

Learning Objectives

After reading and studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Define communication.
2. Explain the interpersonal communication process.
3. Describe the criteria on which different communication methods can be evaluated and on what the choice of communication method depends.
4. Explain how nonverbal communication affects managers.
5. Explain the barriers to effective interpersonal communication and how to overcome them.
6. Contrast the different organizational communication flows and networks.
7. Describe two developments in information technology that have had a significant impact on managerial communication.
8. Discuss how information technology affects organizations.

MANAGEMENT TODAY

Semifreddi's is an artisan-bread bakery, a producer of specialty bread and bread shaped in unusual forms. CEO Tom Frainier describes himself as an "accessible, available, communicative guy," but communication is proving to be a problem for him and his company. Most of his workers come from countries where English is not the native language. His employees are from a variety of places, like Laos, Cambodia, China, Peru, Mexico, Yemen, and Vietnam. Most of his workers speak some English, but language barriers are bound to exist. Very often, when Frainier believes that he is being understood, his employees are simply nodding agreement, but not understanding what he is saying. Of course, this happens all the time among people who even speak the same language—all of us drift off in our minds and only pretend to be listening sometimes. But at Semifreddi's, communication problems are a constant issue.¹

Although he considers himself a good communicator, Frainier sometimes speaks too quickly for his employees to understand him. When he asked them in a meeting to park behind the bakery rather than on the side where spaces should be left for customers, many of his employees thought

Managerial Communication and Information Technology

11

he was telling them not to drive to work anymore. When he had a meeting to discuss the business with employees, and tried to share information about the company's profits and costs (Frainier would like to institute open-book management at the bakery), employees nodded their heads but weren't grasping what he was saying to them. "I didn't realize that they were just being polite," he says. Effective communication is something that every manager

in every organization has to pay attention to, even if they aren't dealing with as many different languages as Tom Frainier is.

WHAT EFFECTS HAVE CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY HAD ON COMMUNICATIONS OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS?



Communication between managers and employees provides the information necessary to get work done effectively and efficiently in organizations. There is no doubt that communication is fundamentally linked to managerial performance.² In this chapter we will present basic concepts in managerial communication. We'll explain the interpersonal communication process, methods of communicating, barriers to effective communication, and ways to overcome those barriers. We'll also look at organizational communication issues including communication flow and communication networks. Finally, because managerial communication is so greatly influenced by information technology, we will look at contemporary issues and challenges associated with electronic communications and other forms of information technology.

> UNDERSTANDING MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION

Skill Building: Managing to Communicate

www.cbizmag.com/Content/10-09-00/skillbuilding.htm

The importance of effective communication for managers can't be overemphasized for one specific reason: Everything a manager does involves communicating. Not some things, but everything! A manager can't make a decision without information. That information has to be communicated. Once a decision is made, communication must again take place. Otherwise, the decision would never be implemented. The best idea, the most creative suggestion, the best plan, or the most effective job redesign can't take shape without communication. Managers need effective communication skills. We aren't suggesting that good communication skills alone make a successful manager. We can say, though, that ineffective communication skills can lead to a continuous stream of problems for a manager.

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Communication is the transfer and understanding of meaning. The first thing to note about this definition is the emphasis on the *transfer* of meaning. This means that if no information or ideas have been conveyed, communication hasn't taken place. The speaker who isn't heard or the writer who isn't read hasn't communicated. More importantly, however, communication involves the *understanding* of meaning. For communication to be successful, the meaning must be imparted and understood. A letter written in Portuguese addressed to a person who doesn't read Portuguese can't be considered communication until it's translated into a language the person does read and understand. Perfect communication, if such a thing existed, would be when a transmitted thought or idea was perceived by the receiver exactly as it was envisioned by the sender.

Another point to keep in mind is that *good* communication is often mistakenly defined by the communicator as *agreement* with the message instead of clearly understanding the message.³ If someone disagrees with us, many of us assume that the person just didn't fully understand our position. In other words, many of us define good communication as having someone accept our views. But I can clearly understand what you mean and just *not* agree with what you say. In fact, many times when a conflict has gone on a long time, people will say it's because the parties aren't communicating effectively. That assumption reflects the tendency to think that effective communication equals agreement.

The final point we want to make about managerial communication is that it encompasses both **interpersonal communication**—communication between two or more people—and **organizational communication**—all the patterns, networks, and systems of communication within an organization. We're going to explore a manager's interpersonal communication first.

communication

The transfer and understanding of meaning.

interpersonal communication

Communication between two or more people.

organizational communication

All the patterns, networks, and systems of communication within an organization.

THE PROCESS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Before communication can take place, a purpose, expressed as a **message** to be conveyed, must exist. It passes between a source (the sender) and a receiver. The message is converted to symbolic form (called **encoding**) and passed by way of some medium (**channel**) to the receiver, who retranslates the sender's message (called **decoding**). The result is the transfer of meaning from one person to another.⁴ Exhibit 11.1 illustrates the seven elements of the **communication process**: the communication source, the message, encoding, the channel, decoding, the receiver, and feedback. In addition, note that the entire process is susceptible to **noise**—disturbances that interfere with the transmission, receipt, or feedback of a message. Typical examples of noise include illegible print, phone static, inattention by the receiver, or background sounds of machinery or co-workers. Remember that anything that interferes with understanding can be noise, and noise can create distortion at any point in the communication process. Let's look at how distortions can happen with the sender, the message, the channel, the receiver, and the feedback loop.

A *sender* initiates a message by *encoding* a thought. Four conditions influence the effectiveness of that encoded message: the skills, attitudes, and knowledge of the sender, and the socio-cultural system. How? We'll use ourselves, as your textbook authors, as an example. If we don't have the requisite skills, our message won't reach you, the reader, in the form desired. Our success in communicating to you depends on our writing skills. In addition, any pre-existing ideas (attitudes) that we may have about numerous topics will affect how we communicate. For instance, our attitudes about managerial ethics, labour unions, or the importance of managers to organizations influence our writing. Next, the amount of knowledge we have about a subject affects the message(s) we are transferring. We obviously can't communicate what we don't know; on the other hand, if our knowledge about a subject is extensive, our writing might at times become too intricate or complicated. Finally, the socio-cultural system in which we live influences us as communication senders. Our beliefs and values (all part of culture) act to influence what and how we communicate. Think back to our chapter-opening Management Challenge and how Tom Frainier wants to be an effective communicator. As he encodes his ideas into messages when communicating with employees, he'll need to reflect on his skill, attitudes, knowledge, and the socio-cultural system (of both Canada and his employees' countries of origin) in order to reduce any possible noise.

The *message* itself can distort the communication process, regardless of the kinds of supporting tools or technologies used to convey it. A message is the actual physical product encoded by the source. It can be the written document, the oral speech, and even the gestures and facial expressions we use. The message is affected by the symbols used to transfer meaning (words, pictures, numbers, etc.), the content of the message itself, and the decisions that the sender makes in selecting and arranging both the symbols and the content. Noise can distort the communication process in any of these areas.

The *channel* chosen to communicate the message also has the potential to be affected by noise. Whether it's a face-to-face conversation, an e-mail message, or a

message
A purpose to be conveyed.

encoding
Converting a message into symbols.

channel
The medium a message travels along.

decoding
Retranslating a sender's message.

communication process
The seven elements involved in transferring meaning from one person to another.

noise
Any disturbances that interfere with the transmission, receipt, or feedback of a message.

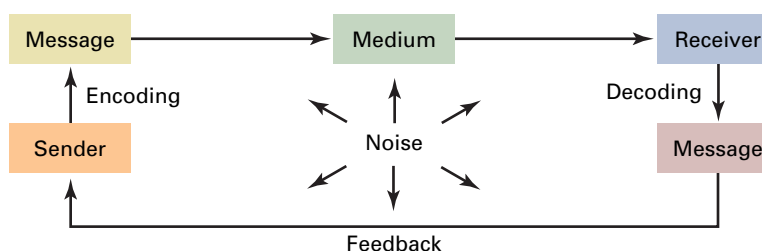


Exhibit 11.1

The Interpersonal Communication Process

company-wide memorandum, distortions can and do occur. Managers need to recognize that certain channels are more appropriate for certain messages. Obviously, if the office is on fire, a memo to convey that fact is inappropriate! And if something is important, such as an employee's performance appraisal, a manager might want to use multiple channels—perhaps an oral review followed by a written letter summarizing the points. This decreases the potential for distortion.

The *receiver* is the individual to whom the message is directed. Before the message can be received, however, the symbols in it must be translated into a form that the receiver can understand. This is the *decoding* of the message. Just as his or her skills, attitudes, knowledge, and socio-cultural system limits the sender, so too it does the receiver. And just as the sender must be skilful in writing or speaking, the receiver must be skilful in reading or listening. A person's knowledge influences his or her ability to receive. Moreover, the receiver's attitudes and socio-cultural background can distort the message.

The final link in the communication process is a *feedback loop*. Feedback returns the message to the sender and provides a check on whether understanding has been achieved. Because feedback can be transmitted along the same types of channels as the original message, it faces the same potential for distortion.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATING INTERPERSONALLY

You need to communicate to your employees the organization's new policy on sexual harassment; you want to compliment one of your workers on the extra hours she's put in to help your work group complete a customer's order; you must tell one of your employees about changes to her job; or you would like to get employees' feedback on your proposed budget for next year. In each of these instances, how would you communicate this information? Managers have a wide variety of communication methods from which to choose. These include face-to-face, telephone, group meetings, formal presentations, memos, traditional mail, fax machines, employee publications, bulletin boards, other company publications, audio and videotapes, hot lines, electronic mail, computer conferencing, voice mail, teleconferences, and videoconferences. All of these communication channels include oral or written symbols, or both. How do you know which to use? Managers can use 12 questions to help them evaluate the various communication methods.⁵

1. Feedback—how quickly can the receiver respond to the message?
2. Complexity capacity—can the method effectively process complex messages?
3. Breadth potential—how many different messages can be transmitted using this method?
4. Confidentiality—can communicators be reasonably sure only those intended receives their messages?
5. Encoding ease—can sender easily and quickly use this channel?
6. Decoding ease—can receiver easily and quickly decode messages?
7. Time-space constraint—do senders and receivers need to communicate at the same time and in the same space?
8. Cost—how much does it cost to use this method?
9. Interpersonal warmth—how well does this method convey interpersonal warmth?
10. Formality—does this method have the needed amount of formality?
11. Scanability—does this method allow the message to be easily browsed or scanned for relevant information?

12. Time of consumption—does the sender or receiver exercise the greater control over when to deal with the message?

Exhibit 11.2 provides a comparison of the various communication methods on these 12 criteria. Which method a manager ultimately chooses should reflect the needs of the sender, the attributes of the message, the attributes of the channel, and

Comparison of Communication Methods

Criteria	Comparison of Communication Methods											
	Feedback Potential	Complexity Capacity	Breadth Potential	Confidentiality	Encoding Ease	Decoding Ease	Time-Space Constraint	Cost	Personal Warmth	Formality	Scannability	Consumption Time
Face-to-face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	4	S/R
Telephone	1	4	2	2	1	1	3	3	2	4	4	S/R
Group meetings	2	2	2	4	2	2	1	1	2	3	4	S/R
Formal presentations	4	2	2	4	3	2	1	1	3	3	5	Sender
Memos	4	4	2	3	4	3	5	3	5	2	1	Receiver
Postal mail	5	3	3	2	4	3	5	3	4	1	1	Receiver
Fax	3	4	2	4	3	3	5	3	3	3	1	Receiver
Publications	5	4	2	5	5	3	5	2	4	1	1	Receiver
Bulletin boards	4	5	1	5	3	2	2	4	5	3	1	Receiver
Audio/ videotapes	4	4	3	5	4	2	3	2	3	3	5	Receiver
Hot lines	2	5	2	2	3	1	4	2	3	3	4	Receiver
E-mail	3	4	1	2	3	2	4	2	4	3	4	Receiver
Computer conference	1	2	2	4	3	2	3	2	3	3	4	S/R
Voice mail	2	4	2	1	2	1	5	3	2	4	4	Receiver
Tele-conference	2	3	2	5	2	2	2	2	3	3	5	S/R
Video-conference	3	3	2	4	2	2	2	1	2	3	5	S/R

Note: Ratings are on a 1–5 scale where 1 = high and 5 = low. Consumption time refers to who controls the reception of communication. S/R means the sender and receiver share control. Source: P.G. Clampitt, *Communicating for Managerial Effectiveness* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991), p. 136.

the needs of the receiver. For instance, if you need to communicate to an employee the changes being made in her job, face-to-face communication would be a better choice than a memo since you want to be able to address immediately any questions and concerns that she might have.

We can't leave the topic of interpersonal communication methods without looking at the role of **nonverbal communication**—that is, communication transmitted without words. Some of the most meaningful communications are neither spoken nor written. A loud siren or a red light at an intersection tells you something without words. When a university instructor is teaching a class, she doesn't need words to tell her that her students are bored when their eyes are glassed over or they begin to read the school newspaper. Similarly, when students start putting their papers, notebooks, and book away, the message is clear: Class time is about over. The size of a person's office and the clothes he or she wears also convey messages to others. These are all forms of nonverbal communication. The best-known types of nonverbal communication are body language and verbal intonation.

Body language refers to gestures, facial expressions, and other body movements that convey meaning. A person frowning "says" something different from one who's smiling. Hand motions, facial expressions, and other gestures can communicate emotions or temperaments such as aggression, fear, shyness, arrogance, joy, and anger.

Verbal intonation refers to the emphasis someone gives to words or phrases that convey meaning. To illustrate how intonations can change the meaning of a message, consider the student who asks the instructor a question. The instructor replies, "What do you mean by that?" The student's reaction will vary, depending on the tone of the instructor's response. A soft, smooth vocal tone conveys interest and creates a different meaning from one that is abrasive and puts a strong emphasis on saying the last word. Most of us would view the first intonation as coming from someone sincerely interested in clarifying the student's concern, whereas the second suggests that the person is defensive or aggressive.

The fact that every oral communication also has a nonverbal message can't be overemphasized. Why? Because the nonverbal component usually carries the greatest impact. "It's not *what* you said, but *how* you said it." People respond to *how* something is said as well as *what* is said. Managers should remember this as they communicate.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

In our discussion of the interpersonal communication process, we noted the continual potential for distortion. What causes distortion? In addition to the general distortions identified in the communication process, managers face other barriers to effective communication.

Filtering **Filtering** is the deliberate manipulation of information to make it appear more favourable to the receiver. For example, when a person tells his or her manager what the manager wants to hear, that individual is filtering information. Does this happen much in organizations? Yes, it does. As information is communicated up through organizational levels, it's condensed and synthesized by senders so those on top don't become overloaded with information. Those doing the condensing filter communications through their personal interests and perceptions of what is important.

The extent of filtering tends to be a function of the number of vertical levels in the organization and the organizational culture. The more vertical levels there are in an organization, the more opportunities there are for filtering. As organizations become less dependent on strict hierarchical arrangements and instead use more collaborative, cooperative work arrangements, information filtering may become less of a problem. In addition, the ever-increasing use of e-mail to communicate in organizations reduces filtering because communication is more direct as intermediaries are bypassed. Finally, the organizational culture encourages or discourages filtering by the type of

nonverbal communication
Communication transmitted without words.

body language
Gestures, facial expressions, and other movements of the body that convey meaning.

verbal intonation
An emphasis given to words or phrases that conveys meaning.

filtering
The deliberate manipulation of information to make it appear more favourable to the receiver.



MANAGING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Communication Styles of Men and Women

“You don’t understand what I’m saying, and you never listen!” “You’re making a big deal out of nothing.” Most of us have probably said or heard statements similar to these when in conversation with someone of the opposite sex. Research shows us that men and women tend to have different communication styles.⁶ Let’s look more closely at these differing styles and the problems that can arise and try to suggest ways to minimize the barriers.

Deborah Tannen has studied the ways that men and women communicate and reports some interesting differences. The essence of her research is that men use talk to emphasize status, whereas women use it to create connection. She states that communication between the sexes can be a continual balancing act of juggling our conflicting needs for intimacy, which suggests closeness and commonality, and independence, which emphasizes separateness and differences. It’s no wonder, then, that communication problems arise! Women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy. Men hear and speak a language of status and independence. For many men, conversations are merely a way to preserve independence and maintain status in a hierarchical social order. Yet for many women, conversations are negotiations for closeness and seeking out support and confirmation. Let’s look at a few examples of what Tannen has described.

Men frequently complain that women talk on and on about their problems. Women, however, criticize men for not listening. What’s happening is that when a man hears a woman talking about a problem, he frequently asserts his desire for independence and control by offering solutions. Many women, in contrast, view conversing about a problem as a way to promote closeness. The woman talks about a problem to gain support and connection, not to get the male’s advice.

Here’s another example: Men are often more direct than women in conversation. A man might say, “I think you’re wrong on that point.” A woman might say, “Have you looked at the marketing department’s research report on that issue?” The implication in the woman’s comment is that the report will point out the error. Men frequently misread women’s indirectness as “covert” or “sneaky,” but most women aren’t as concerned as men with the status and one-upmanship that directness often creates.

Finally, men often criticize women for seeming to apologize all the time. Men tend to see the phrase “I’m sorry” as a sign of weakness because they interpret the phrase to mean the woman is accepting blame, when he may know she’s not to blame. The woman also knows she’s not at fault. Yet she’s typically using “I’m sorry” to express regret: “I know you must feel badly about this and I do, too.”

behaviour it rewards. The more that organizational rewards emphasize style and appearance, the more that managers will be motivated to filter communications in their favour.

Selective Perception **Selective perception** is when people selectively interpret what they see or hear on the basis of their interests, background, experience, and attitudes. The receiver in the communication process selectively sees and hears communications depending on his or her needs, motivations, experience, background, and other personal characteristics. The receiver also projects his or her interests and expectations into communications as they are decoded. An employment interviewer who expects female job applicants to put family before career is likely to see that in female candidates, regardless of whether the applicants actually feel that way.

Because effective communication between the sexes is important in all organizations, how can we manage these differences in communication styles? To keep gender differences from becoming persistent barriers to effective communication requires acceptance, understanding, and a commitment to communicate adaptively with each other. Both men and women need to acknowledge that there are differences in communication styles, that one style isn’t better than the other, and that it takes real effort to “talk” with each other successfully.

Emotions How a receiver feels when a message is received influences how he or she interprets it. You’ll often interpret the same message differently, depending on whether you’re happy or distressed. Extreme emotions are most likely to hinder effective communication. In such instances, we often disregard our rational and objective thinking processes and substitute emotional judgments. It’s best to avoid reacting to a message when you’re upset because you’re not likely to be thinking clearly.

selective perception

When people selectively interpret what they see or hear on the basis of their interests, background, experience, and attitudes.

information overload

The information we have to work with exceeds our processing capacity.

jargon

Specialized terminology or technical language that members of a group use to communicate among themselves.

Information Overload A marketing manager goes on a week-long sales trip to Spain where he doesn't have access to his e-mail and is faced with 600 messages on his return. It's not possible to fully read and respond to each and every one of those messages without facing **information overload**—when the information we have to work with exceeds our processing capacity. Today's typical executive frequently complains of information overload. The demands of keeping up with e-mail, phone calls, faxes, meetings, and professional reading create an onslaught of data that is nearly impossible to process and assimilate. What happens when individuals have more information than they can sort and use? They tend to select out, ignore, pass over, or forget information. Or they may put off further processing until the overload situation is over. Regardless, the result is lost information and less effective communication.

Defensiveness When people feel that they're being threatened, they tend to react in ways that reduce their ability to achieve mutual understanding. That is, they become defensive—engaging in behaviours such as verbally attacking others, making sarcastic remarks, being overly judgmental, and questioning others' motives.⁷ When individuals interpret another's message as threatening, they often respond in ways that hinder effective communication.

Language Words mean different things to different people. Age, education, and cultural background are three of the more obvious variables that influence the language a person uses and the definitions he or she gives to words. Governor General Adrienne Clarkson and hip hop artist André from Outkast both speak English, but the language each uses is vastly different.

In many organizations employees come from diverse backgrounds and have different patterns of speech. Even employees who work for the same organization but in different departments often have different **jargon**—specialized terminology or technical language that members of a group use to communicate among themselves.

Keep in mind that while we may speak the same language, our use of that language is far from uniform. Senders tend to assume that the words and phrases they use mean the same to the receiver as they do to them. This, of course, is incorrect and creates communication barriers. Knowing how each of us modifies the language would help minimize those barriers.

National Culture Communication differences can also arise from the different languages that individuals use to communicate and the national culture of which they are a part. Interpersonal communication isn't conducted the same way around the world. For example, let's compare countries that place a high value on individualism (such as Canada) with countries where the emphasis is on collectivism (such as Japan).⁸

In Canada, communication patterns tend to be oriented to the individual and clearly spelled out. Canadian managers rely heavily on memoranda, announcements, position papers, and other formal forms of communication to state their positions on issues. Canadian supervisors may hoard information in an attempt to make themselves look good and as a way of persuading their employees to accept decisions and plans. And for their own protection, lower-level employees also often engage in this practice.



Differences in language can create obvious communication barriers, and managers must sometimes be creative about preventing and solving communication problems in today's increasingly diverse workplace. Few safety manuals or other documents in the construction industry are available in any language other than English at present.

In collectivist countries, such as Japan, there's more interaction for its own sake and a more informal manner of interpersonal contact. The Japanese manager, in contrast to the Canadian manager, engages in extensive verbal consultation with subordinates over an issue first and draws up a formal document later to outline the agreement that was made. The Japanese value decisions by consensus, and open communication is an inherent part of the work setting. Also, face-to-face communication is encouraged.

Cultural differences can affect the way a manager chooses to communicate. And these differences undoubtedly can be a barrier to effective communication if not recognized and taken into consideration.

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Given these barriers to communication, what can managers do to overcome them? The following suggestions should help you make your interpersonal communication more effective.

Use Feedback Many communication problems can be directly attributed to misunderstandings and inaccuracies. These problems are less likely to occur if the manager uses the feedback loop in the communication process. This feedback can be verbal or nonverbal.

If a manager asks a receiver, "Did you understand what I said?" the response represents feedback. Good feedback should include more than yes-and-no answers. The manager can ask a set of questions about a message to determine whether or not the message was received and understood as intended. Better yet, the manager can ask the receiver to restate the message in his or her own words. If the manager hears what was intended, understanding and accuracy should improve. Feedback includes subtler methods than directly asking questions or having the receiver summarize the message. General comments can give a manager a sense of the receiver's reaction to a message.

Of course, feedback doesn't have to be conveyed in words. Actions can speak louder than words. A sales manager sends an e-mail to his or her staff describing a new monthly sales report that all sales representatives will need to complete. If some of them don't turn in the new report, the sales manager has received feedback. This feedback suggests that the sales manager needs to clarify further the initial communication. Similarly, when you're talking to others, you watch their eyes and look for other nonverbal clues to tell you whether they're getting your message or not.

Simplify Language Because language can be a barrier, managers should choose words and structure their messages in ways that will make those messages clear and understandable to the receiver. The manager needs to simplify his or her language and consider the audience to whom the message is directed so that the language can be tailored to the receivers. Remember, effective communication is achieved when a message is both received and *understood*. Understanding is often improved by simplifying the language used in relation to the audience intended. This means, for example, that a hospital administrator should always try to communicate in clear, easily understood terms and that the language used in messages to the surgical staff should be purposefully different from that used with office employees. Jargon can facilitate understanding when it's used within a group of those who know what it means, but it can cause many problems when used outside that group.

Listen Actively When someone talks, we hear. But too often we don't listen. Listening is an active search for meaning, whereas hearing is passive. In listening, two people are engaged in thinking: the sender and the receiver.

Many of us are poor listeners. Why? Because listening is difficult, and it is also usually more satisfying to be on the offensive. Listening, in fact, is often more tiring than talking. It demands intellectual effort. Unlike hearing, **active listening**, which is lis-

Cultural Barriers to Effective Communication
www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/cultrbar.htm

active listening
 Listening for full meaning without making premature judgments or interpretations.

Exhibit 11.3

Listening Behaviours



tening for full meaning without making premature judgments or interpretations, demands total concentration. The average person normally speaks at a rate of about 125 to 200 words per minute. However, the average listener can comprehend up to 400 words per minute.⁹ The difference obviously leaves lots of idle time for the brain and opportunities for the mind to wander.

Active listening is enhanced by developing empathy with the sender—that is, by placing yourself in the sender’s position. Because senders differ in attitudes, interests, needs, and expectations, empathy makes it easier to understand the actual content of a message. An empathetic listener reserves judgment on the message’s content and carefully listens to what is being said. The goal is to improve your ability to receive the full meaning of a communication without having it distorted by premature judgments or interpretations. Other specific behaviours that active listeners demonstrate are listed in Exhibit 11.3.

Constrain Emotions It would be naive to assume that managers always communicate in a rational manner. We know that emotions can severely cloud and distort the transference of meaning. A manager who is emotionally upset over an issue is more likely to misconstrue incoming messages and fail to communicate his or her outgoing messages clearly and accurately. What can the manager do? The simplest answer is to refrain from communicating until he or she has regained composure.

Watch Nonverbal Cues If actions speak louder than words, then it’s important to watch your actions to make sure they align with and reinforce the words that go along with them. The effective communicator watches his or her nonverbal cues to ensure that they convey the desired message.



ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

An understanding of managerial communication isn’t possible without looking at the fundamentals of organizational communication. In this section, we look at several important aspects of organizational communication including formal versus informal communication, the flow patterns of communication, and formal and informal communication networks.

FORMAL VERSUS INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

Communication within an organization is often described as formal or informal.

Formal communication refers to communication that follows the official chain of command or is part of the communication required to do one's job. For example, when a manager asks an employee to complete a task, he or she is communicating formally. So is the employee who brings a problem to the attention of his or her manager. Any communication that takes place within prescribed organizational work arrangements would be classified as formal.

Informal communication is organizational communication that is not defined by the organization's structural hierarchy. When employees talk with each other in the lunch room, as they pass in hallways, or as they're working out at the company exercise facility, that's informal communication. Employees form friendships and communicate with each other. The informal communication system fulfills two purposes in organizations: (1) It permits employees to satisfy their need for social interaction, and (2) it can improve an organization's performance by creating alternative, and frequently faster and more efficient, channels of communication.

formal communication

Communication that takes place within prescribed organizational work arrangements.

informal communication

Communication that is not defined by the organization's structural hierarchy.

DIRECTION OF COMMUNICATION FLOW

Organizational communication can flow downward, upward, laterally, or diagonally. Let's look at each.

Downward Communication Any communication that flows downward from a manager to employees is **downward communication**. Downward communication is used to inform, direct, coordinate, and evaluate employees. When managers assign goals to their employees, they're using downward communication. Managers are also using downward communication by providing employees with job descriptions, informing them of organizational policies and procedures, pointing out problems that need attention, or evaluating their performance. Downward communication can take place through any of the communication methods we described earlier.

downward communication

Communication that flows downward from a manager to employees.

Upward Communication Managers rely on their employees for information. Reports are given to managers to inform them of progress toward goals and any current problems. **Upward communication** is communication that flows upward from employees to managers. It keeps managers aware of how employees feel about their jobs, their co-workers, and the organization in general. Managers also rely on upward communication for ideas on how things can be improved. Some examples of upward communication include performance reports prepared by employees, suggestion boxes, employee attitude surveys, grievance procedures, manager-employee discussions, and informal group sessions in which employees have the opportunity to identify and discuss problems with their manager or even representatives of top-level management.

upward communication

Communication that flows upward from employees to managers.

The extent of upward communication depends on the organizational culture. If managers have created a climate of trust and respect and use participative decision making or empowerment, there will be considerable upward communication as employees provide input to decisions. However, in a highly mechanistic and authoritarian environment, upward communication still takes place but will be limited both in style and content.

Lateral Communication Communication that takes place among any employees on the same organizational level is called **lateral communication**. In today's often chaotic and rapidly changing environment, horizontal communications are frequently needed to save time and facilitate coordination. Cross-functional teams, for instance, rely heavily on this form of communication interaction. However, it can create conflicts if employees don't keep their managers informed about decisions they've made or actions they've taken.

lateral communication

Communication that takes place among any employees on the same organizational level.

diagonal communication

Communication that cuts across work areas and organizational levels.

communication networks

The variety of patterns of vertical and horizontal flows of organizational communication.

grapevine

The informal organizational communication network.

Diagonal Communication **Diagonal communication** is communication that cuts across both work areas and organizational levels. When a credit analyst in the credit department communicates directly with a regional marketing manager—note the different department and different organizational level—about a customer problem, that’s diagonal communication. In the interest of efficiency and speed, diagonal communication can be beneficial. And the increased use of e-mail facilitates diagonal communication. In many organizations, any employee can communicate by e-mail with any other employee, regardless of organizational work area or level. However, just as with lateral communication, diagonal communication has the potential to create problems if employees don’t keep their managers informed.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

The vertical and horizontal flows of organizational communication can be combined into a variety of patterns called **communication networks**. Exhibit 11.4 illustrates three common communication networks.

Types of Communication Networks In the *chain* network, communication flows according to the formal chain of command, both downward and upward. The *wheel* network represents communication flowing between a clearly identifiable and strong leader and others in a work group or team. The leader serves as the hub through whom all communication passes. Finally, in the *all-channel* network, communication flows freely among all members of a work team.

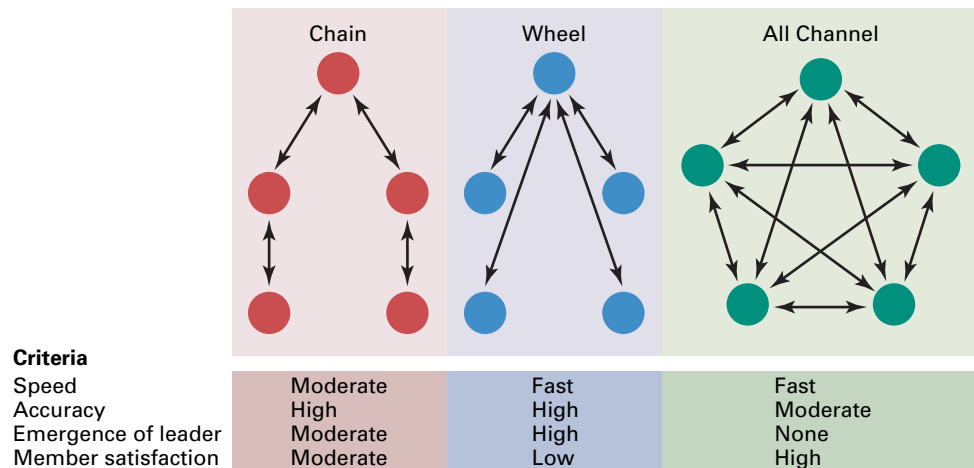
As a manager, which network should you use? The answer depends on your goal. Exhibit 11.4 also summarizes the effectiveness of the various networks according to four criteria: speed, accuracy, the probability that a leader will emerge, and the importance of member satisfaction. One observation is immediately apparent: No single network is best for all situations. If you are concerned with high member satisfaction, the all-channel network is best; if having a strong and identifiable leader is important, the wheel facilitates this; and if accuracy is most important, the chain and wheel networks work best.

The Grapevine We can’t leave our discussion of communication networks without discussing the **grapevine**—the informal organizational communication network. The grapevine is active in almost every organization. Is it an important source of information? You bet. One survey reported that 75 percent of employees hear about organizational matters first through rumours on the grapevine.¹⁰

What are the implications for managers? Certainly, the grapevine is an important part of any group or organization communication network and well worth understanding.¹¹ It identifies for managers those bewildering issues that employees consider

Exhibit 11.4

Three Common Organizational Communication Networks and How They Rate on Effectiveness Criteria



important and anxiety producing. It acts as both a filter and a feedback mechanism, picking up on the issues employees consider relevant. More importantly, from a managerial point of view, it *is* possible to analyze what is happening on the grapevine—what information is being passed, how information seems to flow along the grapevine, and which individuals seem to be key conduits of information on the grapevine. By being aware of the grapevine's flow and patterns, managers can stay on top of issues that concern employees and, in turn, can use the grapevine to disseminate important information. Since the grapevine can't be eliminated, managers should “manage” it as an important information network.

Rumours that flow along the grapevine also can never be eliminated entirely. What managers can do, however, is minimize the negative consequences of rumours by limiting their range and impact. How? By communicating openly, fully, and honestly with employees, particularly in situations in which employees may not like proposed or actual managerial decisions or actions.

› UNDERSTANDING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Technology is changing the way we live and work. Take the following examples: Japanese employees and managers, housewives, and teens use wireless interactive Web phones to send e-mail, surf the Web, swap photos, and play computer games. At Postnet, the Swedish postal service's Internet subsidiary, employees work at tables with electrical and data-connection cables to plug in their laptop computers. Over 75 percent of IBM's 316 000 employees regularly use instant messaging software for communicating and for workplace collaboration.

IBM
www.ibm.com

The world of managerial communication is not what it used to be. Managers are challenged to keep their organizations functioning smoothly while continually improving work operations *and* staying competitive even though both the organization and the environment are changing rapidly. Although changing technology has been a significant source of the environmental uncertainty facing organizations, these same technological advances have enabled managers to coordinate the work efforts of employees in ways that can lead to increased efficiency and effectiveness. Information technology now touches every aspect of almost every company's business. The implications for managerial communication are profound.

HOW TECHNOLOGY AFFECTS MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION

Technology, and more specifically information technology, has radically changed the way organizational members communicate. For example, it has significantly improved a manager's ability to monitor individual or team performance, it has allowed employees to have more complete information to make faster decisions, and it has provided employees more opportunities to collaborate and share information. In addition, information technology has made it possible for people in organizations to be fully accessible, any time, regardless of where they are. Employees don't have to be at their desk with their computer turned on in order to communicate with others in the organization. Two developments in information technology seem to be having the most significant impact on current managerial communication: networked computer systems and wireless capabilities.

Networked Computer Systems In a networked computer system, an organization links its computers together through compatible hardware and software, creating an organizational network. Organizational members can then communicate with each other and tap into information whether they're down the hall, across town, or halfway across the world. Although we won't get into the mechanics of how a network



The speed and convenience of e-mail has changed business communication forever. Along with the enormous growth of intranets (internal electronic communications webs) and other forms of electronic communication, the market for e-mail monitoring systems has doubled in the last year and continues to surge. Hundreds of companies like Canadian-based Ritvik now routinely store and review employees' incoming and outgoing e-mail messages and Web site visits, in an effort to reserve the organization's resources for company use. Here Andrew Quinn, Ritvik's systems manager, monitors co-workers' correspondence.

e-mail

The instantaneous transmission of written messages on computers that are linked together.

instant messaging (IM)

Interactive real-time communication that takes place among computer users logged on the computer network at the same time.

voice mail

A communication system that digitizes a spoken message, transmits it over a network, and stores the message on disk for the receiver to retrieve later.

fax

Communication through machines that allow the transmission of documents containing both text and graphics over ordinary telephone lines.

system works, we will address some of its communication applications including e-mail, instant messaging, voice mail, fax, electronic data interchange, teleconferencing and videoconferencing, intranets and extranets, and the talking Internet.

E-mail is the instantaneous transmission of written messages on computers that are linked together. E-mail is fast and cheap and can be used to send the same message to numerous people at the same time. It's a quick and convenient way for organizational members to share information and communicate.

Some organizational members who find e-mail slow and cumbersome are using **instant messaging (IM)**. This is interactive real-time communication that takes place among computer users who are logged onto the computer network at the same time. IM first became popular among teens and preteens who wanted to communicate with their friends online. Now, it's moving to the workplace. With IM, there's no waiting around for a colleague to read e-mail. Whatever information needs to be communicated can be done so instantaneously. However, there are a couple of drawbacks to instant messaging. It requires

groups of users to be logged on to the organization's computer network at the same time. This leaves the network open to security breaches. Also, IM software is currently incompatible with important business applications software.¹² However, as new versions of IM software are created, these drawbacks are likely to be addressed.

A **voice-mail** system digitizes a spoken message, transmits it over the network, and stores the message on disk for the receiver to retrieve later.¹³ This capability allows information to be transmitted even though a receiver may not be physically present to take the information. Receivers can choose to save the message for future use, delete it, or route it to other parties.

Fax machines allow the transmission of documents containing both text and graphics over ordinary telephone lines. A sending fax machine scans and digitizes the document. A receiving fax machine reads the scanned information and reproduces it in hard copy form. Information that is best viewed in printed form can be easily and quickly shared by organizational members.

? THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT ETHICS

Pogo.com reported that in one recent month, over one million people visited its game site from work and the average workplace player spent more than two hours and 34 minutes per visit glued to a pogo.com game. Funny stories, jokes, and pictures make their way from one employee's e-mail inbox to another's, to another's, and so forth.

Although these may seem like fun and harmless activities, it is estimated that such Internet distractions cost businesses in North America \$54 billion annually. While there is a high dollar cost associated with using the Internet at work for other than business reasons, is there a psychological benefit to be gained by letting employees do something to relieve the stress of pressure-packed jobs? What are the ethical issues associated with widely available Internet access at work for both employees and for organizations?¹⁴

Electronic data interchange (EDI) is a way for organizations to exchange standard business transaction documents, such as invoices or purchase orders, using direct computer-to-computer networks. Organizations often use EDI with vendors, suppliers, and customers because it saves time and money. How? Information on transactions is transmitted from one organization's computer system to another through a telecommunications network. The printing and handling of paper documents at one organization are eliminated as is the inputting of data at the other organization.

Meetings—one-on-one, team, divisional, or organization-wide—have always been one way to share information. The limitations of technology used to dictate that meetings take place among people in the same physical location, but that's no longer the case. **Teleconferencing** allows a group of people to confer simultaneously using telephone or e-mail group communications software. If meeting participants can see each other over video screens, the simultaneous conference is called **videoconferencing**. Work groups, large and small, which might be in different locations, can use these communication network tools to collaborate and share information.

Networked computer systems have allowed the development of organizational intranets and extranets. An **intranet** is an organizational communication network that uses Internet technology and is accessible only by organizational employees. Many organizations are using intranets as ways for employees to share information and collaborate on documents and projects from different locations. An **extranet** is an organizational communication network that uses Internet technology and allows authorized users inside the organization to communicate with certain outsiders such as customers or vendors.

Finally, we are all aware of the tremendous impact that the Internet has had and continues to have on organizations. Now, instead of being a communication medium just for text, colourful graphics, and the occasional music and video clip, the Internet is being used for voice communication. Popular e-mail providers such as Yahoo! let users chat verbally with each other. Many companies are also moving to Internet-based voice communication. For instance, in the headquarters of Merrill Lynch & Co., 6500 Internet phones have been installed for employees to use in conference calls or for instant messaging communication. On Compaq Computer Corporation's Web site, visitors can click on an icon and speak live to a company representative.¹⁵

Wireless Capabilities While the communication possibilities for a manager in a networked world are exciting, the real potential is yet to come! Networked computer systems require organizations (and organizational employees) to be connected by wires. Wireless communication depends on signals sent through air or space without any physical connection using things such as microwave signals, satellites, radio waves and radio antennas, or infrared light rays. Wireless smart phones, notebook computers, and other pocket communication devices have spawned a whole new way for managers to "keep in touch." In Japan and Europe, over nine million users have wireless technology that allows them to send and receive information from anywhere.¹⁷ Employees don't have to be at their desks with their computers plugged in and turned on in order to communicate with others in the organization. As technology continues to improve in this area, we'll see more and more organizational members using

electronic data interchange (EDI)

A way for organizations to exchange standard business transaction documents using direct computer-to-computer networks.

teleconferencing

Communication system that allows a group of people to confer simultaneously using telephone or e-mail group communications software.

videoconferencing

A simultaneous communication conference in which participants can see each other.

intranet

An organizational communication network that uses Internet technology and is accessible only by organizational employees.

extranet

An organizational communication network that uses Internet technology and allows authorized users inside the organization to communicate with certain outsiders.



Technology doesn't always aid in communication. As Senior Vice-President of a Toronto-based advertising company, Catherine Frank spends about six hours a day in meetings. She often finds today's communication technology to be a bit of a hassle, and not overly efficient. About e-mail she says: "Things can bounce back and forth like a tennis match for quite a long time until someone just says, 'Let's get together.'" As far as videoconferencing goes, she finds it to be a great time-saver for long-distance communication, but for local meetings it is often not very efficient. "Half the time," she says, "we spend the first 45 minutes trying to get it to work."¹⁶ Managers need a good understanding of communication applications in order to determine when each is effective.

wireless communication as a way to collaborate and share information. The implications for these technologies are massive in all kinds of organizations. For instance, Computing Devices Canada recently sold a digital radio system for battlefield use to the British armed forces. 48 000 radios, 30 000 computers and 18 000 installations on vehicles will allow the British forces to communicate using secure digital voice and data. The system will also provide automated location reporting and navigational aids, allowing troops and commanders better situational awareness.¹⁸

HOW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AFFECTS ORGANIZATIONS

Employees—working in teams or as individuals—need information to make decisions and do their work. After describing the communications capabilities managers have at their disposal, it's clear that technology can significantly affect the way that organizational members communicate, share information, and do their work.

Communications and the exchange of information among organizational members are no longer constrained by geography or time. Collaborative work efforts among widely dispersed individuals and teams, sharing of information, and integration of decisions and work throughout an entire organization have the potential to increase organizational efficiency and effectiveness. And while the economic benefits of information technology are obvious, managers must not forget to address the psychological drawbacks.¹⁹ For instance, what is the psychological cost of an employee being constantly accessible? Will there be increased pressure for employees to “check in” even during their off-hours? How important is it for employees to separate their work lives and their personal lives? While there are no easy answers to these questions, they are issues that managers will have to face.

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Managing in Canada and the World. Craig Dobbin heads up the world's leading helicopter services company. CHC provides helicopter transportation to offshore oil gas platforms around the world. New communications technologies allow companies like CHC Helicopter to run global operations far more effectively than in the past. When asked in a telephone interview whether he found being based in Newfoundland to be a drawback, he replied: “Location is not important anymore because of the Internet and travel availability. I'm in Florida in my car, but we're talking through Newfoundland and you're in Toronto. And my next call will probably be to my president who I think is in Copenhagen this morning. So we have that kind of mobility and these communications available to us, and the result is that it's very easy to do business from different points around the globe. The globe is so damn small now.”²⁰

Chapter Summary

This summary is organized by the chapter-opening objectives.

1. Communication is the transfer and understanding of meaning. Managerial communication encompasses both interpersonal communication—communication between two or more people—and organizational communication—all the patterns, networks, and systems of communication within an organization.
2. The communication process starts with a purpose, expressed as a message. This message is converted to symbolic form (called encoding) and passed by way of some medium (channel) to the receiver who retranslates the sender's message (called decoding). The entire process is susceptible to noise—disturbances that interfere with the transmission, receipt, or feedback of a message.
3. Communication methods can be compared on the basis of feedback potential, complexity capacity, breadth potential, confidentiality, encoding ease, decoding ease, time-space constraint, cost, personal warmth, formality, scanability, and consumption time. Which communication method (face-to-face, telephone, group meetings, formal presentations, memos, postal mail, fax, publications, bulletin boards, audio/videotapes, hot lines, e-mail, computer conference, voice mail, teleconference, or videoconference) a manager ultimately chooses, depends on the needs of the sender, the attributes of the message, the attributes of the channel, and the needs of the receiver.
4. Nonverbal communication is communication transmitted without words and is reflected by body language and verbal intonation. It affects managers because every oral communication has a nonverbal message as well. That nonverbal message usually carries the greatest impact.
5. The barriers to effective interpersonal communication include filtering (deliberately manipulating information to make it appear more favourable), selective perception (selectively interpreting what we see or hear based on our interests, background, experience, and attitudes), emotions, information overload (information received exceeds our processing capacity), defensiveness, language, and national culture. Overcoming the barriers involves using feedback, simplifying language, listening actively, constraining emotions, and watching nonverbal cues.
6. Organizational communication can flow in four ways. Downward communication is any communication that flows downward from manager to employees. Upward communication is communication that flows upward from employees to manager. Lateral communication is communication that takes place among employees on the same organizational level. Diagonal communication is communication that cuts across both work areas and organizational levels. There are three common organizational communication networks: the chain, the wheel, and the all-channel networks. In addition, managers must recognize the grapevine—the informal organizational communication network.
7. Two developments in information technology that have impacted managerial communication include networked computer systems and wireless capabilities. Some of the communication applications of networked computer systems include e-mail, instant messaging, voice mail, fax machines, electronic data interchange, teleconferencing and videoconferencing, intranets and extranets, and Internet voice communications. Wireless communications mean that organizational members don't have to be plugged into the computer network to send and receive information.
8. Information technology affects organizations through the way that organizational members communicate, share information, and do their work. Communication and the exchange of information among organizational members are no longer constrained by geography or time.

Thinking About Management Issues

1. Why isn't effective communication synonymous with agreement?
2. Which do you think is more important for the manager: speaking accurately or listening actively? Why?
3. "Ineffective communication is the fault of the sender." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Discuss.
4. How might managers use the grapevine for their benefit?
5. Is information technology helping managers be more effective and efficient? Explain your answer.

Log On: Internet-Based Exercise

There's no doubt that managers and organizations need to communicate effectively. Look at the Web sites for some Canadian companies you are familiar with. Find an example of poor communication. What do you think the organization is trying to say in this example and how could they say it more clearly? Now look for an example of good communication on a company's Web site. How are the two different? What makes the one example "poor" com-

munication, and what makes the other example "good" communication?

Now, find five companies whose primary business is helping organizational employees improve their interpersonal communication skills. What common characteristics, if any, did you find in the programs these companies offer?

Pearson Canada Companion Web Site



Visit your Companion Website at www.pearsoned.ca/robbins for more resources to help you with this chapter.

You will find:

- An on-line study guide, with self-quizzing exercises giving you immediate feedback
- internet exercises
- links to Internet sites related to the content of the chapter
- FAQs
- content and case updates and more.

Working Together: Team-Based Exercise

Form groups of five or six individuals. Each group should choose one person to remain in the room while the other members of each group leave the room. Your instructor will give you instructions on what happens next.

After the exercise is over, each group should discuss where communication errors (both in sending and receiv-

ing information) occurred. You should also discuss what you learned about managerial communication from this exercise. Be prepared to share your important ideas with the class.

Case Application

Miscommunications Lead to Tragedies

When there is miscommunication between managers and employees, it may create problems in the workplace, but most of the time there are no serious or tragic consequences. But in the airline industry, miscommunications can be deadly as all too many examples illustrate. Consider the following events.

In September 1997, a Garuda Airlines jetliner crashed into a jungle, just 20 miles south of the Medan Airport on the island of Sumatra. All 234 people aboard were killed. The cause of this disaster was the pilot and the air traffic controller confusing the words "left" and "right" as the plane approached the airport under extremely poor visibility conditions.

On December 20, 1995, American Airlines Flight 965 was approaching the Cali, Colombia, airport. The pilot expected to hear either the words "cleared as filed" (meaning he was to follow the flight plan filed before leaving Miami) or "cleared direct" (meaning fly straight from

where you are to Cali, a slightly different route from the filed flight plan). The controller intended to clear the flight "as filed" but said "cleared to Cali." The pilot interpreted that as a direct clearance. When he checked back, the controller said "affirmative." On the final approach to the airport, the plane crashed into a mountain, killing 160 people.

In 1993, Chinese pilots flying a U.S.-built MD-80 tried to land in heavy fog at Urumqi, in northwest China. They were puzzled by an audio alarm from the jet's ground proximity warning system, which alerts pilots that they are approaching the ground too quickly. Just before impact, the cockpit recorder recorded one crew member saying to the other in Chinese: "What does 'pull up' mean?" The plane hit power lines and crashed, killing 12 people.

In 1990, pilots on a Colombian airline Avianca flight told controllers as they neared New York Kennedy Airport that their Boeing 707 was "running low on fuel" after several holding patterns caused by bad weather. Controllers hear those words all the time so they took no special action. While the pilots knew there was a serious problem,

they failed to use a key phrase—“fuel emergency”—that would have compelled controllers to direct the Avianca flight ahead of all others and clear it to land as soon as possible. In addition, the vocal tone of the pilots didn't convey the severity or urgency of the fuel problem to the air traffic controllers. The controllers at Kennedy never understood the true crisis facing the pilots. The jet ran out of fuel and crashed 16 miles from the airport, killing 73 people.

Finally, history's deadliest aviation disaster occurred in 1977 at Tenerife in the Canary Islands. On a particularly foggy evening, the captain of a KLM flight thought the air traffic controller had cleared him to take off. But the controller intended only to give departure instructions. Although the language spoken between the Dutch KLM captain and the Spanish controller was English, the heavy accents and improper terminology created confusion. The KLM Boeing 747 hit a Pan Am 747 at full throttle on the runway—a disaster caused by miscommunication that killed a total of 583 people.

All these examples illustrate how miscommunication can have tragic consequences. Although the circumstances of most managerial communication are not as dramatic as these, the fact remains that good communication is essential to any group's or organization's effectiveness.

QUESTIONS

1. What barriers to communication do you see in these examples? How might these barriers have been overcome?
2. Would nonverbal communication play a role in the miscommunications between pilots and air traffic controllers? Explain.
3. How could active listening have prevented these crashes? Be specific.
4. As this case illustrates, language can be a definite communication barrier. What are the implications for managers who manage diverse work groups in which employees may not speak the native language as fluently?

Sources: Information from ABC News.com Web site (www.abcnews.go.com), September 13, 2000; S. Carey, “Alaska Air Aims to Restore Credibility After Plane Crash,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 28, 2000, p. B4; A. Kotarumalos, “Pilot Confused Before Deadly Jetliner Crash,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 30, 1997, p. A2; P. Garrison, “Can Culture Cause a Crash?,” *Conde Nast Traveler*, July 1997, pp. 24–28; J. Ritter, “Poor Fluency in English Means Mixed Signals,” *USA Today*, January 18, 1996, p. 1A; and E. Weiner, “Right Word Is Crucial in Air Control,” *New York Times*, January 29, 1990, p. B5.