to change. For change to happen, all parties in an interaction need to be open to dialogue, growth, and transformation.Sonja K. Foss and Karen A. Foss, *Inviting Transformation: Presentational Speaking for a Changing World*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2003), 4–10.

Teaching is a form of advocacy, but you don’t have to be a teacher to teach. We all teach in various capacities as friends, parents, and community members. As we teach, we build bridges between different areas of thoughts and actions. This is a

9. Engaging people through responsible communication that seeks to make a better world for our loved ones and our communities.

process that helps build communities and alliances. Ask yourself, "What kind of community do I want? What role will I play in creating that community? What work am I willing to do and what sacrifices am I willing to make to create and nurture that community?"John T. Warren and Deanna L. Fassett, *Communication: A Critical/Cultural Introduction* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2011), 38. As speakers, we must seize opportunities we have to speak and use them to talk about socially significant topics that matter to us and our communities. Speaking about these topics invites others who hear us to think about their position in the world and reflect on their own responsibilities as communicators, which can spread advocacy and lead to social change.

"Getting Critical"

Advocacy and Critical Thinking

Being an advocate and responsible citizen in the world means speaking about how we can and should make the world a better place for all as well as listening and thinking critically and compassionately before responding to others' communication.John T. Warren and Deanna L. Fassett, *Communication: A Critical/Cultural Introduction* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2011), 52–53. Critical listening means we can identify flaws within a message we receive and places for positive change. The positive change occurs because critical listening and critical thinking lead to responsible advocacy. Critical listeners don't just tear a message apart because it has flaws. When we engage in compassionate critical listening, we make a genuine effort to hear others and reflect on the complexity of their message rather than closing ourselves off or shutting down because we encounter a message with which we disagree. Since the issues and causes people advocate for are often political and controversial, critical thinking and listening become even more important. When we feel ourselves shutting down or disregarding a person's message without giving it thought, a little alert should go off in our minds to indicate that perhaps we are not engaging in critical compassionate listening. The same alert should go off if we find ourselves wanting to cut someone off or dismiss him or her when that person questions us after we engage in advocacy speaking. Being a critical compassionate listener, however, doesn't mean that we have to give up our own ways of thinking and our own advocacy positions. There is a delicate balance that critical listeners and thinkers try to maintain, as critical thinkers are generous, cautious, and open minded, but wary.

1. As an advocate and a competent communicator, what can you do to try to maintain a critical mind-set that is both open minded and wary?
2. Are there causes that people advocate for that you find it difficult to listen to critically and compassionately? If so, what are they? What can you do to be a better critical and compassionate listener in these situations?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Getting integrated: While many students view public speaking as a classroom exercise, we are all expected to speak in multiple contexts ranging from personal, to civic, to professional. This chapter can serve as a guide for how public speaking will "pop up" in your life once you've completed this class.

  - Ceremonial speeches are intended to praise, pay tribute to, and celebrate individuals or groups in ways that bring audience members together on special occasions. These speeches should be prepared ahead of time, brief, and occasion focused.

    - In a speech of introduction, get to know the person you are introducing, say his or her name correctly several times during the speech, establish his or her credentials, and set the tone of the event.
    - For a speech of welcome, welcome the audience, provide key information about upcoming events, announce any changes to the program, acknowledge sponsors and VIPs, and convey logistical information.
    - When presenting an award, state the name of the award and its purpose, connect the award to the values of the organization presenting it, describe the selection process, acknowledge the winner, share his or her qualifications, and connect him or her to the legacy of the award.
    - When accepting an award, be gracious and humble, thank the group presenting the award, thank fellow nominees, and thank those who helped make your accomplishments possible.
    - When delivering a toast, be spontaneous and genuine, share a personal anecdote, use humor that has been approved by at least one other trusted person, and be brief.
    - When delivering a speech of tribute, demonstrate why the person being honored is worthy of praise, connect to the personality of the individual, do not offer a biographical sketch, and share a "moral of the story."
    - When delivering a eulogy, prepare a well-organized speech so you can still communicate clearly and comfort others despite your own emotions.

- This I Believe speeches encourage people to speak from a personal context in a way that inspires others and crosses into civic engagement.

These speeches should be positive, personal, grounded in concrete events, and not preachy.

- Public advocacy speaking occurs mostly in civic contexts and engages people through responsible communication that invites others to listen to diverging viewpoints in a critical and compassionate way to promote social change.
- A thesis statement summarizes the central idea of your speech and will be explained or defended using supporting material. Referencing your thesis statement often will help ensure that your speech is coherent.
- Demographic, psychographic, and situational audience analysis help tailor your speech content to your audience.

EXERCISES

1. Getting integrated: This section discusses speaking in personal and/or civic contexts. Recall an experience you have already had with this type of speaking. How does your experience compare with the content in this section? Did you follow any of these guidelines? What might you do differently next time?
2. Write a speech of introduction for a classmate, friend, family member, or person that you admire.
3. Review the text of the tribute to Al Pacino at the following link: http://www.afi.com/laa/laa07.aspx. How does the speech establish that the honoree is worthy of praise? What elements of the honoree's personality come through in the speech?
4. If you were to write a This I Believe speech, what would you write it on and why? Does your belief connect to public advocacy in some way? Why or why not?

12.2 Speaking in Academic Settings

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify strategies for adapting presentations in the following disciplines: arts and humanities, social sciences, education/training and development, science and math, and technical courses.
2. Identify strategies for effective speaking at academic conferences.

Oral communication has always been a part of higher education, and communication skills in general became more of a focus for colleges and universities in the late part of the twentieth century, as the first "communication across the curriculum" programs began to develop. These programs focus on the importance of writing and speaking skills for further academic, professional, and civic development. Your school may very well have a communication across the curriculum program that includes requirements for foundational speaking and writing skills that are then built on in later classes. Whether your school has a communication across the curriculum program or not, it is important to know that the skills you develop in this class serve as a scaffold from which you can continue to build and develop speaking skills that are tailored to the needs of your particular field of study. As you participate in oral communication within and about your field of study, you become socialized into the discipline-specific ways of communicating necessary to be successful in that field. This communicative process starts in the classroom.Deanna P. Dannels, "Time to Speak Up: A Theoretical Framework of Situated Pedagogy and Practice for Communication across the Curriculum," *Communication Education* 50, no. 2 (2001): 151.

Speaking to Professors and Classmates

What does a good communicator in a science class look and sound like? What does a good communicator in a history class look and sound like? While there will be some overlap in the answers to those questions, there are also specific differences based on the expectations for oral communication within those fields of study. Knowing that speaking is context specific can help you learn which presentation style will earn you a better grade based on the discipline and the course.Deanna P. Dannels, "Time to Speak Up: A Theoretical Framework of Situated Pedagogy and Practice for Communication across the Curriculum," *Communication Education* 50, no. 2 (2001): 152.

Although instructors try to bring professional contexts into the classroom, students have difficulty or avoid engaging with a “made-up” customer or company. Making a more conscious effort to view the classroom as a training ground that simulates, but doesn’t replicate, the environment of your chosen career field can make your transition from student to practitioner more successful.Deanna P. Dannels, “Learning to Be Professional: Technical Classroom Discourse, Practice, and Professional Identity Construction,” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 14, no. 5 (2000): 28. While students know they are being graded and their primary audience is their professor, you and your classmates are also audience members in the class who can use the opportunity to practice communicating in ways relevant to your career path in addition to completing the assignment and getting a good grade.

Students are often asked to think of a classroom presentation as a simulation of a speaking situation they may encounter in their desired career.

Social Sciences

Social sciences include psychology, sociology, criminology, and political science, among others. **Speaking in the social sciences**[10] is driven by quantitative or qualitative data reviewed in existing literature or from original research projects that focus on historical or current social issues. Social scientists often rely on quantitative and/or qualitative research and evidence in their presentations. Qualitative research focuses on describing and interpreting social phenomena using data collected through methods such as participant observation and interviewing—in short, watching and/or talking to people. Qualitative researchers value the subjectivity that comes from individual perspectives and seek to capture the thoughts and feelings of research participants and convey them using descriptive writing that allows readers to think, see, and feel along with the participant. Quantitative social scientists use statistics to provide evidence for a conclusion and collect data about social phenomena using methods such as surveys and experiments. Since these methods are more controlled, the information gathered is turned into numerical data that can be statistically analyzed. Rather than valuing subjectivity and trying to see the world through the perspective of their research subjects, as qualitative researchers do, quantitative researchers seek to use data to describe and explain social phenomena in objective and precise ways so their findings can be generalized to larger populations. Knowing what counts as credible data for each type of research is an important part of speaking in the social sciences. Some social scientists use qualitative and quantitative research, but many people have a preferred method, and individual instructors may expect students to use one or the other.

10. Speaking driven by quantitative or qualitative data reviewed in existing literature or from original research projects that focus on historical or current social issues.

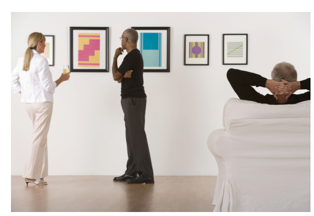
Presentations in the social sciences usually connect to historical or current social issues. Students may be expected to conduct a literature review on a particular societal issue related to race or poverty, for example. When presenting a literature review, students are expected to review a substantial number of primary sources and then synthesize them together to provide insight into an issue. Many students make a mistake of simply summarizing articles in a literature review. Students should put various authors in conversation with one another by comparing and contrasting the various perspectives and identifying themes within the research.

Students in social work and political science courses may be asked to evaluate or propose policies relevant to a societal issue. Reviewing information about persuasive speeches, discussed earlier, that include propositions of policy may be helpful. This type of presentation involves researching current and proposed legislation and may involve comparing and contrasting policies in one area with policies in another. A student in a social work class may be asked to investigate policies in urban areas related to homeless youth. A political science student may be asked to investigate the political arguments used in states that have passed “right to work” legislation. In any case, presentations in the social sciences may be informative or persuasive but should be socially relevant and research based.

Arts and Humanities

Speaking in the arts and humanities[11] usually involves critiquing, reviewing, or comparing and contrasting existing literature, art, philosophies, or historical texts in ways that connect the historical and contemporary. It may also involve creating and explaining original works of art. Students in the arts may give presentations on fine arts like painting and sculpting or performing arts like theater and dance. Students in the humanities may present in courses related to philosophy, English, and history, among other things.

Research in these fields is based more on existing texts and sources rather than data created through original research as in the sciences and social sciences. In the arts, students may be expected to create an original final product to present, which may entail explaining the inspiration and process involved in creating a sculpture or actually performing an original dance or song. In either case, there is an important visual component that accompanies presentations. In the humanities, visual support is not as central as it is in many other fields.Deanna P. Dannels, “Time to Speak Up: A Theoretical Framework of Situated Pedagogy and Practice for Communication across the Curriculum,”



Students in the arts present original works to their professors and classmates.

11. Speaking that usually involves creating and explaining original works of art or critiquing, reviewing, or comparing and contrasting existing literature, art, philosophies, or historical texts in ways that connect the historical and contemporary.

Communication Education 50, no. 2 (2001): 150. Given that the humanities rely primarily on existing texts for information, students may be asked to synthesize and paraphrase information in a literature review, just as a student in the social sciences would. Frequently, students in the arts and humanities are asked to connect a work of art, a literary work, a philosophy, or a historical event to their own lives and/or to present day society. Students may also be asked to compare and contrast works of art, literature, or philosophies, which requires synthesis and critical thinking skills.

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The arts and humanities also engage in criticism more than other fields. Being able to give and receive constructive criticism is very important, especially since many people take their art or their writing personally. Some projects are even juried, meaning that an artist needs to be prepared to engage with several instructors or selected judges and explain their work and process through feedback and constructive criticism.

Education/Training and Development

Speaking in education/training and development[12] involves students delivering a lecture, facilitating a discussion, or running an activity as if they were actually teaching or training. In each of these cases, students will be evaluated on their ability to present content in a progressive way that builds new knowledge from existing knowledge, interact with their audience (students or trainees), and connect their content to the bigger picture or the overarching objectives for the lesson and course. Teachers and trainers also need to be able to translate content into relevant examples and present for long periods of time, adapting as they go to fit the changing class dynamics. All levels of the education and training and development fields include a focus on the importance of communication and public speaking. Listening is also a central part of teaching and training. Aside from being judged on how technical information is broken down as a speaker in a technical class may be, speakers in education and training are evaluated more on their nonverbal communication.

Immediacy behaviors are important parts of teaching and training. Immediacy behaviors are verbal and nonverbal communication patterns that indicate a teacher's approachability. Effective use of immediacy behaviors helps reduce perceived distance between the teacher and student or trainer and trainee. Some immediacy behaviors include changes in vocal pitch, smiling, leaning in toward a person, nodding, providing other positive nonverbal feedback while listening, and using humor effectively. Teachers who are more skilled at expressing immediacy receive higher evaluations, and their students learn more.Virginia P. Richmond, Derek R. Lane, and James C. McCroskey, "Teacher Immediacy and the Teacher-

12. Speaking that involves students delivering a lecture, facilitating a discussion, or running an activity as if they were actually teaching or training.

Student Relationship," in *Handbook of Instructional Communication: Rhetorical and Relational Perspectives*, eds. Timothy P. Mottet, Virginia P. Richmond, and James C. McCroskey (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2006), 170. Immediacy behaviors are important for lecturing, facilitating, and interacting with students or trainees one-on-one.

Tips for Effective Lectures Marilla Svinicki and Wilbert J. McKeachie, *McKeachie's Teaching Tips*, 13th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2011): 55–71.

- Put content that you are excited about in lectures.
- Move around to engage the audience; don't get stuck behind a lectern or computer.
- Actually write out examples; don't expect them to "come to you" as you lecture.
- Include notes to yourself to stop and ask for questions or pose a direct question to the audience.
- Start the lecture by connecting to something the audience has already learned, and then say what this lecture will add to their knowledge and how it fits into what will be learned later in the class.
- Do not lecture for more than twenty minutes without breaking it up with something more interactive.

Tips for Effective Discussion Facilitation Marilla Svinicki and Wilbert J. McKeachie, *McKeachie's Teaching Tips*, 13th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2011): 36–54.

- Start the discussion off with an example that connects to something the audience is familiar with.
- Do not be afraid of silence. Pose the question. Repeat it or rephrase it once if needed and then wait for a response. Too often facilitators pose a question, wait a second, repeat and rephrase the question to the point that everyone is confused, and then end up answering their own question.
- Listen supportively and do not move from one person to the next without responding to his or her comment verbally and nonverbally. Use this as an opportunity to pivot from a response back to the topic of discussion, to another example, or to another person.
- Spend time making good discussion questions. Good discussion questions usually contain a sentence or two that sets up the context for the question. The question should be open ended, not "yes or no." Have follow-up questions prepared to move the discussion along.

- If students/trainees are not actively participating, you can have them write a brief response first, then share it with a neighbor, then come back to group discussion. This is the “think, pair, share” method.

"Getting Plugged In"

Online Teaching and Learning

Online courses are becoming more common. You may have even taken an online course or may be taking this class online. Although we have an understanding of how the typical classroom functions, since we have been socialized into it, the online classroom presents a whole new set of variables and challenges. Some of our past classroom experiences will be relevant and some will not. Many online instructors and students are expected to "figure it out" as they go, which leads to frustrated teachers and students.Lawrence C. Ragan, *10 Principles of Effective Online Teaching: Best Practices in Distance Education* (Madison, WI: Magna Publications, 2011), 6, accessed March 17, 2012, http://www.facultyfocus.com/free-reports/principles-of-effective-online-teaching-best-practices-in-distance-education. We'll learn some tips for making online teaching and learning more effective for instructors and students next. The amount of research and information available about online teaching and learning has increased dramatically in recent years, so there is much more information that isn't included here. More resources for online teaching and learning can be found at the following link: http://www.eiu.edu/adulted/online_tips.php.

Tips for Instructors

- Set a schedule and keep to it. A major difference between a brick-and-mortar classroom and an online classroom is the asynchronous nature. In most cases, the instructor and individual students can do their class work at different times rather than all together at scheduled times. This is a major reason for popularity of online courses, since a busy professional, single parent, or member of the military can get a college education on his or her own time frame. You can preserve this flexibility while still providing structure by grading assignments promptly, setting regular days and times for course updates, and charting a progressive path with start and end dates for lessons/units so that students aren't completing all the work during the last week of class.

- Reveal online materials as they are relevant. Don't have everything for the whole semester visible, as it can be overwhelming and difficult to navigate.
- Monitor and manage student progress by communicating with students about missed and upcoming assignments. Online students are expected to be more independent, but the instructor should still serve as a guide.
- Create a "frequently asked questions" document that addresses common areas of concern for students, and allow students to pose new questions so you can add them to the document.
- Do informal assessments to check in with students to get feedback on the course. Don't wait for end-of-semester evaluations. Ask them what they like about the course and for suggestions for improvement.
- Find ways to make the course interactive: create a "questions forum" where students can ask questions like they would by raising their hand in class; use peer learning to have students engage with each other about the content; use images, audio, and video; and use real-time chats or video conferencing.

Tips for Students

- Schedule a time to do your online class work that works for your schedule and stick to it. Make sure that the time spent engaged directly with the course at least equals the amount a regular class would meet, typically about three hours a week for a sixteen-week semester. This doesn't include homework and study time, which will also need to be scheduled in.
- Since technology is the primary channel for your learning, plan ahead for how you will deal with technological failures. Identify an additional place where you can access the Internet if necessary. Keep all your course documents backed up on a thumb drive so you can do course work "on the go" on computers other than your own.
- Ask questions when you have them so you don't get lost and behind.
- Practice good "netiquette" when communicating with your instructor and classmates.

1. What are some positives and negatives of online learning—from a teacher's perspective and from a student's perspective?
2. What courses do you think would translate well to an online environment? What courses would be difficult to teach online?

Science and Math

Speaking in science and math[13] usually focuses on using established methods and logic to find and report objective results. Science includes subjects such as biology, physics, and chemistry, and math includes subjects such as statistics, calculus, and math theory. You may not think that communication and public speaking are as central to these courses as they are in the humanities and social sciences—and you are right, at least in terms of public perception. The straightforwardness and objectivity of these fields make some people believe that skilled communication is unnecessary, since the process and results speak for themselves. This is not the case, however, as scientists are increasingly being expected to interact with various stakeholders, including funding sources, oversight agencies, and the public.

Scientists present results of original research.

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The ability to edit and discern what information is relevant for a presentation is very important in these fields. Scientists and mathematicians are often considered competent communicators when they are concise but cover the material in enough detail to be understood.Deanna P. Dannels, "Time to Speak Up: A Theoretical Framework of Situated Pedagogy and Practice for Communication across the Curriculum," *Communication Education* 50, no. 2 (2001): 151. Poster presentations are common methods of public communication in science and math and are an excellent example of when editing skills are valuable. Posters should be professional looking and visually appealing and concisely present how the information being presented conforms to expected scientific or logical methods. It is difficult, for example, to decide what details from each step of the scientific method should be included on the poster. The same difficulties emerge in oral scientific research reports, which also require a speaker to distill complex information into a limited time frame. Research shows that common critiques by biology instructors of student presentations include going over the time limit and rambling.Trudy Bayer, Karen Curto, and Charity Kriley, "Acquiring Expertise in Discipline-Specific

13. Speaking that usually focuses on using established methods and logic to find and report objective results.

Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Exercise in Learning to Speak Biology," *Across the Disciplines: A Journal of Language, Learning, and Academic Writing* 2 (2005), accessed March 15, 2012, http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/bayer_curto_kriley2005.cfm. Some presentations may focus more on results while others focus more on a method or procedure, so it's important to know what the expectations for the presentation are. Scientists also engage in persuasive speaking. Scientists' work is funded through a variety of sources, so knowing how to propose a research project using primary-source scientific data in a persuasive way is important.

Technical Courses

Speaking in technical courses[14] focuses on learning through testing, replication, and design and then translating the technical information involved in those processes into lay terms. Technical courses appear in most disciplines but are more common in fields like computer science, engineering, and fire sciences. Technical vocational courses like welding, electronics, and woodworking would also fall into this category. Some nursing courses and many courses for medical technicians are considered technical courses. There is a perception of technical courses as training grounds where you give people a manual, they memorize it, regurgitate it, and then try to put the skills into practice. If that were the case, then a range of communication skills wouldn't be as necessary. However, the goal of such courses has changed in recent years to focus more on educating professionals rather than training technicians.Deanna P. Dannels, "Learning to Be Professional: Technical Classroom Discourse, Practice, and Professional Identity Construction," *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 14, no. 5 (2000): 8.

Technical courses may include research, but testing, replication, and design are usually more important. A main focus in these courses is to translate technical information into lay terms.Deanna P. Dannels, "Time to Speak Up: A Theoretical Framework of Situated Pedagogy and Practice for Communication across the Curriculum," *Communication Education* 50, no. 2 (2001): 151. A key communication path in technical fields is between professional and customer/client, but you can't just think of the client as the only person for whom the information must be translated. Technical professionals also have to communicate with a range of people along the way, including managers, colleagues, funding sources, machinists, and so on. Team projects are common in technical courses, especially in courses related to design, so being able to work effectively in groups and present information as a group is important. Much of the presentation in technical courses will be data driven, which is informative. While data may be compelling and the merits of a design self-evident for internal audiences, external audiences will require more information, and selling ideas requires persuasive speaking skills. To help prepare students in technical courses to adapt to these various audiences, instructors often use assignments that ask students to view their classmates and

14. Speaking that focuses on learning through testing, replication, and design and then translating the technical information involved in those processes into lay terms.

instructor as customers, colleagues, or funding sources that they might encounter once in their career. As was noted earlier, students may not take these simulations seriously, which is a missed opportunity for applied, practical learning.

Speaking at Academic Conferences

Undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and administrators have opportunities to present at **academic conferences**[15], which are local, regional, national, or international events at which students, teachers, professionals, and practitioners gather to discuss and share knowledge in a particular field of study. Presenting at or even attending a conference can be intimidating. The National Communication Association provides useful resources on the "how to" of academic conferencing including frequently asked questions and professional standards and guidelines that will be helpful when preparing for any conference: http://natcom.org/conventionresources.

Students and faculty from all fields of study have opportunities to present at academic conferences.

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When planning a presentation at an academic conference, you should spend time creating a "sexy" and descriptive title. You want something "sexy," meaning that it gets people's attention and connects to a current and relevant topic, and descriptive, so that people can get a sense for what the presentation will include. Most conferences have numerous concurrent sessions running, so in a way, you are competing with people in other rooms who are speaking at the same time slot. Getting people in the room is important for networking to take place. The blog entry at the following link contains useful information about "How to Write Killer Conference Session Titles That Attract Attendees": http://jeffhurtblog.com/2010/03/17/how-to-write-killer-conference-session -titles-that-attract-attendees.

A frequent complaint about conference presentations stems from speakers who try to cram too much information into their ten-minute time slot. Presenters at academic conferences are usually presenting recently completed original research or research that is in progress. The papers that are submitted for review for the conference are usually about twenty-five to thirty pages long. It would take about an hour to present the whole paper, but since most conferences occur as part of a panel, with four to five speakers and a seventy-five-minute time slot, each speaker usually gets between ten and fifteen minutes to present. Therefore conference presenters must use their editing skills to cut their papers down to fit their time limit. As we've already learned in Chapter 9 "Preparing a Speech", writing

15. Local, regional, national, or international events at which students, teachers, professionals, and practitioners gather to discuss and share knowledge in a particular field of study.

something that will be read and writing something that will be listened to are two different styles of writing and require different skill sets. So hacking your twenty-five-page paper down to five pages isn't enough, as you also need to translate that writing into an oral style. Even at communication conferences, where presenters definitely "know better," I've seen people try to speed read their way through a ten- to twelve-page paper because they could only bring themselves to cut it down by half. As a writer, I know it's difficult to cut your own work down, because we often think that everything is important, but it's really not, and even if it was, there's no time to go over it all. So, since almost all presenters at academic conferences are faced with the same problem of too much information and too little time, it's important to adapt the paper to a completely different structure than the original form in order to effectively achieve your speaking goals. Additionally, it's very difficult to anticipate how many people will attend your conference session—it may be forty, or two. I usually prepare a typically formal conference presentation for an audience of ten to thirty people, but I am also prepared to do something more informal. Especially in situations where there are more panelists than audience members, I've found it useful to just make a circle with chairs and have a more informal and interactive discussion.

When preparing the presentation, follow these steps: determine the take-home message, determine the main question, add supporting material, and compose the introduction and conclusion.Scott Morgan and Barrett Whitener, *Speaking about Science: A Manual for Creating Clear Presentations* (New York, NY: Cambridge, 2006), 9–16, 35–47. The "take-home message" is the one concept or finding that captures the combined importance of all the data and findings. This is what the speaker wants the audience to have memorized by the end of the speech. It provides a theme or thread for the whole presentation and can therefore be used to help determine what needs to stay in the presentation and what should be left out. This functions like the thesis statement of a typical informative or persuasive speech. The next step in preparing the presentation is identifying the main question. The main question will be answered in the talk through the presentation of data and findings. The take-home message should be related to the main question, perhaps even answer it, as this provides a logical flow for the presentation. Explicitly stating the take-home message and main question in the speech helps the audience process the information and helps a speaker keep only the information relevant to them, which helps prevent information overload. The following link contains some information from the National Communication Association about "How to Make the Most of Your Presentation": http://natcom.org/Tertiary.aspx?id=1763.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The need for public speaking skills extends beyond this classroom to other parts of academia but will vary based on your discipline. Knowing how to speak in discipline-specific ways can help you be a more successful student.
- Student speakers in the social sciences present reviews of existing research or the results of original quantitative or qualitative research related to current social issues.
- Student speakers in the arts and humanities critique, review, and compare and contrast existing art, literature, and historical texts. Students are also asked to paraphrase and synthesize existing texts and connect past art or literature to contemporary society.
- Student speakers in education/training and development lecture, facilitate discussion, and run activities as if they were actually teaching or training. Students need to be able to break down complex concepts and progressively build on them while sharing examples and connecting to the bigger picture of the course. Students will also be evaluated on nonverbal immediacy behaviors.
- Student speakers in science and math courses deliver presentation content based on the scientific method and systems of logic. Students may focus on sharing the results of a research project or problem or focus on a specific method or procedure related to science or math.
- Student speakers in technical courses present “how-to” information regarding mechanical or information processes. They also translate technical information for lay audiences. Presentation content is often data driven, but products and designs must still be sold to various audiences, so persuasive skills are also important.
- Presentations at academic conferences must be severely edited to fit time frames of approximately ten minutes. Many speakers try to cram too much information into their time frame. Narrow your presentation down to an introduction, an interrogation of a main question, and a concluding take-home message.

EXERCISES

1. Getting integrated: Does your major or career interest fall into the social sciences, arts and humanities, education/training and development, science and math, or technical courses? Which strategies for speaking in that area have you already witnessed among your professors or classmates? Which strategies do you think will be most helpful for you to learn/improve on? Which are you already doing well on?
2. Identify an academic conference related to your desired career field and visit the conference association’s website. When is the conference? How do you submit to attend? Do they have any advice listed for presenting at their conference? If so, compare and contrast the advice they offer with the advice in this chapter.

12.3 Speaking in Business Settings

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Employ audience analysis to adapt communication to supervisors, colleagues, employees, and clients.
2. Explain the role of intercultural communication competence in intercultural business communication contexts.
3. Identify strategies for handling question-and-answer periods.
4. Identify strategies for effectively planning and delivering common business presentations, including briefings, reports, training, and meetings.

Most people's goal for a college degree is to work in a desired career field. Many of you are probably working while taking this class and already have experience with speaking in business settings. As you advance in your career, and potentially change career paths as many Americans do now, the nature of your communication and the contexts in which you speak will change. Today's workers must be able to adapt content, level of formality, and format to various audiences including the public, clients, and colleagues.Deanna P. Dannels, "Time to Speak Up: A Theoretical Framework of Situated Pedagogy and Practice for Communication across the Curriculum," *Communication Education* 50, no. 2 (2001): 144. What counts as a good communicator for one audience and in one field may not in another. There is wide variety of research and resources related to business communication that cannot be included in this section. The International Association of Business Communicators is a good resource for people interested in a career in this area: http://www.iabc.com.

Adapt to Your Audience

Speaking in business settings requires adaptability as a communicator. Hopefully the skills that you are building to improve your communication competence by taking this class will enable you to be adaptable and successful. The following suggestions for adapting to your audience are based on general characteristics; therefore expect variations and exceptions. A competent communicator can use categories and strategies like these as a starting point but must always monitor the communication taking place and adapt as needed. In many cases, you may have a diverse audience with supervisors, colleagues, and employees, in which case you would need to employ multiple strategies for effective business communication.

Even though much of the day-to-day communication within organizations is written in the form of memos, e-mails, and reports, oral communication has an important place. The increase in documentation is related to an epidemic of poor listening. Many people can't or don't try to retain information they receive aurally, while written communication provides a record and proof that all the required and detailed information was conveyed. An increase in written communication adds time and costs that oral communication doesn't. Writing and reading are slower forms of communication than speaking, and face-to-face speaking uses more human senses, allows for feedback and clarification, and helps establish relationships.Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens, "Listening to People," in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 14–15.

It's important to remember that many people do not practice good listening skills and that being understood contributes to effectiveness and success. You obviously can't make someone listen better or require him or her to listen actively, but you can strive to make your communication more listenable and digestible for various audiences.

Much communication in the workplace is written for the sake of documentation. Oral communication, however, is often more efficient if people practice good listening skills.

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Speaking to Executives/Supervisors

Upward communication[16] includes speeches, proposals, or briefings that are directed at audience members who hold higher positions in the organizational hierarchy than the sender. Upward communication is usually the most lacking within an organization, so it is important to take advantage of the opportunity and use it to your advantage.Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens, "Listening to People," in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 15. These messages usually function to inform supervisors about the status or results of projects and provide suggestions for improvement, which can help people feel included in the organizational process and lead to an increased understanding and acceptance of management decisions.Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 15. So how do we adapt messages for upward communication?

16. Speeches, proposals, or briefings that are directed at audience members who hold higher positions in the organizational hierarchy than the sender.

The "executive summary" emerged from the fact that executives have tightly scheduled days and prefer concise, relevant information. Executive summaries are usually produced in written form but must also be conveyed orally. You should build some repetition and redundancy into an oral presentation of an executive summary, but you do not need such repetition in the written version. This allows you to emphasize a main idea while leaving some of the supporting facts out of an oral presentation. If an executive or supervisor leaves a presentation with a clear understanding of the main idea, the supporting material and facts will be meaningful when they are reviewed later. However, leaving a presentation with facts but not the main idea may result in the need for another presentation or briefing, which costs an organization time and money. Even when such a misunderstanding is due to the executives' poor listening skills, it will likely be you who is blamed.

Employees want to be seen as competent, and demonstrating oral communication skills is a good way to be noticed and show off your technical and professional abilities.Fernando Bartolome, "Nobody Trusts the Boss Completely—Now What?" in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 92. Presentations are "high-visibility tasks" that establish a person's credibility when performed well.Rick Weinholdt, "Taking the Trauma Out of the Talk," *The Information Management Journal* 40, no. 6 (2006): 62. Don't take advantage of this visibility to the point that you perform only for the boss or focus on him or her at the expense of other people in the audience. Do, however, tailor your message to the "language of executives." Executives and supervisors often have a more macro perspective of an organization and may be concerned with how day-to-day tasks match with the mission and vision of the organization. So making this connection explicit in your presentation can help make your presentation stand out.

Be aware of the organizational hierarchy and territory when speaking to executives and supervisors. Steering into terrain that is under someone else's purview can get you in trouble if that person guards his or her territory.Michael B. McCaskey, "The Hidden Messages Managers Send," in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 128. For example, making a suggestion about marketing during a presentation about human resources can ruffle the marketing manager's feathers and lead to negative consequences for you. Also be aware that it can be challenging to deliver bad news to a boss. When delivering bad news, frame it in a way that highlights your concern for the health of the organization. An employee's reluctance to discuss problems with a boss leads to more risk for an organization.Fernando Bartolome, "Nobody Trusts the Boss Completely—Now What?" in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 81. The sooner a problem is known, the better for the organization.

Speaking to Colleagues

Much of our day-to-day communication in business settings is **horizontal communication**[17] with our colleagues or people who are on the same approximate level in the organizational hierarchy. This communication may occur between colleagues working in the same area or between colleagues with different areas of expertise. Such horizontal communication usually functions to help people coordinate tasks, solve problems, and share information. When effective, this can lead to more cooperation among employees and a greater understanding of the “big picture” or larger function of an organization. When it is not effective, this can lead to territoriality, rivalry, and miscommunication when speaking across knowledge and task areas that require specialization.Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 15.

Many colleagues work collaboratively to share ideas and accomplish tasks together. In a sharing environment, it can be easy to forget where an idea started. This becomes an issue when it comes time for credit or recognition to be given. Make sure to give credit to people who worked with you on a project or an idea. If you can’t remember where an idea came from, it may be better to note that it was a “group effort” than to assume it was yours and risk alienating a colleague.

Speaking to Supervisees/Employees

Downward communication[18] includes messages directed at audience members who hold a lower place on the organizational hierarchy than the sender. As a supervisor, you will also have to speak to people whom you manage or employ. Downward communication usually involves job instructions, explanations of organizational policies, providing feedback, and welcoming newcomers to an organization.

This type of communication can have positive results in terms of preventing or correcting employee errors and increasing job satisfaction and morale. If the communication is not effective, it can lead to unclear messages that lead to misunderstandings and mistakes.Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 15.

Supervisors can set a good example by keeping a good flow

17. Communication between colleagues or people who are on the same approximate level in the organizational hierarchy.
18. Messages directed at audience members who hold lower positions on the organizational hierarchy than the sender.

During this type of "top-down" communication, employees may not ask valuable questions. So it is important to create an open atmosphere that encourages questions. Even though including an open discussion after a presentation takes more time, it helps prevent avoidable mistakes and wasted time and money. Let your audience know before a presentation that you will take questions, and then officially open the floor to questions when you are ready. Question-and-answer sessions are a good way to keep information flowing in an organization, and there is more information about handling these sessions in the "Getting Competent" box in this chapter.

of information going to their employees.

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A good supervisor should keep his or her employees informed, provide constructive feedback, explain the decisions and policies of the organization, be honest about challenges and problems, and facilitate the flow of information.Fernando Bartolome, "Nobody Trusts the Boss Completely—Now What?" in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 86. Information should flow to and away from supervisors. Supervisors help set the tone for the communication climate of an organization and can serve as models of expectations of oral communication. Being prepared, consistent, open, and engaging helps sustain communication, which helps sustain morale. Supervisors also send messages, intentional or unintentional, based on where they deliver their presentations. For example, making people come to the executive conference room may be convenient for the boss but intimidating for other workers.T. J. Larkin and Sandar Larkin, "Reaching and Changing Frontline Employees," in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 152.

Speaking to Clients / Customers / Funding Sources

Communication to outside stakeholders[19] includes messages sent from service providers to people who are not employed by the organization but conduct business with or support it. These stakeholders include clients, customers, and funding sources. Communication to stakeholders may be informative or persuasive. When first starting a relationship with one of these stakeholders, the communication is likely to be persuasive in nature, trying to convince either a client to take services, a customer to buy a product, or a funding source to provide financing. Once a relationship is established, communication may take the form of more informative progress reports and again turn persuasive when it comes time to renegotiate or renew a contract or agreement.

19. Messages sent from service providers to people who are not employed by the organization but conduct business with or support it.

As with other types of workplace communication, information flow is important. Many people see a lack of information flow as a sign of trouble, so make sure to be consistent in your level of communication through progress reports or status briefings even if there isn't a major development to report. Strategic ambiguity may be useful in some situations, but too much ambiguity also leads to suspicions that can damage a provider-client relationship. Make sure your nonverbal communication doesn't contradict your verbal communication.

When preparing for a presentation to clients, customers, or funding sources, start to establish a relationship before actually presenting. This will help you understand what they want and need and will allow you to tailor your presentation to their needs. These interactions also help establish rapport, which can increase your credibility. Many people making a proposal mistakenly focus on themselves or their product or service. Focus instead on the needs of the client. Listen closely to what they say and then explain their needs as you see them and how your product or service will satisfy those needs.Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 446. Focus on the positive consequences or benefits that will result from initiating a business relationship with you. If you'll recall from Chapter 11 "Informative and Persuasive Speaking", this is similar to Monroe's Motivated Sequence organization pattern, which gets the audience's attention, establishes the existence of a need or problem, presents a solution to fill the need, asks the audience to visualize positive results of adopting the solution, and then calls the audience to action.

Use sophisticated and professional visual aids to help sell your idea, service, or product. You can use strategies from our earlier discussion of visual aids, but add a sales twist. Develop a "money slide" that gets the audience's attention with compelling and hopefully selling content that makes audience members want to reach for their pen to sign a check or a contract.Scott Morgan and Barrett Whitener, *Speaking about Science: A Manual for Creating Clear Presentations* (New York, NY: Cambridge, 2006), 18.

Proposals and pitches may be cut short, so imagine what you would do if you arrived to present and were told that you had to cut it down to one minute. If you were prepared, you could pull out your money slide. The money slide could be the most important finding, a startling or compelling statistic, an instructive figure or chart, or some other combination of text and graphic that connects to the listener. Avoid the temptation to make a complicated money slide. The point isn't to fit as much as you can onto one slide but to best communicate the most important idea or piece of information you have. A verbal version of the money slide is the elevator speech. This is your sales pitch that captures the highlights of what you have to offer that can be delivered in a short time frame. I recommend developing a thirty-second, one-minute, and two-minute version of your elevator speech and having it on standby at all times.

Include a "money slide" in your presentation to potential clients or customers that really sells your idea.

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Speaking in Intercultural Contexts

It's no surprise that business communication is occurring in more intercultural contexts. Many companies and consulting firms offer cross-cultural training for businesspeople, and college programs in cross-cultural training and international business also help prepare people to conduct business in intercultural contexts. For specific information about conducting business in more than thirty-two countries, you can visit the following link: http://www.cyborlink.com.

While these trainings and resources are beneficial, many people expect intercultural business communication training to be reduced to a series of checklists or rules for various intercultural interactions that may be conveyed in a two-hour, predeparture "everything you need to know about Japanese business culture" training. This type of culture-specific approach to cross-cultural training does not really stand up to the complex situations in which international business communicators find themselves.David Victor, "Cross-Cultural Communication" in *Bridging Both Worlds: The Communication Consultant in Corporate America*, ed. Rebecca L. Ray (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), 113. Scholars trained more recently in culture and communication prefer a culture-general approach that focuses on "tools" rather than "rules." Remember that intercultural competence is relative to the native and host cultures of the people involved in an intercultural encounter, and therefore notions of what is interculturally competent change quickly.Jan Ulijn, Dan O'Hair, Matthieu Weggeman, Gerald Ledlow, and H. Thomas

Hall, "Innovation, Corporate Strategy, and Cultural Context: What Is the Mission for International Business Communication?" *Journal of Business Communication* 37 (2000): 301. To review some of our earlier discussion, elements of intercultural competence involve the ability to identify potential misunderstandings before they occur, be a high self-monitor, and be aware of how self and others make judgments of value.Jan Ulijn, Dan O'Hair, Matthieu Weggeman, Gerald Ledlow, and H. Thomas Hall, "Innovation, Corporate Strategy, and Cultural Context: What Is the Mission for International Business Communication?" *Journal of Business Communication* 37 (2000): 302.

I will overview some intercultural business communication tips that are more like rules, but remember there are always exceptions, so other competent communication skills should be on standby to help you adapt when the rules approach stops working.Emily A. Thrush, "Bridging the Gaps: Technical Communication in an International and Multicultural Society," *Technical Communication Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1993): 275–79.

In terms of verbal communication, make sure to use good pronunciation and articulation. Even if you speak a different language than your audience, clearer communication on your part will help the message get through better. Avoid idiomatic expressions and acronyms, since the meaning of those types of verbal communication are usually only known to cultural insiders. Try to use geographically and culturally relevant examples—for example, referencing the World Cup instead of the World Series. Be aware of differences in communication between high- and low-context cultures. Note that people from low-context cultures may feel frustrated by the ambiguity of speakers from high-context cultures, while speakers from high-context cultures may feel overwhelmed or even insulted by the level of detail used by low-context communicators. The long history of family businesses doing business with family businesses in France means that communication at meetings and in business letters operates at a high context. Dates and prices may not be mentioned at all, which could be very frustrating for an American businessperson used to highly detailed negotiations. The high level of detail used by US Americans may be seen as simplistic or childish to audience members from high-context cultures. Include some materials in the native language or include a glossary of terms if you're using specific or new vocabulary. Don't assume that the audience needs it, but have it just in case.

Also be aware that different cultures interpret graphics differently. Two well-known cases of differing interpretations of graphics involve computer icons. First, the "trash" icon first used on Mac desktops doesn't match what wastebaskets look like in many other countries. Second, the US-style "mailbox" used as an icon for many e-mail programs doesn't match with the mail experiences of people in most other countries and has since been replaced by the much more universally recognizable envelope icon. Nonelectronic symbols also have different cultural meanings. People in the United States often note that they are pursuing the “blue ribbon” prize or standard in their business, which is the color ribbon used to designate second place in the United Kingdom.

"Getting Competent"

Handling Question-and-Answer Periods

Question-and-answer (Q&A) periods allow for important interaction between a speaker and his or her audience. Speakers should always be accountable for the content of their speech, whether informative or persuasive, and making yourself available for questions is a good way to demonstrate such accountability. Question-and-answer sessions can take many forms in many contexts. You may entertain questions after a classroom or conference presentation. Colleagues often have questions after a briefing or training. Your supervisor or customers may have questions after a demonstration. Some question-and-answer periods, like ones after sales pitches or after presentations to a supervisor, may be evaluative, meaning you are being judged in terms of your content and presentation. Others may be more information based, meaning that people ask follow-up questions or seek clarification or more detail. In any case, there are some guidelines that may help you more effectively handle question-and-answer periods.Toastmasters International, "Proposals and Pitches" accessed March 17, 2012, http://www.toastmasters.org/MainMenuCategories/FreeResources/NeedHelpGivingaSpeech/BusinessPresentations/ProposalsandPitches.aspx; Scott Morgan and Barrett Whitener, *Speaking about Science: A Manual for Creating Clear Presentations* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 76–80.

Setting the stage for Q&A. If you know you will have a Q&A period after your presentation, alert your audience ahead of time. This will prompt them to take note of questions as they arise, so they don't forget them by the end of the talk. Try to anticipate questions that the audience may have and try to proactively answer them in the presentation if possible; otherwise, be prepared to answer them at the end. At the end of your presentation, verbally and nonverbally indicate that the Q&A session is open. You can verbally invite questions and nonverbally shift your posture or position to indicate the change in format.

Reacting to questions. In evaluative or informative Q&A periods, speakers may feel defensive of their idea, position, or presentation style. Don't let this show to the audience. Remember, accountability is a good thing as a speaker, and audience members usually ask pertinent and valid questions, even if you think they aren't initially. Repeating a question after it is asked serves several functions. It ensures that people not around the person asking the question get to hear it. It allows speakers to start to formulate a response as they repeat the question. It also allows speakers to ensure they understood the question correctly by saying something like "What I hear you asking is…" Once you've repeated the question, respond to the person who posed the question, but also address the whole audience. It is awkward when a speaker just talks to one person. Be cautious not to overuse the statement "That's a good question." Saying that more than once or twice lessens its sincerity.

Keeping the Q&A on track. To help keep the Q&A period on track, tie a question to one of the main ideas from your presentation and make that connection explicit in your response. Having a clearly stated and repeated main idea for your presentation will help set useful parameters for which questions fall within the scope of the presentation and which do not. If someone poses a question that is irrelevant or off track, you can politely ask them to relate it to a main idea from the talk. If they can't, you can offer to talk to them individually about their question after the session. Don't engage with an irrelevant question, even if you know the answer. Answering one "off-track" question invites more, which veers the Q&A session further from the main idea.

Responding to multipart questions. People often ask more than one question at a time. As a speaker and audience member this can be frustrating. Countless times, I have seen a speaker only address the second question and then never get back to the first. By that point, the person who asked the question and the audience have also usually forgotten about the first part of the question. As a speaker, it is perfectly OK to take notes during a Q&A session. I personally take notes to help me address multipart questions. You can also verbally reiterate the question to make sure you know which parts need to be addressed, and then address the parts in order.

Managing "Uh-oh!" moments. If a person corrects something you said in error during your presentation, thank them for the correction. After the presentation, verify whether or not it was indeed a mistake, and if it was, make sure to correct your information so you don't repeat the mistake in future talks. Admit when you don't know the answer to a question. It's better to admit that you do not know the answer than to try to fake your way through it. An audience member may also "correct" you with what you know is incorrect information. In such cases, do not get into a back-and-forth argument with the person; instead, note that the information you have is different and say you will look into it.

Concluding the Q&A session. Finally, take control of your presentation again toward the end of the Q&A session. Stop taking questions in time to provide a brief wrap-up of the questions, reiterate the main idea, thank the audience for their questions, and conclude the presentation. This helps provide a sense of closure and completeness for the presentation.

1. Which of these tips could you have applied to previous question-and-answer sessions that you have participated in to make them more effective?
2. Imagine you are giving a presentation on diversity in organizations and someone asks a question about affirmative action, which was not a part of your presentation. What could you say to the person?
3. In what situations in academic, professional, or personal contexts of your life might you be engaged in an evaluative Q&A session? An information-based Q&A session?

Common Business Presentations

Now you know how to consider your audience in terms of upward, downward, or horizontal communication. You also know some of the communication preferences of common career fields. Now we will turn our attention to some of the most frequent types of business presentations: briefings, reports, training, and meetings.

Briefings

Briefings[20] are short presentations that either update listeners about recent events or provide instructions for how to do something job related.Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 427. Briefings may occur as upward, downward, or horizontal communication. An industrial designer briefing project managers on the preliminary results of testing on a new product design is an example of upward briefing. A nurse who is the shift manager briefing an incoming shift of nurses on the events of the previous shift is an example of downward briefing. A representative from human resources briefing colleagues on how to use the new workplace identification badges is an example of horizontal briefing. Briefings that provide instructions like how to use a new identification badge are called **technical briefings,**[21] and they are the most common type of workplace presentation.Toastmasters International, "Technical Briefings" accessed March 17, 2012, http://www.toastmasters.org/

20. Short presentations that either update listeners about recent events or provide instructions for how to do something job related.

21. Briefings that provide instructions on the use or function of something.

MainMenuCategories/FreeResources/NeedHelpGivingaSpeech/BusinessPresentations/TechnicalBriefings.aspx. For technical briefings, consider whether your audience is composed of insiders, outsiders, or a mixture of people different levels of familiarity with the function, operation, and/or specifications of the focus of the briefing. As we have already discussed, technical speaking requires an ability to translate unfamiliar or complex information into content that is understandable and manageable for others.

Technical briefings, which explain how something functions or works, are the most common type of workplace presentations.

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As the name suggests, briefings are *brief*—usually two or three minutes. Since they are content focused, they do not require formal speech organization, complete with introduction and conclusion. Briefings are often delivered as a series of bullet points, organized topically or chronologically. The content of a briefing is usually a summary of information or a series of distilled facts, so there are rarely elements of persuasion in a briefing or much supporting information. A speaker may use simple visual aids, like an object or even a one-page handout, but more complex visual aids are usually not appropriate. In terms of delivery, briefings should be organized. Since they are usually delivered under time constraints and contain important information, brief notes and extemporaneous delivery are effective.Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 428.

Reports

There are numerous types of reports. The line between a briefing and short oral report is fuzzy, but in general a report is a more substantial presentation on the progress or status of a task. Reports can focus on the past, present, or future. Reports on past events may result from some type of investigation. For example, a company may be interested in finding the cause of a 15 percent decline in revenue for a branch office. Investigative reports are also focused on past events and may include a follow-up on a customer or employee complaint.

Reports on the present are often status or progress reports. Various departments or teams that make up an organization, or committees that make up a governing board, are likely to give status reports. **Status reports**[22] may focus on a specific project or task or simply report on the regular functioning of a group.

22. Reports that focus on a specific project or task or simply report on the regular functioning of a group.

Components of a Status Report Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 430.

1. State the group or committee's task or purpose.
2. Describe the current status, including work done by the group and/or individuals and the methods used.
3. Report on obstacles encountered and efforts to overcome them
4. Describe the next goal or milestone of the group and offer concrete action steps and a timeline for achieving the goal.

Final reports[23] are presented at the conclusion of a task and are similar to a progress report but include a discussion and analysis of the results of an effort. While some progress reports may only be delivered verbally, with no written component, a final report almost always has an associated written document. The written final report usually contains much more detail than is included in the oral final report, and this detail is referenced for audience members to consult if they desire more information.Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 430–31.

A common future-focused report is the **feasibility report**[24], which explores potential actions or steps and then makes recommendations for future action based on methodical evaluation. The purpose of these reports is basically to determine if an action or step is a good idea for an organization. Facebook made a much-discussed move to go public in 2012, a decision that was no doubt made after analyzing many feasibility reports.

Components of a Feasibility Report Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 433–34.

1. Introduction to a problem or situation and its potential consequences
2. Overview of the standards used for evaluating potential courses of action
3. Overview of process used to identify and evaluate courses of action
4. Details of potential courses of action
5. Evaluation of the potential courses of action
6. Recommendation of best course of action

23. Reports presented at the conclusion of a task and similar to a progress report but including a discussion and analysis of the results of an effort.

24. Future-oriented report that explores potential actions or steps and then makes recommendations for future action based on methodical evaluation.

Training

People in supervisory or leadership positions often provide **training**[25], which includes presentations that prepare new employees for their jobs or provide instruction or development opportunities for existing employees. While some training is conducted by inside and outside consultants, the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics notes that about 75 percent of training is delivered informally while on the job.Robert B. Adler and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 434. As the training and development field expands, this informal training is likely to be replaced by more formalized training delivered by training professionals, many of whom will be employees of the company who have been certified to train specific areas. Organizations are investing more time and money in training because they recognize the value in having well-trained employees and then regularly adding to that training with continued development opportunities. Common focuses of training include the following:

- **Compliance with company policies.** Includes training and orienting new hires and ongoing training for existing employees related to new or changing company policies.
- **Changing workplace environments.** Diversity training and cross-cultural training for international business.
- **Compliance with legal policies.** Sexual harassment, equal employment, Americans with Disabilities Act, and ethics training.
- **Technical training.** Instructions for software, hardware, and machinery.

Companies are also investing money in training for recent college graduates who have degrees but lack the technical training needed to do a specific job. This upfront investment pays off in many situations, as this type of standardized training in field-specific communication skills and technology can lead to increased productivity.

Trainers require specific skills and an ability to adapt to adult learners.Rebecca L. Ray, "Introduction: The Academic as Corporate Consultant," in *Bridging Both Worlds: The Communication Consultant in Corporate America*, ed. Rebecca L. Ray (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), 6–8. Important training skills include technical skills specific to a discipline, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, and critical thinking skills. Trainers must also be able to adapt to adult learners, who may have more experience than the trainer. Training formats usually include a mixture of

25. Presentations that prepare new employees for their jobs or provide instruction or development opportunities for existing employees.

information presentation formats such as minilecture and discussion as well as experiential opportunities for trainees to demonstrate competence such as role-play, simulation, and case-study analysis and application. Trainers should remember that adult learners learn best by doing, have previous experience that trainers can and should draw on, have different motivations for learning than typical students, and have more competing thoughts and distractions. Adult learners often want information distilled down to the "bottom line"; demonstrating how content is relevant to a specific part of their work duties or personal success is important.

Corporate trainers prepare new employees for their jobs and provide development opportunities for existing employees.

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Steps in Developing a Training Curriculum Steven A. Beebe, Timothy A. Mottet, and K. David Roach, *Training and Development: Enhancing Communication and Leadership Skills* (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2004).

1. Do background research based on literature on and observations of the training context you will be in.
2. Conduct a needs assessment to see what sort of training is desired/needed.
3. Develop training objectives based on research, observations, and needs assessment. Objectives should be observable, measurable, attainable, and specific.
4. Develop content that connects to the needs assessment.
5. Determine the time frame for training; make the training as efficient as possible.
6. Determine methods for delivering content that connect with objectives developed earlier.
7. Select and/or create training materials.
8. Create a participant's guide that contains each activity and module of the training.
9. Include the following for each training activity: objectives, training content, time frame, method, and materials needed.
10. Test the training plan on a focus group or with experts in the field to evaluate and revise if necessary.

Meetings

Over eleven million meetings are held each day in the United States, so it is likely that you will attend and lead meetings during your career. Why do we have meetings? The fundamental reason is to get a group of people with different experiences and viewpoints together to share their knowledge and/or solve a problem. Despite their frequency and our familiarity with them, meetings are often criticized for being worthless, a waste of time, and unnecessary. Before you call a meeting, ask yourself if it is necessary, since some issues are better resolved through a phone call, an e-mail, or a series of one-on-one meetings. Ask the following questions to help make sure the meeting is necessary: What is the goal of the meeting? What would be the consequences of not having it? How will I judge whether the meeting was successful or not?Antony Jay, "How to Run a Meeting," in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 34.

Meetings are important at the early stages of completing a task, as they help define a work team since the members share a space and interact with each other. Subsequent meetings should be called when people need to pool knowledge, refine ideas, consider new information, or deliberate over a decision. Most meetings are committee size, which ranges from three to ten people. The frequency of the meeting will help determine how the meeting should be run. Groups that meet daily will develop a higher level of cohesion and be able to work through an agenda quickly with little review. Most groups meet less frequently, so there typically needs to be a structured meeting agenda that includes informational items, old business, and new business.

In determining the meeting agenda, define the objectives for various items. Some items will be informative, meaning they transmit information and don't require a decision or an action. Other items will be constructive, in that they require something new to be devised or decided, such as determining a new policy or procedure. Once a new policy or procedure has been determined, a group must decide on the executive components of their decision, such as how it will be implemented and who will have responsibilities in the process. As the items progress from informational, to constructive, to executive, the amount of time required for each item increases, which will have an effect on the planning of the agenda.Antony Jay, "How to Run a Meeting," in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 34–37.

After completing the agenda, continue to plan for the meeting by providing attendees with the agenda and any important supporting or supplementary materials such as meeting minutes or reports ahead of time. Consult with people who will attend a meeting beforehand to see if they have any questions about the meeting and to remind them to review the materials. You can also give people a "heads up" about any items for discussion that may be lengthy or controversial. Make sure the meeting room can accommodate the number of attendees and arrange the seating to a suitable structure, typically one where everyone can see each other. A meeting leader may also want to divide items up as "for information," "for discussion," or "for decision." Start the meeting by sharing the objective(s) that you determined in your planning. This will help hold you and the other attendees accountable and give you something to assess to determine the value of the meeting.

People's attention spans wane after the first twenty minutes of a meeting, so it may be useful to put items that warrant the most attention early on the agenda. It is also a good idea to put items that the group can agree on and will unify around before more controversial items on which the group may be divided. Anything presented at the meeting that wasn't circulated ahead of time should be brief, so people aren't spending the meeting reading through documents. To help expedite the agenda, put the length of time you think will be needed for each item or category of items on the agenda. It is important to know when to move from one item to the next. Sometimes people continue to talk even after agreement has been reached, which is usually a waste of time. You want to manage the communication within the meeting but still encourage people to speak up and share ideas. Some people take a more hands-on approach to managing the conversation than others. As the president of the graduate student body, I attended a few board of trustees meetings at my university. The chairperson of the committee had a small bell that she would ring when people got off track, engaged in personal conversations, or were being disruptive to the order of the group.

At the end of the meeting make sure to recap what was accomplished. Return to the objective you shared at the beginning and assess whether or not you accomplished it. If people feel like they get somewhere during a meeting, they will think more positively about the next one. Compile the meeting minutes in a timely fashion, within a few days and no more than a week after the meeting.Antony Jay, "How to Run a Meeting," in *Harvard Business Review on Effective Communication* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 25–57.

Tips for Running Effective Meetings

1. Distribute an agenda to attendees two to three days in advance of the meeting.
2. Divide items up on the agenda into "for information," "for discussion," and "for decision."
3. Put items that warrant close attention early on the agenda.
4. Since senior attendees' comments may influence or limit junior people's comments, ask for comments from junior attendees first.
5. People sometimes continue talking even after agreement has been reached, so it's important to know when to move on to the next item in the agenda.

6. At the end of a meeting, recap what was accomplished and set goals for the next meeting.
7. Compile meeting minutes within forty-eight hours and distribute them to the attendees.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- What counts as being a good communicator in one business context doesn't in another, so being able to adapt to various business settings and audiences will help you be more successful in your career.
- Upward business communication involves communicating messages up the organizational hierarchy. This type of communication is usually the most lacking in organizations. However, since oral presentations are a "high-visibility" activity, taking advantage of these opportunities can help you get noticed by bosses and, if done well, can move you up the organizational ladder. Present information succinctly in an executive summary format, building in repetition of main ideas in the oral delivery that aren't necessary for the written version. Don't just focus on the boss if there are other people present, but do connect to the vision and mission of the organization, since most managers and executives have a "big picture" view of the organization.
- Horizontal communication is communication among colleagues on the same level within an organizational hierarchy. This type of communication helps coordinate tasks and lets people from various parts of an organization get a better idea of how the whole organization functions. Many workplaces are becoming more collaborative and team oriented, but make sure you share credit for ideas and work accomplished collaboratively so as not to offend a colleague.
- Downward communication includes messages traveling down the organizational hierarchy. These messages usually focus on giving instructions, explaining company policies, or providing feedback. As a supervisor, make sure to encourage employees to ask questions following a presentation. Good information flow helps prevent employee errors and misunderstandings, which saves money.
- Initial communication with clients, customers, or funding sources is usually persuasive in nature, as you will be trying to secure their business. Later communication may be more informative status reports. Connect your message to their needs rather than focusing on what you offer. Use persuasive strategies like positive motivation, and always have a "money slide" prepared that gets across the essence of what you offer in one attractive message.
- When adapting business communication to intercultural contexts, take a "tools not rules" approach that focuses on broad and adaptable intercultural communication competence.

    - There are various types of business presentations for which a speaker should be prepared:

- Briefings are short, two- to three-minute “how-to” or “update” presentations that are similar to factual bullet points.
- Reports can be past, present, or future focused and include status, final, and feasibility reports.
- Trainings are informal or formal presentations that help get new employees ready for their jobs and keep existing employees informed about changing policies, workplace climates, and legal issues.

- To have an effective meeting, first make sure it is necessary to have, then set a solid foundation by distributing an agenda in advance, manage the flow of communication during the meeting, and take note of accomplishments to promote a positive view of future meetings.

EXERCISES

1. Identify a recent instance when you engaged in upward, horizontal, downward, or intercultural communication in a business setting. Analyze that communication encounter based on the information in the corresponding section of this chapter. What was done well and what could have been improved?
2. Prepare a briefing presentation on how to prepare a briefing. Make sure to follow the suggestions in the chapter.
3. Think of a time when you received training in a business or academic setting. Was the communication of the trainer effective? Why or why not?

12.4 Speaking via Electronic Media

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify strategies for speaking on radio and television.
2. Describe the communication skills necessary to be a spokesperson.
3. Explain the role of crisis communication professionals.

Although radio and television messages may be broadcast to thousands or millions of people, it is important for speakers to realize they are speaking to individuals, not a crowd. Radio and television both seek to make personal connections with listeners or viewers, but it can be difficult to concentrate on making that connection if you aren't prepared for the microphones, lights, and monitors that may surround you. This section will help you be prepared to speak on the radio, speak on the television, conduct a media interview, and speak on behalf of someone else in a regular or crisis situation.

Speaking on Radio and Television

My current university has rather well-established radio and television broadcasting programs for our students. We have a television station and a radio station that undergraduate students interested in careers in broadcasting get to actually work in to gain experience and hone their skills. At the start of each semester there are some definite rough spots—for example, as I watch a broadcast meteorology major make his or her first appearance in front of the green screen weather map or listen to a radio broadcasting student deliver the hourly news update on the radio. But it is wonderful to be able to watch these young broadcasters improve over the course of the semester, some of them growing to rival the seasoned reporters on our regional network stations.

Radio

Although many people think of radio as an old-fashioned form of media, it is still important in many aspects of life and continues to adapt to changing markets, expanding to include Internet and satellite formats. People may think radio is as easy as sitting in a chair and talking into a microphone, but it takes practice and verbal and nonverbal skills to effectively communicate on the radio.Stuart W. Hyde, *Television and Radio Announcing*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 19–21. Aside from reading over words without stumbling and ad-libbing content as needed, speaking on the radio requires communicators to interpret and emphasize using their voice. Even though radio is sound only, nonverbal communication is still important. The audience can't see your gestures and facial expressions, but using them makes the verbal delivery more engaging and effective.

Some people, including me, have "**mic fright**[26]," which is increased nervousness due to the presence of a microphone.Stuart W. Hyde, *Television and Radio Announcing*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 52–57. I actually didn't realize that I had mic fright until the first time I was interviewed on the radio. Even after many years of public speaking experience and skill and confidence development, sitting in a radio booth with headphones on and a big microphone in front of me brought on communication anxiety like I hadn't experienced in years. Luckily my segment was recorded to tape, so by the time it aired it had been edited and I didn't sound as nervous and incoherent as I felt in that moment. To help avoid nervousness, practice with a microphone just so you're used to seeing it. Some people's nervousness stems from a dislike of hearing their own voice. Many people don't like the way they sound when recorded, but that's the way we actually sound and the way others hear us, so it's important to get used to hearing our own voice. When we normally hear our voice, we hear what comes out of our mouth and is conducted through the air but also the internal resonance and vibration that happens as our voice is conducted through the bones and structures of our head and neck. Other people only hear the way our voice sounds as conducted through air *without* the added effect of the bone resonance. So, when we hear ourselves recorded, we hear our voice as others hear it, because the recording only captures the air and not the bone vibrations. We may not like it, but everyone else is already used to hearing it that way, because they've never heard our voice the way we hear it.

Although the radio reaches thousands of people at a time, radio presenters should imagine that they are connecting with individuals as they speak.

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Here are some final tips for radio communication. Be aware of microphones, and follow instructions for how close or distant your mouth should be from a microphone and what kind of volume you need to use. Avoid rattling papers, popping consonant sounds like *p*, or breathing directly into a microphone. Watch your verbal fillers, even more noticeable on the radio than they are in person or on the television. Many professional radio and television announcers practice a version of American English that doesn't give away any regional affiliation. Unless you are doing this for a career, you do not need to try to change an accent or

26. Increased nervousness due to the presence of a microphone.

dialect, as that will probably make you sound strange. Just speak in a natural voice, but make sure to articulate and enunciate your words so you can be understood.

Television

You don’t have to be famous to be on television. People are often surprised to find themselves in a situation where they will be on camera. Although many people in the digital generation are used to being recorded via webcam or even on a smartphone, being in front of a television camera creates a completely different atmosphere.

Since television is a visual medium, appearance is important. In terms of clothing, avoid too much contrast between colors, like black on white. Also avoid clothing that is too striped or patterned, as it may bleed onscreen.Bruce Lewis, *The Technique of Television Announcing* (New York, NY: Hastings House, 1966), 53. Keep in mind that jewelry, watches, or anything reflective may catch the studio lights and create a distracting glare on camera. Also avoid wearing colors that are close to your skin tone.Stuart W. Hyde, *Television and Radio Announcing*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 66–68. You may be offered makeup; if you are, take it.

Once you are on set, you’ll need to orient yourself to the surroundings. Hopefully there will be a producer or other staff person there to explain things to you. You will want to be aware of video and audio monitors. **Video monitors**[27] are televisions that allow the on-air person to monitor their movements and see what viewers are seeing. One usually shows the video feed exactly as it will appear on viewer’s screens and one may be a fixed monitor that basically functions as a mirror so you can see that you are framed properly and look all right. Avoid the common temptation to stare at or constantly check the monitors.

In terms of audio, there may be a lavaliere microphone that will be attached to you beforehand. In some situations you may also get an **audio monitor**[28] that allows you to hear yourself, studio producers, or another person communicating with you off site. If off-camera producers need to communicate with you, the monitor may be an earpiece, which is standard for news anchors. If you are doing a remote live segment, the sound monitor will likely be a simple speaker. You may be asked to do microphone, sound, and video checks. Just follow the instructions, but make sure to speak up if something doesn’t seem to be working right. You want to make sure you can hear and see what you need to.

27. Televisions that allow on-air people to monitor their movements and see what viewers are seeing.

28. Speaker or earpiece that allows a person on television to hear himself or herself, studio producers, or another person communicating from off-site.

It's OK to practice what you're going to say aloud a few times before you actually present. People in television studios are used to on-air announcers and reporters walking around talking to themselves. As with radio, think about the audience you're reaching as individuals rather than a mass of people. Develop a mental picture of a definite person watching, which will help you create the illusion of a personal connection to the viewer.Bruce Lewis, *The Technique of Television Announcing* (New York, NY: Hastings House, 1966), 74–89. I'm sure we've all been drawn into that illusion many times, even though we know better. As a fan of Brian Williams and the NBC Nightly News, I catch myself saying goodnight to Brian after he says goodnight to me (and a few million other people) at the end of his broadcast.

Television studios are fast-paced, technical environments that can make speakers very nervous if they aren't prepared.

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Once the recording begins, become your own director by monitoring your communication.Bruce Lewis, *The Technique of Television Announcing* (New York, NY: Hastings House, 1966), 81–90. Do not monitor yourself so much that you get stuck in your head, worrying about the camera, the monitor, and where to look to the point that you forget to use even normal facial expressions and vocal variety. Remember that your face conveys your thoughts and emotions, sometimes without you knowing it. Don't try to impersonate other people's facial expressions and tone of voice, because it will probably come off as an imitation, rather than as genuine. Hand motions should be a little slower on television than in real life, but don't overthink them either. Remember to keep your head up as much as possible, so only divert your eyes down to review notes; don't let your whole head turn down. Avoid extra movements and stay on your mark if you are given one. A mark may be made using tape on the floor and indicates where you should stand. If a camera is zoomed in, even a small movement can take you out of the frame or out of focus. Movements can also take you out of set lighting or a sound area.

When speaking to someone else on camera, you will need to "cheat out" a little, which may seem awkward in person but will look fine on camera. When we talk to someone, we usually face him or her directly, but on television that would leave us with only a profile shot. Each person should be at about a 25-degree angle from each other so they can see and talk to each other but also be open to the camera. When addressing the camera, look at the lens and focus about a foot behind it, because that creates the illusion that you are looking at the viewer.Stuart W. Hyde, *Television and Radio Announcing*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 56–62. If you are going to be presenting to more than one camera, be prepared to shift your focus. You will usually get a cue from a producer and can then follow the "tally light," which is the red light above the camera. Producers usually give these signals very close to the camera, but you will need to rely on your peripheral vision and not let your focus be shifted to the signaler. You do not need to send a message back, nonverbally or verbally, that the signal has been received.Stuart W. Hyde, *Television and Radio Announcing*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 66.

At the end of a television segment, especially a live one, you may have to hold a position as a segment is tossed to another presenter or there is a transition to a commercial break. Don't assume you are off the air until someone tells you. You don't want to end up with a blooper where you say something embarrassing or start to get up before you are off camera. It may feel like an eternity, but be prepared to hold your position for a few moments while looking into the camera, at the monitor, or at another person.

Media Interview

People often appear on the radio or television as a result of participating in a **media interview**[29] with a reporter or radio or television representative. Handling a media interview is also something that many people aren't prepared for. Unless you are responding to a crisis situation, which we will discuss later, you will likely have time to prepare for a media interview. Make sure to use this time. If you are contacted by a reporter or station representative to schedule an interview, the first thing you should do is ask some preliminary questions to help with your interview preparation.

Questions to Ask before a Media InterviewKC Associations, "10 Tips for Effective Media Interviews," accessed March 17, 2012, http://www.kc-associates.com/vantagepoint/article_2.html.

- Who will be interviewing me?
- How can I access some of this person's previous interviews?
- What is the segment or show I will be featured on?
- What information will you need from me?
- Will the interview be live?
- How long will the interview last?
- If the interview is being recorded and edited, how long will the aired segment be?
- Is there a deadline for the story?

If the interview is part of a series, you may also ask whom they've already talked to and what information they have already gotten.Tom Wadsworth, "Secrets of the Media Savvy: Best Tips for Media Interviews," *asaecenter.org*, April 2005, accessed

29. Communication with a reporter or radio or television representative.

March 17, 2012, http://www.asaecenter.org/Resources/whitepaperdetail.cfm?ItemNumber=12239. Don't feel like you have to begin the interview right away or agree to the interview on the spot. You can ask the person to give you a little time to prepare and then get back in touch with them.

Once you have gotten some preliminary information, do some research on the interviewer and the organization he or she represents. If the interview is about a personal context, then you have more freedom with your content. If you are representing a company or organization, you will want to contact your supervisor before accepting an interview. Many companies have policies about who can speak to the media, and some even have communications departments or designated speakers that they assign to such roles. If you are given approval to do the interview, you will probably want to run your content by your supervisor for approval as well.

Then come up with two to three key messages or main points that you want to convey in the interview. Interviews that aren't live are usually edited, and only some of what you say will make it into the final cut. Due to time constraints, media interviewers are often looking for the "**sound bite**[30]": a verbal bullet point that is about ten seconds or twenty-six words long. While this can be frustrating, especially when you're discussing a complicated and contextual topic, it is a media reality. Think of a sound bite as a verbal bullet point for your speech.

A Good Sound Bite Tom Wadsworth, "Secrets of the Media Savvy: Best Tips for Media Interviews," *asaecenter.org*, April 2005, accessed March 17, 2012, http://www.asaecenter.org/Resources/whitepaperdetail.cfm?ItemNumber=12239.

- Is about ten seconds or twenty-six words for radio or television
- Connects to something current, culturally relevant, or of interest to the public
- Mentions you and/or your company's name (media interviews are often good publicity)
- Offers a claim and some brief support for the claim
- Paints a picture
- Is memorable and leaves a lasting impression

So narrowing your content down to these few main points and then identifying some key sound bites within the points will ensure that at least some of the important material will make it into the story instead of something you get sidetracked onto.

30. A verbal bullet point that is about ten seconds or twenty-six words long.

Many people doing television or radio interviews are afraid of creating dead air and say more than they need to, which can get the interview off track. When interviews get off track, you may only be able to address one of your three main points—remember television and radio segments are usually short. The interviewers are more afraid of dead air than the interviewee is, and it's their job to worry about it, so you can stop answering the question once you've addressed it and let them make the next move. Be concise in your answers to the interviewer's questions. If they need more information, they will ask follow-up questions. If an interviewer tries to get you "off message," be prepared to briefly engage the question and pivot back to your prepared content; in some cases, it is even OK to deflect the question by saying something like "That's not really what I thought we were going to talk about today. I'm here to discuss…" Although politicians often dodge legitimate questions, you can watch them interact with the press for pointers on how to pivot and stay on message.

If you don't know the answer to a question, say so, but offer to follow up if the question is relevant to your expertise and experience or refer the interviewer to someone else who may have the answer. Don't answer a question with "No comment," as that arouses suspicion. It is OK to tell an interviewer that their question falls outside of your area of expertise, falls outside of the scope of the interview as you understood it, or gets into issues of privacy that you cannot discuss due to ethics or policy.

Interviewers, especially if they are reporters, are good at making you feel like you are only talking to them. While this is true in the case of the interview, don't forget that you are actually talking to a larger audience of viewers and/or listeners, so keep them in mind. After the interview, ask the interviewee what they are likely to use in the final segment. You may also want to follow up with a written record of any specific facts, especially if it's technical or needs to be precise.

Speaking on Behalf of Others

Some careers specifically involve speaking on behalf of others. For example, spokespeople, crisis communicators, and other public relations professionals speak for other individuals or organizations. Many organizations do not have designated spokespeople, so you may just find yourself speaking on behalf of others because you were asked or told to. This section explores specific communication skills and knowledge that are useful when speaking for others.

Speaking as a Spokesperson or Representative

Organizations that do not have public relations or communications departments may tap someone as needed to interact with the media or release a statement. **Spokespeople**[31] speak to external audiences, primarily the media, on behalf of an individual or group. Some key attributes for an effective spokesperson are the abilities to establish rapport, tell an engaging story, handle difficult and unexpected questions, respond to nonverbal cues, and adjust communication to match audience preferences.SpokesComm, "Key Spokesperson Skills," accessed March 17, 2012, http://www.spokescomm.com/id65.html. Ideally, spokespeople facilitate a question-and-answer session after they present their statement. We have all seen people read prepared statements and then retreat without addressing questions, which usually creates a negative impression. Spokespeople must maintain their credibility, and being open is a way to do this.

A spokesperson must be perceived as credible to effectively deliver the message of another person or group.

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To prepare for questions and answers, corporate spokespeople are usually given briefing materials to review. They are sometimes given question-and-answer (Q&A) documents that have been drafted ahead of time that contain examples of friendly and hostile questions that may be asked.Barbara Gibson, "Spokesperson Coaching Tips," *SpokesBlog*, accessed March 17, 2012, http://spokesblog.wordpress.com/category/spokescomm. The spokesperson should be involved in drafting the answers rather than being expected to read them as a script. Audiences can usually tell when someone isn't speaking his or her own words, which raises suspicion. The message can still be carefully crafted, but it will appear more natural if the spokesperson is a coauthor of the message. Spokespeople may rely on particular phrases to enhance the audience's perception of their honesty. This becomes problematic when the phrases are overused and therefore lose their meaning. Some examples of phrases to avoid overusing are "to be perfectly honest," "frankly," and "truthfully."

Being an effective spokesperson requires training and preparation.Barbara Gibson, "Spokesperson Coaching Tips," *SpokesBlog*, accessed March 17, 2012, http://spokesblog.wordpress.com/category/spokescomm. Spokespeople should be evaluated and assessed in simulations to help prepare for delivering actual messages. Once a spokesperson is in the job, a debriefing should follow every interview to evaluate strengths and weaknesses. As with many other types of presentations, watching a video recording for evaluation purposes can be instructive. Some spokespeople are communications professionals who have

31. Speakers who communicate with external audiences, primarily the media, on behalf of an individual or group.

general training in communication skills. There are also subject matter experts who serve as spokespeople. These speakers are useful when dealing with complex information, but they should also be trained in communication skills—content knowledge is not enough to be a good spokesperson. Speakers who are subject matter experts should avoid acronyms and other forms of insider language and be able to convey their message in concrete terms. It may be useful to pair a subject matter expert up with a communication expert and have the communication expert set up the interview and then turn it over to the subject matter expert.

Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is a fast-growing field of study within communication studies as many businesses and organizations realize the value in finding someone to prepare for potential crises, interact with stakeholders during a crisis, and assess crisis responses after they have occurred. **Crisis communication**[32] occurs as a result of a major event outside of normal expectations that has potential negative results, runs the risk of escalating in intensity, may result in close media or government scrutiny, and creates pressure for a timely and effective response.Alan Jay Zaremba, *Crisis Communication: Theory and Practice* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp, 2010), 20–22. Some examples of crises include natural disasters, management/ employee misconduct, product tampering or failure, and workplace violence.

The need for crisis communication professionals is increasing, as various developments have made organizations more susceptible to crises.W. Timothy Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2012), 14. Since the 1990s, organizations have increasingly viewed their reputations as assets that must be protected. Whereas reputations used to be built on word-of-mouth communication and one-on-one relationships, technology, mass media, and now social media have made it easier for stakeholders to praise or question an organization's reputation. A Facebook post or a Tweet can now turn into widespread consumer activism that organizations must be able to respond to quickly and effectively. In addition, organizations are being held liable for "negligent failure to plan," which means that an organization didn't take "reasonable action to reduce or eliminate known or reasonably foreseeable risks that could result in harm."W. Timothy Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2012), 16–17. Look around your classroom and the academic building you are in. You will likely see emergency plans posted that may include instructions on what to do in situations ranging from a tornado, to a power outage, to an active shooter. As a response to the mass shooting that took place at Virginia Tech in 2006, most colleges and universities now have emergency notification systems and actively train campus police and faculty and staff on what to do in the case of an active shooter on campus. Post–Virginia Tech, a campus's failure to institute such procedures could

32. Communication that occurs as a result of a major event outside of normal expectations that has potential negative results, runs the risk of escalating in intensity, may result in close media or government scrutiny, and creates pressure for a timely and effective response.

be deemed as negligent failure to plan if a similar incident were to occur on that campus.

Crisis communicators don't just interact with the media; they communicate with a variety of stakeholders. Stakeholders are the various audiences that have been identified as needing information during a crisis. These people and groups have a "stake" in the organization or the public interest or as a user of a product or service. Internal stakeholders are people within an organization or focal area, such as employees and management. External stakeholders are people outside the organization or focal area such as customers, clients, media, regulators, and the general public.Alan Jay Zaremba, *Crisis Communication: Theory and Practice* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp, 2010), 30–31.

Four main areas of crisis communication research are relationships, reputation, responsibility, and response.Alan Jay Zaremba, *Crisis Communication: Theory and Practice* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp, 2010), 32–33 Relationships and reputation are built and maintained before a crisis occurs. Organizations create relationships with their stakeholders, and their track record of quality, customer service, dependability, and communication determines their reputation. *Responsibility* refers to the degree to which stakeholders hold an organization responsible for the crisis at hand. Judgments about responsibility will vary depending on the circumstances of a crisis. An unpreventable natural disaster will be interpreted differently than a product failure resulting from cutting corners on maintenance work to save money. *Response* refers to how an organization reacts to a crisis in terms of its communication and behaviors.

“Getting Real”

Crisis Communication Professionals

Crisis communication professionals create crisis communication plans that identify internal and external audiences that need information during crisis events. Effective crisis communication plans can lessen the impact of or even prevent crises. Aside from preparing for crises and identifying stakeholders/audiences, crisis communicators also construct the messages to be communicated to the stakeholders and select the channels through which those messages will be sent. The crisis communicator or another representative could deliver a speech or press conference, send messages through social media, send e-mail or text message blasts out, or buy ad space in newspapers or on television.Alan Jay Zaremba, *Crisis Communication: Theory and Practice* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp, 2010), 23.

Crisis communicators must have good public speaking skills. Communicating during a crisis naturally increases anxiety, so it’s important that speakers have advanced skills at managing anxiety and apprehension. In terms of delivery, while there will be times when impromptu responses are necessary—for example, during a question-and-answer period—manuscript or extemporaneous delivery are the best options. It is also important that a crisis communicator be skilled at developing ethos, or credibility as a speaker. This is an important part of the preparatory stages of crisis communication when relationships are formed and reputations are established. The importance of ethos is related to the emphasis on honesty and disclosure over stonewalling and denial.

A myth regarding crisis communicators is that their goal is to “spin” a message to adjust reality or create an illusion that makes their organization look better. While some crisis communicators undoubtedly do this, it is not the best practice in terms of effectiveness, competence, or ethics. Crisis communication research and case studies show that honesty is the best policy. A quick and complete disclosure may create more scrutiny or damage in the short term, but it can minimize reputational damage in the long term.Alan Jay Zaremba, *Crisis Communication: Theory and Practice* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp, 2010), 111. Denying a problem, blaming others instead of taking responsibility, or ignoring a problem in hope that it will go away may actually prolong media coverage, invite more investigation, and permanently damage an organization’s image.

1. Why do you think extemporaneous and manuscript delivery are the preferred delivery methods for crisis communicators? What do these delivery styles offer that memorized and impromptu do not? In what situations would it be better to have a manuscript? To deliver extemporaneously?
2. Consider the following scenario, which we all hope we will never encounter: Several reports come into the campus police station that gunshots were heard outside the administrative building on campus. Eyewitnesses say that an unidentified armed person was seen walking into the building. Answer the following questions based on what you have learned about crisis communication: Who are the internal and external stakeholders in this situation? As a student (and stakeholder), what steps would you want your organization to take in response to this situation? What message should be sent? To whom should the message be sent? What media channels should be used?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Although radio and television are mass-communication media, presenters should imagine that they are speaking to select individuals rather than a mass crowd. Radio and television try to create the illusion of a personal connection between the speaker and audience.
- Radio requires verbal and nonverbal communication skills even though it is an aural form of media. People not used to speaking on the radio should prepare for the possibility of experiencing "mic fright."
- Since television is a visual media, appearance is important. Certain types of clothes, makeup, and accessories are preferred for people presenting on air. Be prepared to work with audio and video monitors to help make sure you can see and hear what you need to while you are presenting. Avoid extra movements once you are put on your mark, as camera angles, lighting, and sound may be set to cover only a limited area.
- Ask questions before a media interview to ensure that you can be adequately prepared. Come up with two to three key messages and some relevant "sound bites," and then stay on those messages during the interview.
- Spokespeople need to be good at establishing rapport, storytelling, and managing their nonverbal communication. Even though spokespeople deliver other people's messages, they should be involved in drafting the wording of the messages so their communication sounds natural and not forced.
- As organizations realize the increasing value of their reputations and the power of social media to rapidly enhance or destroy a reputation, they are more frequently employing crisis communication professionals who prepare for before, coordinate the response during, and assess an organization's response after a crisis.

EXERCISES

1. Have you ever spoken on the radio or television? If so, how did your experiences match up with the content of this section? If not, what would you be worried and/or excited about?
2. Come up with three good "sound bites" related to the current speech you're working on. Make sure to follow the guidelines for a good sound bite outlined in this section.
3. Do some Internet research to find an example of an organization that responded poorly to a crisis situation. What could they have done better based on the information you learned in this chapter? (Doing a Google search for "crisis communication case study," or some other related terms, will help you find an example.)