

## Chapter 2: Mastering Team Skills and Interpersonal Communication

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

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- Characteristics of Effective Teams

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  - Allowing for Team Evolution

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- Giving—and Responding to—Constructive Feedback

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- Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening

#### Improving Your Nonverbal Communication Skills

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- Using Nonverbal Communication Effectively

#### Developing Your Business Etiquette

- Business Etiquette in the Workplace

- Business Etiquette in Social Settings

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## LECTURE NOTES

### Section 1: Communicating Effectively in Teams

*Learning Objective 1: List the advantages and disadvantages of working in teams, describe the characteristics of effective teams, and highlight four key issues of group dynamics.*

Collaboration—working together to meet complex challenges—has become a core job responsibility for roughly half the U.S. workforce.

A team is a unit of two or more people who share a mission and the responsibility for working to achieve a common goal.

Problem-solving teams and task forces assemble to resolve specific issues and then disband when their goals have been accomplished.

Such teams are often *cross-functional*, pulling together people from a variety of departments who have different areas of expertise and responsibility.

Diversity of opinions and experiences can lead to better decisions, but competing interests can create tension.

Committees are formal teams that can become a permanent part of the organizational structure.

#### Advantages and Disadvantages of Teams

Teams are often part of participative management, the effort to involve employees in the company's decision making.

A successful team can provide advantages, such as

- Increased information and knowledge
- Increased diversity of views
- Increased acceptance of a solution
- Higher performance levels

Teams can also have disadvantages, such as

- Groupthink—occurs when peer pressures cause individual team members to withhold contrary or unpopular opinions
- Hidden agendas—private, counterproductive motives that undermine someone else on the team
- Cost—aligning schedules, arranging meetings, and coordinating individual parts of a project can eat up a lot of time and money

### Characteristics of Effective Teams

The most effective teams

- Have a clear objective and a shared sense of purpose
- Communicate openly and honestly
- Reach decisions by consensus
- Think creatively
- Know how to resolve conflict

Ineffective teams

- Get bogged down in conflict
- Waste time and resources pursuing unclear goals

Two of the most common reasons cited for unsuccessful teamwork are a lack of trust and poor communication.

### Group Dynamics

Group dynamics are the interactions and processes that take place among members in a team.

Productive teams tend to develop positive norms, informal standards of conduct that members share and that guide member behavior.

Group dynamics are influenced by

- The roles assumed by team members
- The current phase of team development
- The team's success in resolving conflict
- The team's success in overcoming resistance

Team members can play various roles:

- Self-oriented roles are played by those motivated mainly to fulfill personal needs, these individuals tend to be less productive than other members
- Team-maintenance roles are played by those who help everyone work well together
- Task-facilitating roles are played by those who help the team reach its goals

As teams grow and evolve, they generally pass through a variety of stages, such as these five:

- Orientation
- Conflict
- Brainstorming
- Emergence
- Reinforcement

Another common model, proposed by Bruce Tuckman:

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Adjourning

Conflict in team activities can result from

- Competition for resources
- Disagreement over goals or responsibilities
- Poor communication
- Power struggles
- Fundamental differences in values, attitudes, and personalities

Conflict is not necessarily bad.

Conflict can be constructive if it

- Forces important issues into the open
- Increases the involvement of team members
- Generates creative ideas for the solution to a problem

Conflict can be destructive if it

- Diverts energy from more important issues
- Destroys morale of teams or individual team members
- Polarizes or divides the team

Destructive conflict can lead to *win-lose* or *lose-lose* outcomes, in which one or both sides lose, to the detriment of the entire team.

If you approach conflict with the idea that both sides can satisfy their goals to at least some extent (a *win-win strategy*), you can minimize losses for everyone.

For the win-win strategy to work, everybody must believe that

- It's possible to find a solution that both parties can accept
- Cooperation is better for the organization than competition
- The other party can be trusted
- Greater power or status doesn't entitle one party to impose a solution

Conflict can be resolved through

- Proactive management: deal with minor conflict before it becomes major conflict
- Communication: get those involved with the conflict actively involved in resolution
- Openness: Get feelings out into the open before dealing with main issues
- Research: Get the facts before attempting a resolution
- Flexibility: Don't let anyone lock into a position before considering all possible solutions
- Fair play: Insist on a fair outcome that doesn't hide behind rules
- Alliance: Unite the team against an "outside force" instead of each other

When attempting to overcome irrational resistance, try to

- Express understanding
- Bring resistance out into the open
- Evaluate others' objections fairly
- Hold your arguments until the other person is ready for them

## **Section 2: Collaborating on Communication Efforts**

*Learning Objective 2: Offer guidelines for collaborative communication, identify major collaboration technologies, and explain how to give constructive feedback.*

When teams collaborate, the collective energy and expertise of the various members can lead to results that transcend what each individual could do otherwise.

However, collaborating on team messages requires special effort.

### Guidelines for Collaborative Writing

In any collaborative effort, team members coming from different backgrounds may have different work habits or priorities, for example

- A technical expert to focus on accuracy and scientific standards
- An editor to be more concerned about organization and coherence
- A manager to focus on schedules, cost, and corporate goals

Remember that the ways in which team members differ in writing styles and personality traits can complicate the creative nature of communication

To collaborate successfully, follow these guidelines:

- Select collaborators carefully
- Agree on project goals before you start
- Give your team time to bond before diving in
- Clarify individual responsibilities

- Establish clear processes
- Avoid composing as a group
- Make sure tools and techniques are ready and compatible across the team
- Check to see how things are going along the way

### Technologies for Collaborative Writing

Among the simpler collaboration tools are group review and editing features in

- Word processing software
- Adobe Acrobat (PDF files)
- Web-based document systems such as Google Docs

More complex solutions include content management systems that organize and control the content for many websites (particularly larger corporate sites).

A wiki is a website that allows anyone with access to add new material and edit existing material.

Key benefits of wikis include

- Simple operation
- Freedom to post new or revised material without prior approval

This approach is quite different from a content management system, in which both the organization of the website and the *work flow* are tightly controlled.

Chapter 12 addresses wikis in more detail.

Groupware is an umbrella term for systems that let people simultaneously

- Communicate
- Share files
- Present materials
- Work on documents

*Cloud computing* expands the ways in which geographically dispersed teams can collaborate.

Shared workspaces are “virtual offices” that

- Give everyone on a team access to the same set of resources and information
- Are accessible through a web browser
- Control which team members can read, edit, and save specific files
- Can allow only one person at a time to work on a given file or document to avoid getting edits out of sync
- May include presence awareness

The terms intranet (restricted internal website) and extranet (restricted, but with outside access) are still used in some companies.

### Social Networks and Virtual Communities

Social networking technologies are redefining teamwork and team communication by helping erase the constraints of geographic and organization boundaries.

In addition to enabling and enhancing teamwork, social networks have numerous other business applications and benefits (covered in Chapter 7).

Two fundamental elements of any social networking technology:

- *Profiles*—the information stored about each member of the network
- *Connections*—mechanisms for finding and communicating with other members

*Virtual communities* or *communities of practice* link employees with similar professional interests throughout the company and sometimes with customers and suppliers as well.

Social networking can also help a company maintain a sense of community even as it grows beyond the size that normally permits a lot of daily interaction.

### Giving—and Responding to—Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback, sometimes called *constructive criticism*, focuses on the process and outcomes of communication, not on the people involved.

Destructive feedback delivers criticism with no guidance to stimulate improvement.

When you give feedback, try to

- Avoid personal attacks
- Give the person clear guidelines for improvement

When you receive constructive feedback, try to

- Resist the urge to defend your work or deny the validity of the feedback
- Disconnect emotionally from the work and see it simply as something that can be made better
- Step back and consider the feedback before diving in to make corrections
- Don't assume that all constructive feedback is necessarily correct

### Section 3: Making Your Meetings More Productive

*Learning Objective 3: List the key steps needed to ensure productive team meetings.*

Well-run meetings can help you

- Solve problems
- Develop ideas
- Identify opportunities

Meetings are unproductive when they

- Wander off the subject
- Lack an agenda
- Run too long

#### Preparing for Meetings

To increase the productivity of meetings, prepare carefully:

- Identify your purpose—whether you need an informational or a decision-making meeting.
- Select participants whose presence is essential.
- Choose the venue and time and prepare the facility.
- Set the agenda.
- An effective agenda answers three questions:
  - What do we need to do in this meeting to accomplish our goals?
  - What issues will be of greatest importance to all participants?
  - What information must be available in order to discuss these issues?

#### Conducting and Contributing to Efficient Meetings

Ensure a productive meeting by

- Keeping the discussion on track
- Following agreed-upon rules, including parliamentary procedure, if appropriate
- Encouraging participation
- Participating actively
- Closing effectively

#### Putting Meeting Results to Productive Use

The value of a meeting usually doesn't end when the meeting ends.

- Problems or opportunities brought up during a meeting need to be addressed
- Action items assigned during the meeting need to be acted on



- Key decisions and announcements should be distributed to anyone who is affected but was unable to attend

In formal meetings, one person is appointed to record the minutes.

In small meetings, attendees often make their own notes on their copies of the agenda.

The minutes of a meeting summarize

- The important information presented
- The decisions made
- The people responsible for follow-up action

Some meeting technologies can record, distribute, and store meeting minutes.

#### **Section 4: Using Meeting Technologies**

*Learning Objective 4: Identify the major technologies used to enhance or replace in-person meetings.*

Replacing in-person meetings with long-distance, virtual interaction can

- Dramatically reduce costs and resource usage
- Reduce wear and tear on employees
- Give teams access to a wider pool of expertise

Virtual teams have members who work in different locations and interact electronically through virtual meetings.

Basic teleconferencing involves three or more people connected by phone simultaneously.

Videoconferencing combines live audio and video letting team members see each other, demonstrate products, and transmit other visual information.

Telepresence is the most advanced feature in which the interaction feels so lifelike that participants can forget that the person “sitting” on the other side of the table is actually in another city.

Web-based meeting systems combine the best of instant messaging, shared workspaces, and videoconferencing with other tools such as virtual whiteboards that let teams collaborate in real time.

Technology continues to create intriguing opportunities for online interaction; e.g., online brainstorming allows companies to conduct “idea campaigns” to generate new ideas from people across the organization.

## Section 5: Improving Your Listening Skills

*Learning Objective 5: Identify three major modes of listening, describe the listening process, and explain the problem of selective listening.*

Effective listening

- Strengthens organizational relationships
- Enhances product delivery
- Alerts the organization to opportunities for innovation
- Allows the organization to manage growing diversity
- Gives you a competitive edge
- Enhances your performance and influence within your company and industry

### Recognizing Various Types of Listening

You will become a more effective listener by learning to use several methods of listening:

- Content listening emphasizes information and understanding, not agreement or approval.
- Critical listening emphasizes evaluating the meaning of the speaker's message on several levels (logic of the argument, strength of evidence, validity of conclusions, implications of the message, intentions of the speaker, and omission of any important or relevant points).
- Empathic listening emphasizes understanding a speaker's feelings, needs, and wants (without advising or judging).
- Active listening means making a conscious effort to turn off their own filters and biases to truly hear and understand what the other party is saying.

### Understanding the Listening Process

Most people aren't very good listeners—in general, people

- Listen at or below a 25 percent efficiency rate
- Remember only about half of what has been said in a 10-minute conversation
- Forget half of that within 48 hours
- Mix up the facts when questioned about material they've just heard

The listening process involves five separate steps:

- Receiving
- Decoding
- Remembering
- Evaluating
- Responding

## Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening

Good listeners look for ways to overcome potential barriers.

Selective listening is one of the most common barriers to effective listening.

Defensive listening—protecting your ego by tuning out anything that doesn't confirm your beliefs or your view of yourself—is even worse.

To become a good listener, recognize and overcome potential barriers throughout the listening process:

- Avoid interrupting or creating nonverbal distractions that make it hard for others to pay attention.
- Avoid selective listening, in which you pay attention only to those topics in which you have an interest.
- Focus on the speaker (because people think faster than they speak, their minds tend to wander).
- Avoid prejudice, and listen with an open mind.
- Avoid misinterpreting messages because of the lack of common ground.
- Don't rely on your memory.

To remember material, you must first capture it in short-term memory, then successfully transfer it to long-term memory.

Use four techniques to store information in long-term memory:

- Associate new information with something closely related
- Categorize new information into logical groups
- Visualize words and ideas as pictures
- Create mnemonics

## **Section 6: Improving Your Nonverbal Communication Skills**

*Learning Objective 6: Explain the importance of nonverbal communication, and identify six major categories of nonverbal expression.*

Nonverbal communication is the interpersonal process of sending and receiving information, both intentionally and unintentionally, without using written or spoken language.

Nonverbal cues affect communication in three ways:

- Strengthen a verbal message
- Weaken a verbal message
- Replace a verbal message

### Recognizing Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication can be grouped into six general categories:

- Facial expression
- Gesture and posture
- Vocal characteristics
- Personal appearance
- Touch
- Time and space

### Using Nonverbal Communication Effectively

To be a better speaker and listener, pay closer attention to nonverbal cues in every situation:

- Be aware of the cues you send when you're talking.
- Be aware of the cues you send when you're not talking (through clothing, posture, and so on).
- Be aware of the cues you receive when you're listening.

If something doesn't feel right, ask the speaker an honest and respectful question.

## **Section 7: Developing Your Business Etiquette**

*Learning Objective 7: Explain the importance of business etiquette, and identify three key areas in which good etiquette is essential.*

Etiquette is now considered an essential business skill.

Poor etiquette can

- Destroy morale and drain productivity
- Drive away customers, investors, and other critical audiences
- Limit your career potential

### Business Etiquette in the Workplace

Workplace etiquette includes a variety of behaviors, habits, and aspects of nonverbal communication.

Personal appearance may be thought of as an element of etiquette and sends a strong signal to managers, colleagues, and customers.

Personal appearance guidelines include

- Matching your style of dress to the situation
- Dressing modestly and simply
- Paying close attention to cleanliness and avoid using products with powerful scents

- Following company policy regarding hairstyle
- Smiling genuinely at appropriate times

Mobile phones can be disruptive, and some employers have banned or restricted their use.

Your phone habits say a lot about how much respect you have for the people around you.

Disrespectful choices that will reflect negatively on you:

- Selecting obnoxious ring tones
- Talking loudly in open offices or public places
- Using your phone right next to someone else
- Making excessive or unnecessary personal calls during work hours
- Invading someone's privacy by using your camera phone without permission
- Taking or making calls in restrooms and other inappropriate places
- Texting while someone is talking to you
- Allowing incoming calls to interrupt meetings or discussions

### Business Etiquette in Social Settings

When meeting people, learn about their cultural customs beforehand.

When introducing yourself, include a brief description of your role in the company.

When introducing two other people, remember to

- Speak both their first and last names clearly
- Offer some information to help them ease into a conversation
- Introduce the lower-ranking person to the senior-ranking person

When conducting business over a meal, be sure that you

- Choose foods that are easy to eat
- Avoid ordering alcoholic beverages or save them until after business is concluded
- Leave business papers under your chair until entrée plates have been removed
- Avoid using your cell phone in public
- Choose topics of conversation carefully (avoid politics, religion, other emotional topics)
- Avoid going overboard when chatting about personal interests
- Don't complain about work
- Avoid profanity
- Avoid deeply personal questions
- Be careful with humor

## Business Etiquette Online

Learn the basics of professional online behavior to avoid mistakes that could hurt your company or your career. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- Avoid personal attacks
- Stay focused on the original topic; don't hijack threads
- Don't present opinions as facts, and support facts with evidence
- Follow basic expectations of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization
- Use virus protection and keep it up to date
- Ask if this is a good time for an IM chat
- Watch your language and keep your emotions under control
- Avoid multitasking while using IM and other tools
- Never assume privacy
- Don't use "reply all" in email unless everyone can benefit from your reply
- Don't waste others' time with sloppy, confusing, or incomplete messages
- Respect boundaries of time and virtual space
- Be careful with online commenting mechanisms

### **HIGHLIGHT BOX: COMMUNICATING ACROSS CULTURES (p. 53)**

#### **Whose Skin Is This Anyway?**

Students will no doubt have a range of opinions on this matter, and those opinions will be influenced by their experiences as employees and as consumers and by their relative depth of perspective in matters of business. Any considered response to this question needs to include context and common sense, however. For example, one would be hard-pressed to mount a strong defense for body art and other appearance choices that openly clash with the brand image and customer experience that a company is spending thousands or millions of dollars to create and protect. Employees who choose to work in customer-facing positions are "constrained" in other ways as well (they most likely aren't allowed to swear or smoke in front of customers, for example), so on the face of it, having stricter standards of appearance for these employees does not seem unreasonable.

This question is more nuanced than the previous issue, but again it comes down to a matter of context and common sense. A building supplies wholesaler and a bank might both cater to a clientele fond of body art, but brand message and customer experience mean two different things to these two businesses.

### **COMMUNICATION DILEMMAS AT CEMEX (p. 55)**

1. You rely heavily on CEMEXpedia, the wiki that contains technical and business information about the company's operations. As you've become more experienced in your job, you have also become a frequent contributor to the wiki. Lately you've noticed one particular employee from the Cemex office in Madrid, Spain, keeps editing your pages on the wiki, often making changes that appear to add no value, as far as you can see. She doesn't seem to be editing other employees' pages nearly so often, so you are beginning to wonder if she has a personal grudge against you. You want to address this uncomfortable situation without dragging your boss into it. How should you handle it?

- a. No. Responding to destructive behavior with more destructive behavior will only magnify a negative situation and most likely make the situation worse.
  - b. Yes. This keeps the situation private and allows you to get at the underlying cause of the apparent problem.
  - c. No. This would in effect accuse everyone in the firm of inappropriate wiki behavior, creating a negative atmosphere. Moreover, it would stir up the grapevine as people tried to figure out who wrote the message and who the intended target is.
  - d. No. The problem is significant enough to bother you, which means it is surely affecting your productivity and morale. Letting an unsolved problem fester is likely to make it worse.
2. You've been asked to take over leadership of a group of customer accounts managers that once had a reputation for being a tight-knit, supportive team, but you quickly figure out that this team is in danger of becoming dysfunctional. For example, minor issues that healthy teams routinely handle, from helping each other with computer questions to covering the phones when someone has an outside appointment, frequently generate conflict within this group. What steps should you take to help your crew return to positive behavior?
- a. No. With so much negative behavior already engrained, this team is probably beyond healing itself. At the very least, an outside change agent can accelerate the process. See (b).
  - b. Yes. Leading the "team restoration" project yourself will help avoid any power conflicts that might emerge if the team is left to its own devices.
  - c. No. You might be an extraordinary leader, but that's no guarantee that your mere presence is all that is needed to turn the situation around. This situation requires active intervention.
  - d. No. Demanding that the negative, unprofessional behavior stop immediately could backfire in such a situation because it does nothing to remove the conditions that have allowed the negative behaviors to sprout and grow.
3. After a few weeks with the account management team, you notice that team meetings often degenerate into little more than complaint sessions. Workers seem to gripe about everything from difficult clients to the temperature in the office. Some of these complaints sound like valid business issues that might require additional training or other employee support efforts; others are superficial issues that you suspect are simply by-products of the negative atmosphere. How should you handle complaints during the meetings?
- a. No. People who are upset and believe they have valid complaints will grow even more negative if they feel that their concerns aren't being taken seriously.
  - b. No. This approach simply ignores problems that have evidently been festering for some time. Plus, if people are truly upset, these negative emotions and behaviors are going to find some way to surface—perhaps in more destructive ways than complaints during meetings.
  - c. Yes. Tracking each issue immediately sends the message that you care about your employees and their concerns. Moreover, by treating the complaints as problems to be solved, rather than mere criticisms, you can pull the team together and move forward as a more cohesive unit.
  - d. No. This approach would probably just add even more negativity to an already challenging situation. It would also make the meetings even less productive than they've already become.

And over time, such a confrontational approach will also discourage open communication, which means that you as the manager may not receive vital feedback.

4. You're in charge of hiring a replacement for a customer account manager who recently retired. Four job candidates are waiting outside your office, and you have a few moments to observe them before inviting them in for an initial interview (you can see them through the glass wall but can't hear them). Based on the following descriptions, which of these people seems like the best fit for the firm? Why?
  - a. No. This woman doesn't appear to be taking the interview process very seriously. While Candidate C also commits a fashion faux pas with her sundress and sandals, at least she didn't go barefoot as this candidate did. Moreover, listening to her iPod while waiting to be interviewed suggests that Candidate A is unwilling to engage with the people around her and is unfamiliar with standards of conduct in a professional office setting.
  - b. No. This candidate's inability to calmly manage the relatively simple process of a job interview suggests he would struggle mightily with the complexities of helping customers.
  - c. Yes. This woman's casual dress is a mark against her, to be sure, but dressing appropriately is an easily trainable skill. The positive attributes she has demonstrated, particularly in her helpful, engaging conversation with a complete stranger, shows that she could be a valuable member of the Rosen team.
  - d. No. This candidate appears to have a bit of an attitude problem, particularly for a company that values teamwork and interaction.

### **APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE (p. 60)**

- 2.1. Answers will vary, but students should recognize the opportunity to turn the conflict into a constructive means for bringing important issues into the open, increasing the involvement of other team members, and generating creative ideas for solving a problem.
- 2.2. In the email message, students should discuss the benefits of social networking (e.g., connecting people across organizational boundaries) and how networking technology is an essential element of the network organizational structure.
- 2.3. Students should recognize the different, sometimes vastly different, contexts of in-person and online communication. Online communication is a leaner medium, with fewer visual cues, so it doesn't support the level of immediate feedback that helps keep emotions and behaviors in check during in-person conversations. Online media create a certain emotional distance that can lull people into forgetting that another human being is on the other side of the conversation. And, of course, if people are communicating online anonymously, the potential for rude behavior skyrockets as people feel free to engage in unsocial behavior in the belief that their hidden identities renders them immune from consequences.

### **ASSISTED GRADING QUESTIONS (accessed on MyBCommLab)**

1. Nonverbal communication can reinforce the points you're trying to make in the meeting (or it can interfere if it clashes with your words). For example, a meeting leader might reinforce a call to order by standing up to say "Let's begin." Other nonverbal signals include using hand gestures and



changing voice tone to emphasize topics, nodding to show approval, or raising an eyebrow to indicate reservations. Nonverbal signals also regulate the flow of conversation. For example, to discourage an out-of-turn speaker, depending on the culture, such signals might include facially expressing interest or boredom, covering lips with a finger, or frowning. At the same time, a motion of the hand or widening curious eyes could encourage a speaker to continue.

2. This situation invites students to acknowledge that gestures can be just as important as facial expressions since they can also influence the reception of a message. Since communication is a simultaneous process, the fact that the audience can see the speaker but the speaker can't see the audience allows for a potential breakdown since the speaker is unable to receive the audience's nonverbal reactions to his or her message.

## **PRACTICE YOUR SKILLS (p. 60)**

### **Message for Analysis**

Students should examine the sample agenda in Figure 2.4 and then reorganize and reword the information provided in the exercise to create a well-organized agenda. Here's one suggested agenda:

AGENDA  
Budget Committee Meeting  
December 12, 2014, 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Room 3

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting (5 minutes)
- III. Director Reports
  - A. Real estate director's report: A closer look at cost overruns on Greentree site (10 minutes)
  - B. Finance Director's Report on Quarterly Revenues and Expenses (15 minutes)
- IV. New Business
  - A. Discussion of Cost Overrun Issues (20 minutes)
  - B. Discussion of Additional Quarterly Budget Issues
  - C. Presentation of Divisional Budget
- V. Announcements
- VI. Adjournment

### **Exercises**

- 2.4. In the presentation, students should discuss challenges such as how to ensure that employees present a positive image of the organization through the messages they send. The exercise provides a good opportunity to analyze how the team negotiated the process of developing the presentation and agreeing upon content, organization, and other aspects.

- 2.5. This exercise challenges students to prepare and deliver arguments in support of their viewpoints, and then set those viewpoints aside in order to evaluate all of the arguments objectively. Emphasize the process of dealing with conflict in constructive ways without allowing it to hinder the progress of the team.
- 2.6. Although this member's response indicates he wants to be seen as playing a task-facilitating role, he actually seems to be playing a self-oriented role. Students may offer a variety of ways to deal with this situation. For example, next time the member calls for a vote prematurely, the student—who is the leader—can politely intervene and suggest that the vote be postponed until all members have had their say.
- 2.7. Encourage students to implement the guidelines for effective collaborative writing listed in the chapter. At least one team is likely to attempt writing as a group. If so, having them describe the experience is a helpful way for everyone in the class to gain a better understanding of the challenges associated with attempting to do so.
- 2.8. This exercise gives students the opportunity to imagine their responses to an uncomfortable situation when they probably have little personal or positional power to deal with it. This group is clearly dysfunctional, so students need to consider this larger context as well—do they really want to fit in with this group, or perhaps just “go along to get along” long enough to find another position? Looking for opportunities to quietly lead by better example is another avenue to consider. There is also the important matter of compromising one's personal values, given that at least one of the behaviors described (taking credit for others' ideas) is unethical. A workable solution under the circumstances could be to take a bolder and more aggressive approach to being heard, without compromising one's ethics or resorting to rudeness.
- 2.9. This exercise gives students an opportunity to practice listening, observing nonverbal cues, and critiquing a group in action. To answer the questions, students will have to pay attention to a number of things occurring at the meeting. By comparing notes with a partner, students will see that a person's own background and listening skills influence the type and content of the notes he or she takes. What is obvious to one person may be worth noting to another. Similarly, poor listeners tend to have superficial notes.
- 2.10. Students should try to be as inclusive as possible, without making the situation unreasonably uncomfortable. Consider two options: They might ask the speech-impaired person to team up with one or more other employees and let that team report as a unit. Or they might provide an alternative way for this person to communicate during meetings, such as overhead slides or flip charts. Most important, since this communication challenge surely exists outside formal meetings, students may suggest working closely with the person to explore ways to help him or her contribute to the department's work flow.
- 2.11. In addition to providing an opportunity for collaboration, this exercise encourages students to take an audience-centered approach to a topic with which they are likely to be very familiar. The teams should look beyond simple textual instructions or static maps and explore options such as video, animation, or even GPS waypoints.

- 2.12. The objective here is to stimulate self-analysis. The following list of listening problems should spark discussion:
- Prejudging the subject as boring
  - Reacting to a speaker's style
  - Overreacting to certain ideas or words
  - Listening only for facts
  - Trying to take notes on everything
  - Faking attention
  - Succumbing to distractions
  - Tuning out difficult material
  - Planning a rebuttal while the speaker talks
  - Jumping ahead of the speaker; presuming the next point
- 2.13. This assessment provides students with information about their listening skills. If you choose to discuss the results of the self-assessments in class, be sure to ask students to identify instances of selective listening, prejudice, and selective perception.
- 2.14. Students will discuss how nonverbal messages need not be human gestures; they also include the appearance of written messages. Students will consider how letter and memo quality is often judged first by overall appearance. You may want to refer students to Appendix A for a discussion of the importance of formatting and laying out business documents.
- 2.15. Many of these movements can be interpreted several ways, but the exercise leads students to think more clearly about how nonverbal cues influence their communication attempts. Particularly, the list should give students more insight into how they can learn from watching their audience while speaking. They might interpret the movements as follows:
- a. May indicate nervousness, disagreement with what's being said, boredom, or simple physical discomfort
  - b. Could be a nervous reaction or simply an ingrained personal habit
  - c. Conveys a lack of respect—for the speaker and for oneself
  - d. Skepticism, doubt, disbelief, or in some cases, an exaggerated negative commentary on a speaker's message, perhaps as a display for the benefit of others
  - e. Lack of confidence, shyness, and weakness

For the second part of the exercise, students may elaborate with a general discussion of the ways in which such nonverbal cues sometimes reinforce a speaker's words and meaning and sometimes offer conflicting and therefore confusing signals. Students might also mention that our response to nonverbal cues is often unconscious; that is, we interpret them almost as automatically as we express them. Thus, differing cultural norms of nonverbal behavior can easily cloud communication.

- 2.16. This scenario should help students recognize the importance of keeping one's emotions under control. The boss's failure to notify employees is thoughtless—and demonstrative of poor project

management, to boot—but expressing anger or frustration in the voice-mail message will accomplish nothing. Students should phrase their messages in a way that puts the company’s interests above personal frustration or inconvenience. Since the meeting is with an important client, making sure it is successful is clearly in the company’s (and the boss’s) best interest.

2.17. Students’ memo should address the following points:

- Etiquette is now considered an essential business skill. Nobody wants to work with someone who is rude to colleagues or an embarrassment to the company.
- Shabby treatment of others in the workplace can be a huge drain on morale and productivity.
- Poor etiquette can drive away customers, investors, and other critical audiences—and it can limit one’s career potential.
- Students should also include the etiquette advice included in this chapter.