Impact A Guide to Business Communication (Canadian) 9th edition Northey Solutions Manual

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Chapter 2: Strategies in Planning for Writing and Speaking

IN THE CLASSROOM

In our multi-cultural society, concerns about inclusiveness influence us at every turn—even in the classroom. The Information Age, instead of making things simpler, seems to have heightened our awareness of the many barriers—generational, gender, cultural—to communicating effectively.

So what does all this obstruction mean for someone teaching Communications? In practical terms, it means that the subject matter you're teaching may be far more open-ended and relative than many other courses offered by your institution. Students may have quite different perspectives than you around language use, and the business landscape to which we refer has increasingly varied contours.

Impact stresses problem-solving and the need to develop situational strategies, suggesting that each communication has its own unique circumstances, but it can be difficult to convince students that such strategies are really needed, especially if they are younger students with limited exposure to the world. One way of overcoming this barrier is to point out that the class environment itself contains a wide range of cultures, language groups, ages, etc. If typical, your classroom will accurately reflect the nature of our multicultural social environment. Developing an interactive classroom dynamic is particularly important in Communications courses, because a classroom very easily becomes the lab for learning good communications. At times, the same disconnects that can be seen in the larger culture are experienced in class. One way of jump-starting the process is to get students doing oral reports early on (For instance, students can be asked to demonstrate various language norms from their differing backgrounds). Now the students have to create audience-centred messages, and listen with an open mind making sure they hear not their own message but that of the sender. This kind of exercise can begin the process of turning the classroom into a Communications lab.

RESPONSES AND SAMPLE ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

1. Car advertisements can be especially revealing in terms of intended reader. Some present a thrift- and eco-friendly approach (i.e., cars are presented as innovatively designed transportation that treads lightly with heightened fuel economy, hybridization, smaller vehicles, etc.), while others continue to play on more traditional emotional responses to cars as symbols of power, success, luxury, and eros. Similarly, some shampoos emphasize value-for-money, while others, like L'Oreal, suggest the product will magically initiate the buyer into a world of luxury, beauty, and sexual desirability.

2. Typically, a bank manager would want to know how the investment could be guaranteed, what a market analysis or feasibility study would show—the bottom line; while a relative might emphasize less tangible factors: family relations, reputation, etc. A wealthy friend might ask why you want to do this, how this would affect your relationship with each

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other and your future; whereas, the venture capitalist would require assurance of the possibility of substantial profit for any investment made.

Writing to a bank manager would require the most formal tone, as you are approaching a conservative institution that must be reassured of your responsible/practical outlook; a venture capitalist would need a persuasive approach, emphasizing the benefits to investors; a relative and friend would require a more personal, conversational tone emphasizing relationship and benefits that would accrue to the sender.

3. Circumstances affect choices, but channel and medium preferences might be as follows:

a) physical presence: to encourage discussion, develop a relationship, etc.
b) personal static media—memos: because this is policy, for the record, etc.
c) physical presence: because you want to build group rapport
d) impersonal static media: to allow sender to analyze the response to a general warning without the possibility of insult or direct confrontation
e) interactive media: because time is short
f) physical presence: because you need a signature
g) personal static media—memo: because you might want a record of this
h) personal static media—written report: because this is detailed information
i) physical presence: because this is sensitive
j) depends: because you might want to make an official statement (office memo) but may also wish to approach the likely culprits personally
k) personal static media (memo) and physical presence: formulate a statement of office policy on display of such art and circulate; approach calendar owner and request its removal
l) physical presence: call a meeting to congratulate the department en masse — might also, if it's a small department, have one-on-one meetings with top performers
m) personal static media — you need documented, detailed clarification before proceeding with the job

4. a) We'll be in trouble if our biggest client isn't satisfied with our billing.
b) We need to have this order filled right away—please call and let me know when it will be ready.
c) You can pick up your overtime pay at my office any time before Friday.
d) Thanks for your August 9 letter. Sorry to hear of difficulties with your camera—please send it in so we can determine the problem.
e) I don't think this customer's complaints are justified, Mr. Miller, but we should meet to discuss ways to maintain a good client relationship with him.
f) As a follow-up to my memo of the 28th, new instructions for the photocopiers will be distributed to everyone shortly.
g) Sorry I can't attend our weekly meeting; let me know when the page proofs will be ready—as you know, our deadline is fast approaching.

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5. a) rating 8: As you requested, we have extended your warranty.
   b) rating 1: I am having some difficulty keeping my boss up to date.
   c) rating 1: We haven't had any former complaints about our service; what problems have you had?
   d) rating 9: We must sort this out by Tuesday.
   e) rating 10: We checked and found that the warranty has expired.
   f) rating 2: Precise work and neat appearance on the job are requirements in this position – failure to comply with these company standards may result in termination of employment.
   g) rating 10: All kitchenware must be sterilized.
   h) rating 2: Let's get back on schedule!
   i) rating 9: This document should help us improve our client communication and service.
   j) rating 2: I wish the manager could relax a bit and take a longer view of the situation.

6. You will notice that we have made some changes in your Tricorp dental plan. As of July 1, you are eligible to recover 50% of the cost of orthodontic work. This improvement will also affect your spouses' and dependants' coverage: check details in the attached form.

   At Tricorp, we're committed to maintaining—and improving—your well-being and that of your family.

   Answers to "What is the effect of the revision?" will obviously vary. One key effect should be that the revision is focused on the client; it makes him or her feel more valued. It also makes Tricorp sound more personable…not a cold, aloof corporation.

7.

Formal	Moderately Formal	Slang
deceased	died	croaked
domicile	***home***	place
ailing	sick	under the weather
regurgitate	vomit	***heave***
converse	***talk***	chat
disorganized individual	messy person	***slob***
reprimand	***correct***	blast
assist	help	give a hand
tiresome	boring	***what a drag***
purloin	steal	***rip-off***
mentally ill	crazy	wacked
intoxicated	drunk	***pissed***
dismissed	fired	canned
acquiesce	say yes	***go for it***
wealthy	rich	***rolling in it***
sycophant	flatterer	***brown-noser***
fabrication	lie	***B.S.***

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8.

You're invited!
to a pre-reception lunch
for Holden & Gunn's 50th anniversary
Thursday, June 20, at noon
Pastis Bistro
1947 West 4th Avenue

Please let us know if you can come!

9. C is by far the best choice. A is hectoring and negative; while it does challenge the receiver to reflect on how good he or she might have it, the note assumes a moral authority that is irritating and does not create a "you centred" message. B is also negative, using a sort of guilt trip about the efforts of the Executive, and only secondarily about the difficulties of the blind. In contrast, C is positive and "you centred"; it clearly indicates the level of effort requested and suggests several rewards that the participant will receive for that effort: e.g., sense of community, team spirit, and helping others while supporting the college. Notice the importance of words like "we" and "our" to draw students together and make them feel a part of an important project.

10. a) *reasons for writing the memo*
-to promote a great new P.R. concept
-to enhance the image of the company in the larger community
-to persuade the reader of the importance and viability of the concept
-to further develop her relationship with the general manager
-to get the company to donate a week of Jie's time to the charity
-to enable Jie to enhance her reputation in the company and the community

reader assessment: Philip Donaghue
-her superior, the general manager of the company
-marketing background
-ethically minded
-good eye for business opportunities
-no real personal relationship or contact up until now

b) Problems with tone: it is patronizing (I'm sure you realize, wowed), confrontational (business has a responsibility to contribute to society as well as raking in profits), self-aggrandizing and whiney (worked like a dog) and much too I-focused. It doesn't emphasize the benefits to the company, nor does it build any positive relationship between writer and reader—shows no respect for the reader, and inappropriately demands an A.S.A.P. response from a superior.

c) *subject line:* great PR plan
written body of memo:

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I understand that you're looking for promotional opportunities to help establish ourselves in western Canada, and that's why I want to run an idea by you.

Last year I produced a highly successful skating show here in Calgary for the Society for Special Needs Children; we had a sellout audience of 4200 and raised $30 000. The Society has asked if I could do it again this April.

In order for me to do the project justice, though, I would need a week freed up. Would the company consider making a "donation" of my time to the cause? This would be great PR for us—and it seems a natural opportunity for a toy company like ours, as this is a children's charity.

Needless to say, such an involvement would bring us the kind of publicity money just can't buy.

Thanks for your attention; I look forward to discussing this with you.

11. For example, a vacationing political candidate castigated in the newspapers for flightiness and indifference to the upcoming election might be the victim of a poor communication strategy. If her status as a hardworking, low-income single mother and her child's excitement about their non-refundable trip to Disneyland were made part of the public narrative, the story could be refocused on family values -- and the candidate's travel out of the riding during the campaign period might be viewed more sympathetically by the electorate.

ONLINE NOTE

Respect on the net is an on-going issue. Some theorists claim that reading off a monitor screen is inherently a more "emotional" experience: i.e., that back-lit language goes to a different, more "primitive" part of the brain than language which is read off a page. This is how some people explain the phenomenon of "flaming" (posting messages that are deliberately hostile and insulting to an Internet message board, chat room, etc.) and the more general tendency for some individuals to engage in heated exchanges via email, not to overlook the numerous "trolls" who lurk in chatrooms and on bulletin boards, thriving on the conflict their offensive, semi-anonymous postings rouse.

As for "netiquette" overall, part of etiquette is inclusiveness; that is, creating an atmosphere in which all are equally valued. Respectful tone is essential, then. Also, using non-slang language that is open to all, not just to a sub-culture, is a key part of this sense of respect.

Finally, note the five steps mentioned in the Internet Issues section when considering appropriate "netiquette": consider the medium, begin by addressing the recipient, maintain confidentiality, maintain your email credibility, and be clear. Some of your students might identify etiquette with a pinky-lifting image of mannerliness, so it's important to show them the whole picture.

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FURTHER EXERCISES — FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

1. Let's revisit Question 7 from above. This list is one of the most enjoyable exercises to do with a class of students. Try developing an exhaustive list of some of the key slang terms related to formal words such as vomit, intoxicated, deceased, or purloin. You may wish to take the exercise a step further and develop a list of slang terms that have changed over the last few decades.

2. The question above is not only about how language can be formal, moderately, informal or slang…it is also about how language changes. "Canned", "wacked", and "croaked" all had different meanings fifty years ago. Have the students to develop a list of words whose meanings have shifted. Some answers might include: sick, wicked, crib, partner, tools, and collateral.

   Discuss with them how, depending on the audience, using these kinds of words could be either a help or a hindrance to communication. For example, writing an invitation to a police Christmas party and using the words, "All partners invited."

3. What is the essential purpose of each of the following messages? If there is more than one, decide which is most important.

   a) notice to utility users of an increase in fees
   b) email "get well" card
   c) instructions for using a printer
   d) letter informing a customer that a loan payment is late
   e) memo to employees about rising cost of photocopying
   f) weekly report on your activities for your supervisor
   g) your résumé
   h) letter refusing a customer's request for replacement of a faulty product

4. Read each of the following messages. What is the writer's relationship to the intended reader? What does each letter reveal about the writer's knowledge, personality, needs, and interests?

   a) To: Gerry Springer
   From: Flavio Crostini
   Subject: The Carpet City Account

   The Carpet City screw-up is the most costly blunder this division has ever experienced! I expect a full report of your ill-conceived actions on my desk by 9:00 a.m. tomorrow. In the meantime, all enquiries from CC are to be channeled exclusively through my office.

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b) May 1, 20__

Dear Granny's Kitchen:

As a grandmother and a senior citizen I must protest the stereotyping in your magazine and TV ads. I am an active woman with many interests outside the home, and I resent the image of "Granny" as a doddering old lady who has evidently lost all pride in her appearance and lives only to slave over the stove and wait for her grandchildren to come over and eat her out of house and home. I enjoy cookies and muffins as much as the next person, but it will be a frosty Friday in July before I have goodies from Granny's Kitchen in my home.

Sincerely,
(Mrs.) Thelma P. Pinwoodie

5. In the following situations, decide whether you would phone or write. Justify your decision.

a) Your high-end clothing store is receiving a special shipment of designer bathing suits, and you want to let regular customers know in advance. You have two weeks before the shipment arrives.

b) You are a salesperson. One of your corporate clients recently won an award for recycling; you want to congratulate the company.

c) You are planning to attend a workshop at the Banff Centre, but are not sure of how to get there from the airport.

d) You want to display merchandise on the sidewalk in front of your store, and need to know about city by-laws governing this.

e) Your company is planning to change its flexible hours policy. As office manager, you want to find out how each employee feels about their weekly schedule.

6. Revise the following sentences so that the tone is courteous and conversational.

a) Your ill-informed request shows that you haven't a clue about our adjustment policies.

b) It has come to my attention that we face some re-evaluation and downsizing of our personnel at this precarious point in time.

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c) You folks better get your act together like yesterday so we can get this mess sorted out.

d) We included clear directions with the barbecue. Didn't you follow them?

e) As per your request, herewith enclosed a copy of your policy.

f) There is no record that you called our store on the said date.

g) Owing to your inadequate employment record and poor credit history, we can't give you a loan at this time.

h) We all have sacrifices to make! I have been here since six o'clock working my buns off!

7. Increasingly there are multicultural issues involved in any business situation, and sometimes these are deeply rooted in individual cultural history. Suppose you were starting an office of your Canadian company in Tibet, employing primarily a Tibetan workforce, and found that stress and ill-feeling was developing between the staff from Canada and the local hires. Would it be better to start by stressing cultural differences or cultural similarities with your new workforce, and why?

TRANSPARENCY MASTER

Have the students look at the channels of communication listed on TRANSPARENCY 2.1. Ask them to number the channels from 1 (most effective) to 6 (least effective) from a business point of view. An appropriate solution would be:

(4) written message
(6) grapevine
(2) written message with oral follow-up
(5) bulletin board
(3) oral message
(1) oral message with written follow-up

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TRANSPARENCY 2.1

written message

grapevine

written message with oral follow-up

bulletin board

oral message

oral message with written follow-up

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