



LIFE·PAC®

Business Computer Information Systems

Student Book

Unit 1



Alpha Omega Publications®



BUSINESS COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS

UNIT ONE

Communication Skills

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Unit 1: Communication Skills

Introduction

Success in the workplace requires habits and skills you must develop to be an effective and valuable employee. A foundational job skill is the ability to be a good communicator. This unit explores effective communication skills and considers how these translate into and shape desirable workplace skills, habits, and attitudes.

Your goals for the unit include the following:

- Understand and apply effective communication skills.
- Demonstrate productive work habits and attitudes—for example, dependability and punctuality.
- Demonstrate active listening through oral and written feedback.
- Locate and interpret written information.
- Incorporate supplementary resources and references.
- Organize ideas logically and sequentially.

The objectives for this unit include the following:

- Identify characteristics of effective and ineffective communication.
- Evaluate your own communication skills and create an action plan for improving your communication skills.
- Write and revise professional email messages following common netiquette guidelines.
- Identify productive work habits and attitudes.
- Employ active listening techniques.
- Give and accept constructive feedback.
- Determine the suitability and reliability of Internet resources.
- Paraphrase and summarize written information.
- Organize information logically and sequentially.

I. Effective Communication Skills

Communication Skills

Imagine that you have been applying for jobs all over town, and you finally get called for an interview. When you first listen to the voicemail message, you are really excited. But when you listen again to get the details about the interview, this is what you hear:

"Hi. Yeah, we got your application about the job. Um, we'd like to go ahead and interview you. Can you come in for an interview later? That would be great. OK, I'll see you then."

Did you get clear information about the interview? Do you know who to meet with and when to be there? Are you even sure which place you applied to is the one that is interested in interviewing you?

This lesson will focus on effective communication skills. You will accomplish the following during this lesson:

Objectives:

- Define communication and identify barriers to communication.
- Compare and contrast effective and ineffective communication skills.

Vocabulary:

barrier - anything that interferes with a message being sent or received.

communication - an exchange of information.

receiver - the person who receives a message.

sender - the person who creates or composes a message and delivers it either orally or in writing.



Very simply put, **communication** is the exchange of information. When you communicate, you may send a message, or you may receive a message. The goal is to have the message

that is sent by Person A (the **sender**) be clearly and easily received by Person B (the **receiver**). The sender creates or composes the message and delivers it, either orally or in writing, to the receiver, who should be able to clearly understand the intent of the message. When this happens, successful and effective communication has occurred.

Barriers to Communication

Having a clear, two-way exchange of information isn't always as easy as it sounds. Sometimes there are **barriers** to communication that interfere with or block the message. Barriers are anything that interferes with a message being sent or received. Some barriers might be caused by the sender, such as a confusing message, hard-to-understand words or language, or an accent or unfamiliar dialect. Other barriers may be caused by the receiver, such as distraction or inattentiveness. There are also barriers to communication that are not the fault of the sender or the receiver, such as noise.

Effective Communication

But remember, the goal of effective communication is for the message to travel clearly and easily from the sender to the receiver. It is important when communicating to reduce as many barriers as possible. Beginning with a clear message that is logical and organized and easy to understand is a good first step. Making sure there are few distractions to interfere with the message is another important step. If the receiver replies with a new message, this communication has become interactive.

In the workplace, communication becomes even more important. Often, business goals and timelines depend on clear communication. For example, imagine a new computerized cashiering system will be installed in the store at which you work in the next few months. Communication about this change is critical. Employees must be told when the new system will be in place, and there also needs to be communication about the highlights of the new system. There must be communication about training for employees on this new computerized system. And if clear communication does not occur before this new system is activated, this change could bring business to a halt when the employees are unprepared to use it.

But clear communication is not always as easy as it sounds. Sometimes, there are barriers to clear communication. What are some workplace barriers to effective communication? They include the following:

- The sender may not have enough time to create a clear message.
- The sender may not speak clearly or use language that can be easily understood.
- The receiver may not have the knowledge or information to make sense of the message.
- The receiver may not have time to carefully read the message.
- It may be too loud for clear communication to occur.
- It might be too busy for effective communication to occur.

Many times, communication does not happen face-to-face. A lot of business communication will take place by telephone, so employees must be able to communicate clearly using the phone. But the telephone itself can sometimes be a barrier to effective communication. When you are not speaking directly to another person, it can be easier to become distracted and not concentrate fully on the communication. It can also sometimes be harder to understand spoken words over a telephone. When a message is left on voicemail, communication can become even more tricky.

Example:

Imagine that you are a manager who has posted a "Help Wanted" advertisement so that you can hire some new employees. When you review your voicemail messages, you have messages from interested prospective employees. How a person presents him- or herself over the phone, even on a voicemail message, can go a long way toward creating a first impression, either positive or negative. Click on the first voicemail message to listen to it. What impression do you get of this job candidate based on the way she communicates in her phone message?



Please refer to the media CD to listen to the Voice Messages in this example.

Now click on the second message and compare it to the first one. What first impression do you get of the second caller?

What did you think of the person in message 1? As a manager, do you think you would call this person for an interview? It did not seem the caller was prepared with a clear and organized message. The caller did not speak slowly and clearly, and she seemed nervous and confused. Parts of the message were unintelligible. The ineffective communication skills shown by this caller probably affected your first impression. A manager may not be inclined to hire an employee with poor oral communication skills.

The second caller, on the other hand, probably did impress you. The caller was confident, clear, and ready to communicate. The message was logical and organized. Because employers like to hire people with good communication skills, as a manager, you would probably be interested in this job candidate.



Now that you have had a chance to think about the differences between effective and ineffective communication, let's make a list of the main characteristics of each. In the following activity, you will be shown a list of descriptive words related to communication. If you think the word describes good and effective communication, drag-and-drop it into the "Characteristics of Effective Communication" column. But if the word does not describe effective communication, drag-and-drop it into the "Characteristics of Ineffective Communication" column.



Please refer to the media CD to compete Comparing Communication Skills.

Lets Review!

Remember, effective communication is the clear exchange of information. When you are involved in a communication exchange, you may send a message, or you may receive a message. Sometimes, there may be barriers to communication that interfere with or block the message. Some of these barriers cannot be avoided (such as noise), but others can be reduced if you pay attention to the characteristics of effective communication.

 **Multiple Choice**

- 1.1 Bryan has e-mailed his boss, Shauna, asking if he can leave work early next Friday. Which choice best describes Bryan in this communication scenario? _____
- A. the sender of the message
 - B. the receiver of the message
 - C. a barrier to the message
 - D. a source of the message
- 1.2 Jamie works as a receptionist for a small business. Fridays are always a challenge on the phone, since the front entrance sees a lot more customer traffic. Jamie's communication challenge is due to which factor? _____
- A. effective communication
 - B. ineffective communication
 - C. barriers to communication
 - D. workplace communication
- 1.3 Liza is preparing a memo to her employees that explains the new procedure for asking for time off and switching shifts with another employee. By making sure her memo is well-prepared, logical, and organized, Liza has made sure her communication has the characteristics of _____.
- A. effective communication
 - B. ineffective communication
 - C. barriers to communication
 - D. workplace communication

 **True or False**

- 1.4 True/False Oral communication skills can present a positive or negative first impression.
- 1.5 True/False Barriers to communication always can be eliminated.
- 1.6 True/False Effective communication skills are a desirable workplace skill.
- 1.7 True/False Communication is the exchange of information.
- 1.8 True/False The telephone can be a barrier to communication.

Electronic Communication Skills

You likely engage in electronic communication on a daily basis. Whenever you send or receive an e-mail, text message, or IM, you are using electronic communication. In today's global workplace, these electronic communication tools have become very important to businesses.

This lesson will focus on effective communication skills. You will accomplish the following during this lesson:

Objectives:

- Identify guidelines for effective electronic communication, including netiquette.
- Determine how to ensure e-mail messages are appropriate for the workplace.

Vocabulary:

asynchronous communication - communication that occurs when the sender and receiver are separated by time and/or place.

audience - the person or people for whom your message is intended.

netiquette - guidelines for courteous electronic communication.

purpose - the reason for communication, such as to inform, to persuade, or to entertain.

synchronous communication - communication that occurs when the sender and receiver are communicating at the same time.

When we think about communication, we often think about words. But according to A. Barbour's book *Louder than Words: Non-verbal Communication*, communication is only seven percent the words we use. Thirty-eight percent of communication is related to how we speak our message—including how loudly or how quickly we speak—and fifty-five percent of communication involves body language, such as gestures and facial expressions.

Communication isn't limited to just oral, or spoken, communication. Effective written communication skills are also important. How can we communicate effectively when we do not have the benefit of nonverbal communication cues?

Preparation and Planning

Written communication requires special preparation and planning to be effective. It's a good idea to start by thinking about the purpose of your message. The **purpose** is why you are writing. Do you want to give information? Do you need to persuade your reader? Are you trying to entertain?

Next, you must consider the **audience**, or who will be reading your message. Knowing your audience will help you choose the right vocabulary and language to use in your message.

RIGHT

While you were out

Date: 3/25 _____ Time: 4:00 p.m. _____

To: Craig Jones

From: Matt Peterson

Message: Wanted to talk about the Sales Meeting he missed yesterday.

Telephone: 555-555-1234

Telephoned Returned Call

Called to see you Will Call You

Wants to see you Please Call

Operator: Ali

URGENT

WRONG

While you were out

Date: _____ Time: _____

To: _____

From: _____

Message: Matt Called

Telephone: _____

Telephoned Returned Call

Called to see you Will Call You

Wants to see you Please Call

Operator: _____

URGENT