BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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COURSE OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

No one can function without communication. We spend most of our day speaking to someone, reading a book, accessing the email or simply listening to the weather forecast. In each case a message is either being sent or received. All day we are communicating, whether it is talking to people in the workplace, on the road, in the shop or simply giving directions to a young child. The importance of developing good communication skills cannot be over-emphasized. We need to make sure that we get our communication right so that our ideas and information are completely understood by all.

This course is designed to give you a comprehensive view of communication, its scope and importance in business and the role of communication in establishing a favourable outside the firm environment, as well as an effective internal communications program. The Business Communications course will prepare future entrepreneurs to create effective business communications, present business briefings, produce understandable business documents and examine the impact of the communications process on the business operation.

COURSE GOALS

Upon completion of the Business Communications course you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate the use of basic and advanced business writing skills.
2. Produce clear and concise written business documents.
3. Develop interpersonal communications skills that are required for social and business interaction.
4. Plan and conduct effective meetings.
5. Employ proper public speaking techniques.
6. Develop and deliver a formal presentation.
7. Employ proper telephone etiquette.
8. Communicate effectively in the online environment.
DESCRIPTION

This course is divided into five units as follows:

**Unit One – Communication Basics**

- Topic 1: Understanding Communications
- Topic 2: Barriers to Communications
- Topic 3: Types of Communications
- Topic 4: Communications Skills

**Unit Two – Business Correspondence**

- Topic 1: Audience Analysis
- Topic 2: Types of Business Correspondence

**Unit Three – Meetings, Reporting and Presenting**

- Topic 1: Business Meetings
- Topic 2: Business Reports
- Topic 3: Presentation Skills

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Recommended readings are provided in each unit description.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS**

A series of activities and assignments guide you through concepts in this course and ask you to demonstrate that you can apply the concepts to support your approach to business communications. The hosting institution and supporting instructor may add or modify the assignments required to demonstrate mastery of the course learning outcomes. A summary of this work is included at the beginning of each unit. Journaling Requirements

To capture the output from the reflective questions and activities you are asked to keep a personal journal. At the end of the course the personal journal will be submitted to your instructor for feedback and grading.
ASSessment

Assessment takes the form of responding to activities, as well as written assignments and examinations as determined from time-time by the institution. In cases where coursework assignments, fieldwork projects, and examinations are used in combination, a percentage rating for each component will be communicated to you at the appropriate time.

Journaling Requirements

To capture the output from the reflective questions and activities you are asked to keep a personal journal. At the end of the course the personal journal will be submitted to your instructor for feedback and grading.

Assessment Methods

Assessments take the form of responding to activities, as well as coursework assignments, a final project and examinations as determined from time to time by the institution. In cases where coursework, assignments, projects and examinations are used in combination, percentage rating for each component will be communicated to you at the appropriate time.

Time Required

This course is worth 14 credits, and each credit is equivalent to 10 notional hours. You are, therefore advised to spend not less than 140 hours of study on this course. This notional time includes

- Going over activities embedded in the study material
- Peer group interaction (where necessary)
- Face-to-face tutorials (where necessary)
- Working on tutor-marked assignments
- Preparing and sitting examinations (where that is required)

Course Schedule

This course was designed to support a 12 to 14 week semester. The hosting institution and supporting instructor should produce and distribute a detailed schedule to learners based on this content, the assignments and other readings/activities that the instructor wishes to add.
STUDENT SUPPORT

Note: This section should be included in self-paced or paper-based courses that provide tutor/facilitator support and/or web and email support for the students. It must be personalized by the hosting institution.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

<Insert the following information if relevant>

- How to contract a tutor/facilitator (Phone number, email, office hours, etc.).
- Background information about the tutor/facilitator if he/she does not change regularly. Alternatively provide a separate letter with the package describing your tutor/facilitator’s background.
- Description of any resources that they may need to procure to complete the course (e.g. lab kits, etc.).
- How to access the library (either in person, by email or online).

HOW TO SUBMIT ASSIGNMENTS

<If the course requires that assignments be regularly graded, then insert a description of how and where to submit assignments. Also explain how the learners will receive feedback.>

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

<If the students must access content online or use email to submit assignments, then a technical support section is required. You need to include how to complete basic tasks and a phone number that they can call if they are having difficulty getting online>.
UNIT ONE – COMMUNICATION BASICS

INTRODUCTION

The ability to send and receive information accurately and quickly on a daily basis is very vital in today’s business environment—particularly for the entrepreneur. At work you are the face of the company and have to communicate with customers directly, whether face-to-face, over the phone, in writing or via the internet. You therefore have the power to influence customer behaviour. Today, information can be sent easily and quickly and whatever you do you are likely to be surrounded by documents and messages and expected to communicate regularly with colleagues, customers, suppliers, employees and others. The results of being a poor and inadequate communicator can range from minor difficulties to major business stress. Such is the importance of having proper business communication skills when you want to succeed in today’s business world.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this unit you should be able to describe:

1. The elements of communication.
2. The process of communication.
3. The barrier to communication.
4. The importance of good communication skills.

UNIT READINGS

As you complete this unit it is recommended that you read the following online chapters/articles. Click on the URL if reading the URL online or enter the URL in a browser to review the materials.


improvement-articles/types-of-communication-and-its-characteristics-872799.html


- Buzzle.com. (nd.). List of Communications Skills. (Online Article). Available at: http://www.buzzle.com/articles/list-of-communication-skills.html


- SkillsYouNeed.co.uk. (nd.) Interpersonal Communications Skills. (Web Site). Available at: http://www.skillsyouned.co.uk/IPS/Interpersonal_Communication.html

ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout this unit you will be assessed in the following ways:

- In-text activities.

- Self-assessment exercise at the end of the unit.
TOPIC 1.1 – UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION
Why do we communicate? To answer this question, we may need to ask ourselves and answer a series of questions. What do we mean when we say that communication has occurred? How do we know when we have effectively communicated? Can we send what we believe is a perfectly clear message and yet not be understood by those for whom the message is intended?

We communicate so that we can get our point across to the other person. Communication is more than just the words that we speak; it is about how we express ourselves to other people and to the rest of the world. The purpose of Communication is to promote understanding, and this is done effectively via the two-way process that takes place when a message is sent through a medium and the receiver responds to the message by giving feedback. This feedback could either take the form of verbal or non-verbal feedback.

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this topic you will be able to:

1. Define communication.
2. Explain the communication process.
3. Employ the communication process.

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?
Let us begin this topic by exploring your own personal definition of communication and why you think it is important. Make your notes below.

Activity – Personal Definitions

1. How would you define communications?
2. Do you think that communication is important in today’s environment?

Record your answers to the questions in your personal journal. Record them as: Topic 1.1 Personal Definitions Answers.

Good Job! Now let’s explore the definition of communication provided by other authors.
DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

Today communication has become difficult to define because it has come to mean practically anything. The word communication refers to the process by which we create and share meaning (Seiler, 2002). It is the act or process of giving or exchanging of information, signals, or messages either by talk, gestures, or writing. Technically speaking, in the act of communication, we make opinions, feelings, information, etc known or understood by others through speech, writing or bodily movement.

(Taylor 2001) defines communication as giving, receiving or exchanging of information, opinions or ideas by writing, speech or visual means, so that material communicated is properly understood by everyone concerned.

Therefore we see communication as a process that involves the transmission and accurate replication of ideas, and is effective when it achieves the desired reaction or response from the recipient.

Now you may say that communication is important and that you spend most of your time doing it, and that you are pretty good at communicating. After all you talk to people, write notes, read books, get along with other people, and make you understood. So why should you study communication?

Just because we all communicate every day does not make us good communicators. Just because some aspects of effective communication are based on common sense does not mean common sense alone is enough. Skilled communicators draw on an extensive and complex body of knowledge, including semantics (the study of word choice), linguistics (the study of language), rhetoric (the study of writing and speaking effectively), psychology, sociology, graphic design, and even computer science. The ability to communicate is learned, and learning to be a competent communicator is a difficult, lifelong project. But you will make progress quickly if you work hard to learn the principles and concepts and then apply them in practice situations. (William J. Seiler, 2002)

Communication is critical to living successfully in today’s society, but it is also important that you learn how to speak effectively, listen carefully and efficiently, think critically and be aware of and sensitive to differences in others. Then only will you be able to communicate effectively.
Remember:

- Communication is a process of sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal messages.
- Communication is considered effective when it achieves the desired reaction or response from the receiver.
- Communication is a two way process of exchanging ideas or information.

Activity - Let Us Take A Moment To Examine How We Communicate.

1. What happens when you talk?
2. What things might you talk about when you talk with:
   a. A friend?
   b. Your children?
   c. A shopkeeper?
   d. Your brothers or sisters?
3. Do you think that you can communicate effectively without a purpose?

Record your answers in your course journal.

SO WHY DO WE COMMUNICATE?
The purpose of any given communication may be to:

1. initiate some action;
2. impart information, ideals attitudes, beliefs or feelings;
3. establish, acknowledge or maintain links or relations with other people
4. promote a product, service, or organization; and
5. relay information within the business; or deal with legal and similar issues.
At its most basic level, the purpose of communication in the workplace is to provide people with the information they need to do their jobs and to live their lives. In fact, communication is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the communication.

The ability to communicate effectively with others is a top quality of a successful business person, however you may be a very intelligent person; but if you can’t get your message across to others, you will be thought of as less intelligent than you are because ideas are common, but the ability to clearly communicate ideas to others is rare.

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

To appreciate the true nature of communication, it is important to understand four fundamental principles:

- Communication is a process.

- Communication is both interactional and transactional.

- Communication can be intentional or unintentional.

- Communications happens in a context.

Communication is considered a process, because it involves a series of actions that has no beginning or end and is constantly changing (Berlo, 1960). It is like the weather that changes constantly and involves variables that can never be duplicated. Think about a relationship you developed with someone recently. How did it occur? It may have happened by chance or it may have been a pre-arranged meeting. No two relationships are developed in the same way and no two communications are the same.

- The interactional and transactional aspects of communication are closely related. Interaction is an exchange of communication in which people take turns sending and receiving messages. An example of this is a phone conversation between two people. Transactional communication involves the sending (encoding) and receiving (decoding) of messages at the same time. An example of this is when you communicate with a family member. You not only send information but also receive information at the same time.

- Communications can occur regardless of whether it is intended or not. When you communicate with others, you intend that that specific
message be received. Intentional communication is a message that is purposely sent to a specific receiver. Unintentional communication is a message that was not intended to be sent or was not intended for the individual who received it.

- Communication cannot happen in a vacuum, there is always a setting or context in which the communication takes place. This context may be a location, a relationship or even a culture, for example waving to your best friend across a crowded room before an interview may be a way of saying “Good luck”.

**Activity – Communications Process**

Now that we have provided a definition of communication, you should stop and think for a moment about the communication process. Respond to each of the following statements with either “True” or False. Give a brief explanation for your answer and record your response in your course journal.

1. Communication can solve all of our problems
2. The more we communicate the better
3. Communication is a natural ability
4. Communication is reversible

Adopted from (William J. Seiler, 2002) p6

In order to understand the complexity of this communication process you have to be familiar with the following terms referred to as elements:
There is no exhaustive list of the myriad components of communication; however, the most basic elements are examined below.

- The process of communication has six components: sender/encoder, message, medium, receiver/decoder, and feedbacks.

**Context**

- Every message, whether oral or written, begins with context. Context is a broad field that includes country, culture, organization, and external and internal stimuli.

- Another aspect of context is the external stimuli.

- Internal stimuli have effect on how you translate ideas into a message.

- Your attitudes, opinions, emotions, past experiences, like and dislike education, job status and confidence.
**Sender / Encoder**

- While sending a message, you are the “encoder”, the writer or speaker, depending on whether your message is written or oral.
- express your message so that the receiver(s)
- react as you desire
- You decide which symbols best convey your message and which message channel will be most effective among the oral and written media (letter, memo, telephone, etc)

**Message**

- The message is the main idea that you wish to communicate; it is of both verbal (written or spoken) symbols and nonverbal (unspoken) symbols. First decide exactly what your message is. Also consider the receiver of your message.

**Medium/Channel**

- It means the way by which a message is communicated
- You can choose electronic mail, the printed word
- The choice of medium is affected by the relationship between the sender and the receiver.

**Feedback**

- Feedback can be oral or written, it can also be an action, such as receiving in the mail an item you ordered. Sometimes silence is used as feedback, though it is not very useful. Senders need feedback in order to determine the success or failure of the communication

**NOTE:** *To communicate effectively it is important to limit the content of your message to a specific subject, and use this repeated back-and-forth exchange to provide additional information or details in subsequent messages.*

The figure below shows the key elements in the process of communication. The communication process is not very complex. It consists of the elements mentioned above. The major players in the communications process are the sender and receiver.
Figure - The Communication Process

Activity – The Communications Process – The Model

1. What do we call the following key players or elements in the communication process?
   a. A person sending a message to another person.
   b. The person for whom the message is intended.
   c. An encoded set of verbal and non-verbal symbols.

2. Briefly explain the following elements of communication.
   a. A message.
   b. The messenger
   c. The receiver.
   d. Encoding.
   e. Decoding.

3. Record your answers in your course journal.
Activity Responses

You must have identified the key players as follows:

1. Sender
2. Receiver
3. Message
4. Encoding

- A message: what needs to be communicated?
- A messenger: the person who has something to communicate.
- A receiver: the person who will receive the message.
- Encoding: verbal and non-verbal convention of communication.
- Decoding: reading by the receiver of the encoding done by the messenger.

Communications Types Used Today

- **Electronic Communication** comprises different modes of communication out from the traditional way. It includes e-mail, fax, teleconferencing and voicemail. Electronic communication is used both internally and externally.

- **Employment Communication** is a mode of communication used for employees but specifically for accepting applicants for a job. It includes application letter, follow-up communications, interview and resumes.

- **Nonverbal Communication** is a mode of communication that uses body language and other means of communicating without the use of uttering words. It includes body language, expression, gestures, professional appearance, time or space.

- **Verbal Communication** is a mode of communication that uses the uttering of words in communicating to external contacts and employees. It includes feedback, instructions, presentations, and telephone.

- **Written Communication** is a mode of communication that requires writing in order to communicate. It includes letters, memos, proposals and reports.
Effective communication doesn’t occur haphazardly in organisations. Nor does it happen all at once. Communication can be very complex, as there are countless opportunities for sending or receiving the wrong message. Communication is a dynamic two-way process because the receiver then responds to the message (we call this giving feedback) and in this way he/she becomes the sender again, and the person who first spoke/wrote, becomes the receiver (of the feedback communication).

**Activity – Personalized Communications Approach**

Study the Communication Process illustrated earlier and the explanation of each of the element of the process. It is your turn now to draw your own communication model. Show prominently any three of the elements which you find to be important for effective communication as an entrepreneur.

Record your diagram in your course journal.

**Remember!** It is important that all senders of communication must keep in mind who their target audience is, so that they can focus the message accordingly. The sender should know what the receiver’s perception is, so that the encoding can be in line with the receiver’s experiences. The sender should also use the appropriate communication channel to reach the receiver and invite feedback, so that they can confirm that the message was understood and appropriately responded to.

**SUMMARY**

It is important to remember that your communication needs to be clear and effective. Communication takes place when a message is sent in a specific code from the sender to the receiver through a medium, and the receiver responds to the message by giving feedback. The meaning of a message does not reside completely in the message. The receiver contributes meaning to this message when he or she interprets it in terms of his or her own background. If the message is not clear to the receiver this means that the receiver may have interpreted the message differently from its intended purpose. If the receiver understood the message then he or she will provide positive feedback. Good feedback is essential in determining the effectiveness of the message.
TOPIC 1.2 – BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION
Communication barriers can pop-up at every stage of the communication process (which consists of sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback and context – ) and have the potential to create misunderstanding and confusion. To be an effective communicator and to get your point across without misunderstanding and confusion, your goal should be to lessen the frequency of these barriers at each stage of this process with clear, concise, accurate, well-planned communications. This topic will focus on the different barriers to communication, and how those barriers can be overcome.

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this topic you will be able to:

1. Identify various barriers to communication.
2. Give some examples of the barriers to communication.
3. Suggest ways of overcoming these barriers.

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS
Pause for a moment and think about situations where you were unable to understand or convey an intended message.

Activity – Communications Breakdown
What do you think were the reasons for the breakdown in communication?
Take a minute to jot down your ideas in your course journal.

Communication will be incomplete and unsuccessful if you are unable to identify and understand the barriers of communication. These barriers are physical, sociological and psychological obstacles that interfere with the planning, organization, transmission and understanding of the message. There are a number of such obstacles that can occur in the process of communication. The natural result of such obstacles or interfering factors is the misunderstanding of the message. These factors interfere with the self-confidence, self-disclosure and self-consciousness of the communication senders and receivers.
No matter how good the communication system in an organization is, unfortunately barriers can and do often occur. This may be caused by a number of factors which can usually be summarized as being due to:

- physical barriers,
- system design faults
- Additional barriers.

Communication barriers may be defined as factors that interfere with the effectiveness of the process of communication. When this process is interfered with the receiver does not understand the message, does not receive the message at all or decodes a distorted message. Barriers to communication are also referred to as ‘noise’, ‘breakdowns’, ‘filters’ or ‘interference’. Barriers can occur at any point in the communication process and can be either internal or external.

**Figure 1. – Barriers to the Communication Process**

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**NOISE**

Noise hinders effective communication throughout the communication process. Noise can be from the external (surrounding) environment, such as from too many messages at the same time or background noise that interferes with a clear understanding of the message. We also refer to some receiver characteristics as ‘noise’, and this is where their emotions, ethnic background, age, education level or disabilities may distort or make a message misunderstood.

Noise in communication, is any distraction that interferes with the proper transmission of communication, so that the message from the sender cannot
reach the receiver as it was intended by the sender to be understood. It is a major communication barrier, as we will see further on in this discussion. In tour guiding for example, noise can be the background sounds of animals at a sight while the tour guide is explaining the attractions. It could also be the accent of a person, which may make it difficult for another to understand the message he/she is trying to convey.

**NOISE MAY FURTHER BE CLASSIFIED INTO TWO TYPES**

- **Internal Noise** – anything that distracts and distorts a communication without audible sound, for example the smell of a perfume when a person walks into the room or when the temperature in the room is too hot.

- **External Noise** – anything that distracts and distorts a communication with audible sound for example the ringing of the cell phone or the pouring of the rain outside the house.

- **Physical Barriers** - are often due to the nature of the environment.

  Any physical noise that disturbs the message so that it is not received properly can be seen as a physical barrier. Likewise, poor or outdated equipment, particularly the failure of management to introduce new technology, may also be observed as a physical barrier. Distractions like background noise, poor lighting or an environment which is too hot or cold can all affect people’s morale and concentration, which in turn interfere with effective communication.

- **Semantic Barriers** - A basic principle of communication is that the symbols the sender uses to communicate messages must have the same meaning in both the sender’s and receiver’s minds. You can never be sure that the message in your mind will be clearly sent to your receiver.

  - **System Design** refers to problems with the structures or systems in place in an organization. Examples might include an organizational structure which is unclear and therefore makes it confusing to know who to communicate with. Other examples could be inefficient or inappropriate information systems, a lack of supervision or training, and a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities which can lead to staff being uncertain about what is expected of them.

  - **Attitudinal Barriers** come about as a result of problems with staff in an organization. These may be brought about, for
example, by such factors as poor management, lack of consultation with employees, personality conflicts which can result in people delaying or refusing to communicate, the personal attitudes of individual employees which may be due to lack of motivation or dissatisfaction at work, brought about by insufficient training to enable them to carry out particular tasks, or just resistance to change due to entrenched attitudes and ideas.

Figure 1.2B – Communications Barriers

- **Physiological Barriers** – These are barriers that result from the state of condition of the body. For example, the working conditions that affect our health or the impairment of the sensory organs. Our health gets affected by poor working conditions, poor working designs within the organization as well as poor lighting. Persons who are impaired have unavoidable barriers in their communication, however for most the impairment does not prevent them for communicating effectively.

- **Psychological Barriers** – referred to an individual’s state of mind. If a person has been disturbed at some point, they are most likely not going to concentrate on a message. The psychological barrier that disturbs communication may be referred to as either psychological noise – any emotion mannerism or attitude that causes the message to be affected negatively. For example if a student received poor grades in a communication examination they may be too upset to pay attention to the teacher in the class. Sometimes this limitation may cause an emotional outburst.
Stereotyping

Stereotyping is an image idea or character that has become fixed, unchanged and standardized in the conventional form without permitting or encouraging actual individual differences. When we single out one attribute that a person has which is normally negative and ignore the rest of their good characteristics or positive characteristics we would be stereotyping that individual.

If we form negative stereotypes of people we communicate with, it may affect our communication with them. If we stereotype people and structure in our message, in a negative way we might inadvertently offend people, especially the persons who do not conform to any particular stereotype.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL BARRIERS

Your mental or emotional state as well as those of your visitors may also affect the way in which a message is conveyed or interpreted. Consider the following examples:

- Emotional stress, anger, depression or sadness during the communication process. Such negative emotions may influence how you send the message and in turn may block the message in the mind of the receiver. This results in a message that is not clearly understood.

- Too much or too little information or information that is inaccurate. If you fail to prepare and do the necessary research you may lack confidence and questions may exceed your personal knowledge. These too are barriers to effective communication.

- A distorted and subjective focus in your commentary. For example expressing your personal political, ethnic or religious views.

- Insecurity or a lack of confidence may also be a major barrier to effective communication.

- Difficult personalities you may encounter. Some tourists may be aggressive and may have exaggerated demands while others may be passive. Such situations may create barriers to effective communication.
Activity – Personal Reflection

Based on the barriers discussed in the above sections, share any personal experience you have had where you were unable to send an intended message

Record your response in your course journal.

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Activity – Communications Problems

Review the cartoon above and then answer the following questions.

1. Identify the problem with which the receptionist was initially confronted.
2. What caused the communications problem?
3. What could have happened because of this problem?

Record your answers in your course journal.

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OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

Everybody at some stage experiences communication breakdown, where the message is not received as the sender intended. There are also many ways of overcoming such limitations however, the following section will help us understand those limitations so as to ensure smooth and effective communication of message.
• **Use of Simple Language:** Use of simple and clear words should be emphasized. Use of ambiguous words and jargons should be avoided.

• **Reduction and elimination of noise levels:** Noise is the main communication barrier which must be overcome on priority basis. It is essential to identify the source of noise and then eliminate that source.

• **Active Listening:** Listen attentively and carefully. There is a difference between “listening” and “hearing”. Active listening means hearing with proper understanding of the message that is heard. By asking questions the speaker can ensure whether his/her message is understood or not by the receiver in the same terms as intended by the speaker.

• **Emotional State:** During communication one should make effective use of body language. He/she should not show their emotions while communication as the receiver might misinterpret the message being delivered. For example, if the conveyer of the message is in a bad mood then the receiver might think that the information being delivered is not good.

• **Avoid Information Overload:** The managers should know how to prioritize their work. They should not overload themselves with the work. They should spend quality time with their subordinates and should listen to their problems and feedbacks actively.

• **Give Constructive Feedback:** Avoid giving negative feedback. The contents of the feedback might be negative, but it should be delivered constructively. Constructive feedback will lead to effective communication between the superior and subordinate.

• **Proper Media Selection:** the medium through which communication passes should be properly selected. Simple messages should be conveyed orally, like: face to face interaction or meetings. Use of written means of communication should be encouraged for delivering complex messages. For significant messages reminders can be given by using written means of communication such as: Memos, Notices etc.

• **Flexibility in meeting the targets:** For effective communication it is important to ensure that the individuals are meeting their targets timely without skipping the formal channels of communication.
Figure – What Do You See?

(The figure was adapted by psychologists, R. W. Leeper and E. G. Boring)

Activity - Perception

Can you describe what you see in this picture?

Take another look at the picture; is it an old lady or a young lady you thought you saw in the figure?

What do you think was the intention of the communicator/artist who drew this picture?

Show this picture to three other persons and see what they perceive.

Record your responses in your course journal.
Response to Activity 1.2D

1. Did your description included words similar to old or witch-like or hag?

2. Or did your description included words similar to young or beautiful or elegant or well dressed?.

3. Look again at the picture. You should be able to see both a young and an old lady.
   (If you cannot see both the young and the old lady, ask your tutor to point both out to you.)

4. Was it an old lady or a young lady that you were intended to see?

5. Do you see what was intended to be communicated to you or did you see something else?....

SUMMARY

The barriers of communication are dangers to any organization if they are not removed on time. When the communicator transmits the idea in an unchanged and undistorted form to the receiver and the receiver responds to it, then, the process of the communication is supposed to have been perfect. But this process of ‘perfect’ communication can never exist due to the number of factors, which stand in its way as the barriers. The communicator has to identify and understand the reasons for poor communication in order to communicate effectively. Understanding the process of communication is the first step towards improving the abilities and skills of communication, but understanding the factors that prevent us in transmitting the exact meaning is very essential for effective communication.
TOPIC 1.3 – TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION
In the previous topic, we took a look at the barriers to communication. These barriers may be eliminated when one is aware of the different types and forms of communication present today. Did you know that there are other types of communication other than oral and written communication? In this topic we will examine the different types and forms of communication with special emphasis to non-verbal communication.

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this unit you will be able to:

1. Identify the different types and levels of communications in the workplace.
2. Explain the systems of communication.
3. Discuss the different forms of communication.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION
The type of communication is usually distinguished by the number of people involved in the communication, the purpose of the communication, and by the degree of formality in which it occurs.

When you communicate you interact and react. You exchange information, ideas, plans, and make decisions, rules, proposals, contracts, and agreements. All these activities require one skill that is communication. So we can say that communication is the “Lifeline” of every person or organization and for you to exchange information within and outside the organization or with other people you need to use a variety of formal and informal forms of communication that carry the flow of information.

Four types of communication are discussed below: intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group and team, and public.

- **Intrapersonal Communication** – to communicate with others you must first understand how you communicate with yourself. The process of understanding information within oneself is called intrapersonal communication. As we grow we learn about ourselves and our surroundings and much of what we learn is gained from our own experiences. Intrapersonal communication includes internal activities such as thinking, problem solving, evaluating, emotions and stress. All messages that we create first occur within us. This makes
communication a personal event. Intrapersonal communication may occur without the presence of any other type of communication, but all other types of communication cannot occur without it.

- **Interpersonal Communication** – the informal exchange of information between two or more people is referred to as interpersonal communication. It includes informal conversations such as talks with parents, friends, children, acquaintances or strangers as well as more formal conversations such as an Interview.

- **Small Group Communication** - A subcomponent of interpersonal communication – small-group communication, is an exchange of information among a relatively small number of persons who share a common purpose.

- **Public Communication** - a message is transmitted from one person to a number of individuals who listen. The most widely used form of public communication is the public speech.

**COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

For communication to be considered effective, you need to know how to keep the communication routes open. What follows is a simple discussion on the communication systems that may be used in different settings:

**Downward Communication** - Organizational decisions are made at top level and then flow down to the people who carry them. When employees receive appropriate downward communication from the management, they become motivated and more efficient. Downward communication frequently makes use of communications like memos, notices, in-house newsletters, handbooks and procedure manuals.

**Upward Communication** - The upward communication flow is equally important as downward communication. Communications are directed upward to managers or supervisors by using memos, reports, meetings and informal discussions. Successful managers listen closely to opinions, complaints, problems, and suggestions, especially when these are clearly put forward.

**Horizontal Communication** - Horizontal communication occurs between people of the same status – departmental heads, directors, supervisors or between peers in organizations in order to solve problems, performs job duties, prepare for meetings, and cooperate on important projects.
**Internal Communication** - This communication takes place within the organization and falls under two categories:

- Internal oral communication which includes telephone, face-to-face discussions, intercom, presentation, meetings and conferences.

- Internal written communication which includes memos, reports, graphs/charts, email, fax, notices, minutes, newsletters etc.

**Informal Internal Communication** - Every organization has an informal communication network – a grapevine: this term describes an unofficial communication system which is constantly changing. It is an important source of casual conversation. However it may be viewed as vehicle for distortions of the truth, rumor or gossip.

**Figure – Internal Oral Communication**

**EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

Communication that takes place outside the organization is called external communication and falls under two categories:

- External oral communication- which includes meetings, conferences/seminars, conversations, telephone communication and presentations

- External written communication – which includes advertisements, notices, reports, emails, fax, letter, invitations, leaflets/brochures, forms/questionnaires etc
Activity – Forms of Communications

List the different forms of communications explained above that you have personally used during your career and briefly describe how you used them? Who was the receiver? What was the message? What was the response?

Record your observations in your course journal.

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication involves the exchange of information in the form of messages, signs, symbols and thought. This exchange of information can be relayed to the sender through different forms, three of which will be discussed below:

- **Oral Communication**: Oral communication refers to the spoken words in the communication process. Oral communication is information spoken by mouth; the use of speech. Some of the examples of Oral Communication are: Face to face communication, Telephonic Communication, Public Address System (Speech), Informal rumor mill (Grape Wine), Audio & Visual Media (Radio, TV), Lectures, Conference-Interchange of views, Meetings, Cultural Affairs.

- **Written Communication**: Communication by means of written symbols (either printed or handwritten). Some of the examples are: Orders, Instructions, Letters, Memos, Reports, Policy manuals, Information Bulletin, Complaint System, Suggestion System, etc. The effectiveness of the written communication will depend on the style of writing and also the clarity and precision of language.
Non-Verbal Communication - is the overall body language that a person uses when they engage in communication. These include body posture, hand gestures, facial expressions and the overall body movements. Non-verbal communication is also known as SEMIOLOGY (communication that does not use words). Facial expressions form a major part of non-verbal communication because it communicates instant expression about a person’s mood. This does not mean that other non-verbal elements are not equally important. A firm handshake can independently express emotion as well.

Non-verbal communication can also be observed in the form of signboards, photographs, sketches or even paintings. Most of the time we consciously and unconsciously use the elements of non-verbal communication to support the verbal messages that enhance our communication’s. In other words, effective two way communication depends on our ability to interpret non-verbal signs.

Table - Classification of Non-verbal Communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proximics</strong></td>
<td>Examines individual personal space. It takes into account body spacing and postures. The physical distance between two people can suggest whether the relationship is a personal on or a business one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Intimate distance- embracing, touching or whispering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Personal distance – interaction among friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social distance- interaction with formal acquaintances, colleagues, business persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Public distance – interaction with strangers and also during public speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chronemics</strong></td>
<td>Usage of time – communication may be expressed through punctuality, willingness to wait for something, speed of speech or even the time people are willing to listen to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Kinesics**   | Body movements, facial expression and gestures and will include:  
|                | • Posture - how you sit, and how you lean forward communicate information about you  
|                | • Gestures – they allow us to express a variety of emotions and thoughts like contempt, hostility or affection |
| **Haptics**    | Touching as a tool of non-verbal communication, eg, a firm handshake or a pat on the back. The meaning conveyed by a touch will depend on other factors also like context as well as situation or even the relationship between two individuals. |
| **Oculesics**  | Expressions communicated through the eyes. Eg a glance or a gaze or even the blinking of the eyes |
| **Paralanguage/Vocalics** | Non- verbal cues of the voice which include, Pitch, tone, volume, tempo, rhythm:  
|                | • Vocal characterizers: laughing, crying, sighing, yawning, clearing the throat, groaning, yelling, whispering.  
|                | • Vocal Qualifiers: intensity (loud/soft); pitch height (high/low).  
<p>|                | • Vocal Segregates: sounds such a ‘uh-huh’, ‘um’, ‘uh’; silent pauses. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Factors</td>
<td>The environment can influence the outcome of communication. For this reason, you have to give careful consideration to office space, factory layout, the sales area and conference venues. The environment should put people at ease and match their expectations; an unsuitable environment can produce ‘noise’ that causes communication barriers and interferes with the communication process. In the workplace, attention to punctuality or a disregard for it can make a strong nonverbal impact. A disregard for punctuality may, like a sloppy appearance, merely reflect a casual attitude. However, a deliberate decision to keep a contact waiting may be a way to communicate a negative message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>Artifacts are objects used to convey nonverbal messages about self-concept, image, mood, feeling or style. For example, perfume, clothes, lipstick, glasses and hairpieces project the style or mood of the wearer. Many artifacts are common to the group but we also use artifacts, particularly clothing, as an individual form of communication.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMMUNICATIONS ACCORDING TO STYLE AND PURPOSE**

**Formal Communication** - This includes all the instances when communication has to take place in a formal format – the style is formal and in most cases very official. Business meetings, official conferences would make use of official letters and memos to convey their message. Formal communication is straightforward, it is to the point and has a rigid tone to.

**Informal Communication** - this includes instances where people share a casual dialogue or conversation with each other. There are no strict guidelines to follow. They do not necessarily have boundaries of time like formal communication. This type of communication occurs between friends or persons who have a very good relationship.
Activity - Interpretation

Look at the picture above:

1. What type of communication is taking place in the picture above?

2. Examine the different types of communication that are featured under non-verbal communication. How will the person’s expression change if placed in all the situations of non-verbal communication?

Record your observations in your course journal.

SUMMARY

In this topic we examined the different types of communication that you can use to get your message across effectively. Communication, whether oral or written is all about understanding. Effective communication can be achieved by having thorough knowledge of the communication cycle, being aware of the barriers which may exist and by carefully considering the following vital factors:

- What is the objective of the communication? is it intended to give information, to persuade, to request, to inform
- Who will receive that information?
- Under which circumstance is the communication taking place?
- How will the recipient react to the communication?
**TOPIC 1.4 – COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS**

**INTRODUCTION**
Communicating with others is an essential skill in our ever growing business environment. Do you often find yourself misunderstanding others? Do you have difficulty getting your point across clearly? When it comes to communication, what you say and what you don't say are equally important.

**OBJECTIVES**
Upon completion of this topic you will be able to:

1. Identify good communication skills.
2. Understand the importance of communication skills.
3. Identify the benefits of effective communication.

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS**
Good communication skills are skills that facilitate people to communicate effectively with one another. Effectual communication engages the choice of the best communications channel, the technical know-how to use the channel, the presentation of information to the target audience, and the skill to understand responses received from others. Self development, interpersonal skills, mutual understanding, mutual cooperation and trust are also important to set a complete channel of most effective and winning communication skills.

**Interpersonal communication skills**-Simply put interpersonal skills are the skills we use to interact or deal with others. Interpersonal skills are sometimes also referred to as communication skills, people skills and/or soft skills. How we deal with others can greatly influence our professional and personal lives, improving these skills builds confidence and enhances our relationships with others.

Interpersonal communication is the process by which people exchange information, feelings and meaning through verbal and non-verbal messages. This definition highlights the important fact that interpersonal communication is not only concerned with what is said, i.e., the language used, but how it is said, e.g. the non-verbal messages sent, such as tone of voice and facial expressions.

**Speaking Skills** – most people find talking easier than writing because it is not so complex and because phrases can be used in speech which
would be unacceptable in written communication. However, if communication is to be effective oral communication should be planned just as carefully as planning what you write. Given below are some guidelines that you may use to create a well structured oral message

- Decide what your message is
- Identify the key points in your message
- Choose an appropriate style to convey your message
- When delivering the message, monitor feedback constantly
- Know when you have said enough and try to end on a positive note

**Expressive Skills** - are required to convey message to others through words, facial expressions and body language -

**Listening Skills** - are skills that are used to obtain messages or information from others. Listening is half of oral communication, and it is a skill that needs to be practices and taken equally as seriously as speaking. Here are some guidelines to follow if you want to be an effective listener:

- Prepare to listen – concentrate on what is being said, learn to listen, not just hear
- Avoid pre-judgement – do not just to conclusions before hearing what is said
- Be open-minded – hear what is said and not what you would like to hear
- Establish eye contact
- Watch for signals - pick up aspects that the speaker considers important by watching posture and gestures and listening to intonation in the speakers words
- Extract the main points – pick out the key words and phrases
- Give feedback – learn to give positive feedback and ask questions to assist your understanding of the message
• Make notes – record important information that can be used as a reminder of the communication

The importance of good communication skills can never be ignored or neglected. With good communication skills, you can have a team of members who together create an ambience of open communication, concise messages, probe for clarifications, recognize nonverbal signals, and mutual understanding.

Good communication skills are an invaluable asset to everyone. While the importance of verbal communication cannot be underestimated, one cannot do away or ignore written communication. A simple billboard, carrying a well written message, manages to hold our attention at a crossing while authors have been mesmerizing voracious readers by the power of their words. The enthralled reader flips through the pages, reading well into the night, without giving much thought to the mode of communication. The above examples clearly illustrate the importance of communication skills.

Activity – Interpersonal Communications

When you have the opportunity to observe interpersonal communication, make a mental note of the behaviours used, both verbal and non-verbal. If this is not possible, you could examine some of the different ways interpersonal relationships are conveyed on the television. Make notes about your observations in your course journal on the following:

1. Who are the communicators?
2. What messages were exchanged?
3. What (if any) noise distorts the message?
4. How is feedback given?
5. What is the context of the communication?

Why Are Communication Skills Essential?

In any form of business, communication is an internal as well as an external affair. The success of the business rests upon communication and it has become all the more essential due to the following reasons:
1. **Mutual co-operation**: People have to perform different tasks. Sound communication is essential for ensuring mutual co-operation and understanding between people.

2. **Technological advancements**: Rapid changes in science and technology lead to obsolescence of technology and knowledge. In order to upgrade technology, entrepreneurs must persuade their employees to accept new technology. Regular communication becomes necessary to update knowledge and to provide the skills needed to apply new technology.

3. **Competition**: Liberalization and globalization have resulted in severe competition between and within business. Persuasive communication in the form of advertisements, personal contacts and publicity becomes essential to survive in the race of competition.

4. **Trade union movement**: In all sectors, employee unions are very strong and powerful. Managers must consult union leaders on several matters. The exchange of information and ideas between entrepreneurs and union officials helps to maintain healthy relations between them.

5. **Human relations**: Effective communication is necessary to develop mutual trust and confidence. Participation in the decision-making process and other means of communication help to develop a sense of belonging and loyalty.

6. **Public relations**: Society expects more and more from its members in organizations. Entrepreneurs and managers have to keep Government, distributors, suppliers, investors and other sections of society well-informed about their contributions to society. Public relations help to improve image in society and big enterprises employ professional experts for this purpose.

7. **Personal asset**: Communication skill is essential for success in every job. Entrepreneurs and Managers are required to deliver speeches, write documents and conduct interviews. The ability to communicate effectively is equally essential for promotion in career.

Good communication is the foundation of good business and entrepreneurial skills. It is essential not only for the growth and success of the business but also for personal growth.
However, just theoretical knowledge is not enough. If an entrepreneur does not possess practical communication skills, he/she would fail. The entrepreneur may have all the requisite technical skills, know the business and policies but fail to communicate effectively. This inadequacy overshadows the other skills. Generally, the main problem is that the effort to communicate is missing.

Good communication is an essential skill in being personally effective. It is also an essential skill for everyone who works for supervisors and managers or who is part of a team at work, home or socially. How often have you felt that someone doesn’t understand, that they take you for granted, that you’re not taken seriously, that people twist what you’re saying, that your rights have been ignored, angry that you can’t express yourself at the time. Most of us will have felt at least some of these at some time or another.

You may react by getting angry or aggressive, or by avoiding situations that cause conflict and pain, or by agreeing to things because you feel powerless and want a quiet life. All of these activities are based around establishing and maintaining good methods of communication. However, your ability to communicate effectively will be governed by many things, but mainly on your development of skills which will help you to balance the interests, rights and reactions of others with your own.

**GUIDELINES TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

The list of communication skills presented below may be used as a guideline while interacting with others:

- **Staying focused while communicating is very important.** Concentrating hard, should help in catching the speaker’s views and responding to them with ease.

- **Developing effective listening skills** is as important as speaking during a communication process. Good listeners don’t have to spend much time in understanding what the other person has to say. However one can also respond in a much more precise manner, if the whole thing is understood quickly. Feedback given by good listeners reduces the effort of speakers to elaborate on things to be communicated.

- **Making eye contact while speaking/and listening** is a way to assure the other person that you are following the communication process with interest. Looking away from the speaker or just not concentrating, can exhibit your poor communication skills.
• **The aspect of body language** should be given as much importance as verbal communication while interacting with people. It is one of the main components in the list of interpersonal skills. An open stance indicates that a person is interested in communication.

• **Attitude of the speaker** holds great importance while communicating. Listening to the speaker patiently and then keeping forth our views should be the right thing to do. The attempt should not be that of winning over an argument

• **Speaking clearly** is again an important thing to keep in mind. Merely pronouncing the words clearly is not enough. The other person should be able to understand our views/thoughts clearly. Any kind of ambiguity leads to confusion.

• **One should not use harsh language** even if he/she finds the opponent’s views to be conflicting with his/her opinion. Disagreeing or keeping forth our disapproval about a particular thing in a polite way is possible. Once again, patience is the key to handle such situations.

**BENEFITS AND IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

The ability to communicate effectively is necessary in today’s fast-paced environment. The importance of speech and words whether through voice or a paper is a communication medium to convey information and direction. Without communication there is no way that we would be able to express thoughts, expressions and ideas.

The lack of effective communications may lead to:

• Misunderstandings.

• Lack of information.

• Decrease in employees’ performance.

• Increase in company’s turnover, as a result.

Ineffective or poor communication is frustrating and becomes a source of a conflict. The inability to clearly express thoughts, ideas and demands leads to an individual’s inability to perform work well. Such a situation may take place when an employee is not truly aware of what is requested of them. This decreases the satisfaction an employee gets from the job.
• If a manager is able to communicate his/her ideas clearly, so that employees definitely know what is asked of them, the subordinates will, consequently, perform their jobs correspondingly. On contrast, an aggressive way of managing reports results in employees’ getting more and more frustrated, often guessing what their real faults

• A good style of entrepreneurship, as well as a positive approach to communication, ensures that the entrepreneur and the employee understand each other, and are more effective at the workplace.

• Effective communication provides individuals with a clear understanding of what is demanded from them, with knowledge of what to do and what to expect.

• Effective communication can be done using various internal journals, magazines, pamphlets and intranet. They can serve as official proof of the happening of an event and other information.

• Effective listening and trusting the speaker are two essential elements which help people concentrate on the subject matter of communication. While communicating, all people should keep the objectives of communication in mind and avoid any bias towards each other.

• Communication establishes a bond among people and effective communication helps people save their precious time and increase personal and professional productivity.

• Attempts should be made to seek feedback from the receivers of information to ensure that communication has actually taken place. Without a proper feedback, the process of effective communication is incomplete.

• Communication helps people understand what is expected of them and how to convert their talent into performance.

• Effective communication reduces the chances of mistakes and misunderstandings. When there is greater and more effective interaction between persons there will be lesser number of mistakes and misunderstandings.

To achieve the desired standard of communication, constant efforts are required. Any failure in the communication results in chaos and defeated
purposes. Proper flow of communication ensures harmony among all individuals.

Persons who have developed effective communication skills are able to:

- Listen attentively and empathically, enabling them to minimize and resolve conflict, resulting in less frustration and stress.
- Form and maintain good interpersonal relationships at all levels, creating better co-operation between people.
- Form and maintain good relations with external publics.
- Speak effectively, thereby being able to provide and exchange information and give sensible feedback.
- Motivate and encourage people to be more productive in reaching specific goals.
- Consider problems logically, make decisions about what they think and therefore solve problems effectively.
- Persuade colleagues to think the way they do, increasing effective team work and group discussion.
- Save time and money.

People with good communication skills are very successful in motivating others and therefore tend to lead people in a desired direction efficiently. Good business communication leads to enhanced leadership skills.

SUMMARY

It can take a lot of effort to communicate effectively. In this lesson you examined the different skills that you could use to make your communication more effective. However, you need to be able to communicate well if you're going to make the most of the opportunities that life has to offer. Good communication is essential not only for the growth and success of the business but also for personal growth. However, just theoretical knowledge is not enough. If you do not possess practical communication skills, you will fail to communicate effectively.

Good communication is an essential skill in being personally effective. How often have you felt that someone doesn’t understand, that they take you for granted, that you’re not taken seriously, that people twist what you’re saying,
that your rights have been ignored, angry that you can’t express yourself at the time. Most of us will have felt at least some of these at some time or another.

You may react by getting angry or aggressive, or by avoiding situations that cause conflict and pain, or by agreeing to things because you feel powerless and want a quiet life. All of these activities are based around establishing and maintaining good methods of communication. However, your ability to communicate effectively will be governed by many things, but mainly on your development of skills which will help you to balance the interests, rights and reactions of others with your own.

Self-Reflection:

By learning the skills you need to communicate effectively, you can learn how to communicate your ideas clearly and effectively, and understand much more of the information that’s conveyed to you.

As either a speaker or a listener, or as a writer or a reader, you’re responsibility is to make sure that the message is communicated accurately. Pay attention to words and actions, ask questions, and watch body language. These will all help you ensure that you say what you mean, and hear what is intended.
**UNIT SUMMARY**

In this unit we explored the communications process and how to ensure your personal and professional messages are received and interpreted correctly. Business is about communications. Effective communications will support the marketing and sales process and ensure that products and services are provided to the customer in a timely fashion.

Ineffective or poor communications will result in lost productivity, poor employee morale, unsatisfied customers and potential failure of the business. During the remainder of this course you will be provided guidelines on how to improve your business communications process.

But before you move on to the next unit you should complete the unit assignment described below.

**UNIT ASSIGNMENT**

![The Communications Process Diagram]

Answer all the questions and record your answers in a Word document that can be forwarded to your instructor.

1. What is your definition of communication?

2. Can you identify the main elements of communication in the model above?

3. Explain the function of each of the elements identified in the model above.

4. Describe a message that you would like to send to a group of persons and explain it using the model above.

5. Below is correspondence that was sent to workers regarding the Total Eclipse of the sun. The correspondence was sent from the managing
director to his executive director who in turn communicated it to the
departmental heads in the business. Read the series of messages and
identify any barriers that are present. Did the message change as it was
being forwarded by each level in the chain of command?

From: Managing Director
To: Executive Director

‘Tomorrow morning there will be a total eclipse of the sun at
nine o’clock. This is something which we cannot see every day.
So let the work-force line up outside, in their best clothes to
watch it. To mark the occasion of this rare occurrence, I will
personally explain the phenomenon to them. If it is raining we
will not be able to see it very well and in that case the work force
should assemble in the canteen.’

From: Executive Director
To: Departmental Head

‘By order of the Managing Director, there will be a total eclipse
of the sun at nine o’clock tomorrow morning. If it is raining we
will not be able to see it in our best clothes, on the site. In this
case the disappearance of the sun will be followed through in
the canteen. This is something we cannot see happening
every day.’

From: Departmental Heads
To: Sectional Heads

‘By order of the Managing Director, we shall follow the
disappearance of the sun in our best clothes, in the canteen at
nine o’clock tomorrow morning. The Managing Director will tell 15 of us whether it is going to rain. This is something which we cannot see happen every day.’

From: Section Heads

To: Foreman

‘If it is raining in the canteen tomorrow morning, which is something that we cannot see happen every day, the Managing director in his best clothes, will disappear at nine o’ clock.’

From: Foreman

To: All Operators

‘Tomorrow morning at nine o’ clock, the Managing Director will disappear. It’s a pity that we can’t see this happen every day.


List the barriers to each message and how they were mis-interpreted.

Instructions

Once you have answered all of the questions and completed this exercise submit it to your instructor for review, feedback and grading.

If you would like to learn more about the communications process review the readings provided in the unit bibliography.

Once you have completed this exercise move on to Unit Two – Business Correspondence.
UNIT ONE- BIBLIOGRAPHY


Business Communications- Virtual University of Pakistan

Communication Module in VUSCC – Tour guide course material


UNIT TWO— BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Much of the communication that goes on in organisations is in the form of written communication otherwise known as professionally written texts. Professional writing covers the basic form of business communications and includes e-mail, memoranda, letters, reports, periodicals and proposals. This unit will give you the exposure on how to identify and go about writing effective business correspondences and will specifically look at e-mails, memos and letters. The ultimate goal is to assist you in the writing of effective documents that can be used to communicate effectively with your audience.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to:

1. Understand the importance of business writing styles.
2. Acquire the skills necessary to produce effective business correspondence.
3. Write various types of business correspondence.
4. Produce a business report.

UNIT READINGS

As you complete this unit it is recommended that you read the following online chapters/articles. Click on the URL if reading the URL online or enter the URL in a browser to review the materials.

- Hale, S. (nd.). Choosing and Writing for an Audience. (Online Article). Available at: http://facstaff.gpc.edu/~shale/humanities/composition/handouts/audience.html
- Purdue.edu. (nd.). Purdue Online Writing Lab. (Web Site). Available at: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/02/


ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

In this unit you will discuss the basic forms of business communications and the importance of writing effective business correspondence. During the unit you will complete a series of activities that will help you create effective business correspondence. You will be assessed in the following ways:

• In-text activities throughout the unit

• Two Assignments to be handed to the instructor for correction and feedback

• Self-Assessment exercise to be completed at the end of the unit
TOPIC 2.1 - AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION
Your audience is usually referred to as the “end-user”, because all communication needs to be targeted towards a defined audience. The audience is the intended reader, listener or potential receiver of the communication. Regardless of who your audience is, it is important to analyse them in terms of background, needs and interests, as well as their demographic characteristics (age, sex, preference etc). Once this has been done it will become easier to determine what type of correspondence will be needed to effectively communicate with that audience.

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this topic you will be able to:

1. Define a business audience.
2. Explain why audience analysis is important for effective communication.
3. Identify the different categories of audiences.
4. Complete an audience analysis.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS
Let us begin this topic by asking this question – “who will read what I have written?” This is a critical aspect and key question in the communication process. Your communication must be tailored to its intended audience.

Can you explain what an Audience is? – An audience is anyone who reads, sees or hears your message. (Hale, nd.). Audience Analysis is the process of determining information about the characteristics, knowledge and interests of your audience, in order to tailor your communication to their needs and interests.

When planning a business message, the first thing you need to think about is your purpose. For a business message to be effective, its purpose and its audience must complement one another. Ask yourself some key questions about your audience

- Who are your audience members?
• What are their attitudes?
• What do they need to know?
• And why should they care about your message?

The answers to such questions will indicate to you which material you need to send to your audience and what document you need to communicate with them. The answers will also give an indication as to whether the document would be a formal or informal document. An effective communicator is one who is able to get the message across effectively to the target audience.

When analysing your audience, you must always remember that your audience may fall in one of the following categories

• **Individual** – these may consist of persons who are,
  o customers or prospective customers,
  o employees or prospective employees, and
  o shareholders.

• **Corporate of group** audience may consist of persons who are,
  o Corporate customers and potential customers,
  o Corporate suppliers and potential suppliers,
  o Government departments and regulatory agencies,
  o Trade unions and employee associations, and
  o Community groups and organisations.

**TYPES OF AUDIENCE**

There are at least two types of audiences: **real and intended audience**. The real audience is anyone who reads or perceives the message; the intended audience is the target group that the message sender has in mind.
Table – Audience Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Real Audience – Actual Audience.</th>
<th>Intended Audience – Secondary Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This type of audience represents individuals who will be the primary target of the communication.</td>
<td>This type of audience represents anyone else who may hear or read the message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For an essay - the real audience could be a teacher, friend, a student or even a computerized grammar checker</td>
<td>For an essay - the intended audience could be young, old, middle-aged, male or female, white or black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Why Is Important To Write With The Audience In Mind?**

It is important to write with the audience in mind so that you can provide them with the kind and amount of information in a way that most effectively conveys your ideas.

The audiences described earlier (individual and corporate) have different needs, therefore different business documents or a combination of these documents need to be used in order to successfully meet the demands of the audience. A report for a large audience requires a more formal style, organisation and format then one directed to just three or four persons. It is also important to gauge your audience level of understanding. If audience members share your general background, they will understand the communication without difficult.

To give the right impression in your message, think carefully about whom you are and who your audience is. Express your message in terms of the audience’s interest and needs. Knowing your audience before you write will make the process of writing easier because it simplifies the decisions you have to make. Writing with a specific audience in mind will also give your communication more unity of purpose and style and will involve your reader more directly.
Table – The Audience Profile

The Audience Profile

- Who is your primary audience
- How big is your audience
- What is your audience composition
- What is your audience level of understanding
- What is your audience level of reaction

Activity – Audience Profile

What do you need to know in order to develop your audience profile?

For each communications task below, describe (1) Who is the audience? (2) What is the general attitude of the audience towards my subject, (3) What does my audience need to know?

1. An advertisement for Colgate minty toothpaste.
2. A cover letter sent along with your resume to a potential employer.
3. A letter to a customer who has not made payments for the last three months.

Record your analysis in your course journal

Summary

In this topic we discussed why it is important to identify with your audience. In order for you to write effective business correspondence, it is important to take into consideration your audience: who they are and what they expect from the communication. An effective communicator is one who is able to get his/her message across effectively to the target audience and knowing your audience profile before you write makes it easy to decide the purpose and content of your message.
Topic 2.2 - Types Of Business Correspondence

INTRODUCTION
The use of the proper types of business correspondence in the business environment can either make or break your business. Being one of the most powerful tools in business today, business correspondences have moved from simply being the communication of information through the exchange of letters to the communication of information via the electronic media. This topic will introduce you to three the different types of business correspondence (E-mail, Memoranda, and Letters) used today as well as the format employed while preparing effective business correspondence. Business correspondence should be written using a consistent process. They should have a specific purpose and each should be written for a specific audience. Just as you wouldn’t build a house without a blueprint, business communications need a plan.

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this topic you will be able to:

1. Identify the different types of business correspondences used today.
2. Explain the purpose of each type of business correspondence.
3. Identify the different formats used in preparing business correspondence.

TYPES OF BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE
The types of business correspondence that are most commonly used today are

- Business Emails.
- Business Memos.
- Business Letters.

Business Emails – Electronic mail otherwise known as e-mail refers to any form of message that is transmitted electronically. With emails we can communicate immediately and faster and answers and responses are expected faster, as well. The email is perhaps one of the most effective ways of communicating as it is quick, relatively fast, readily available, relatively
inexpensive and most of all not dependent on the receiver’s presence. The email is the least formal of all business correspondence.

Emails can be used for the following purposes:

- Conveying information to friends, family and co-workers.
- Giving and receiving assignments.
- Conveying decisions that have been made.
- Advising staff on urgent matters.
- Conveying instructions and messages.
- Marketing of goods and services.
- Making appointments.

**Business Memos** - A memo (memorandum) is a written message that is sent internally within the organization. Memos have a twofold purpose: they bring attention to problems and they solve problems. They accomplish their goals by informing the reader about new information like policy changes, price increases, or by persuading the reader to take an action, such as attend a meeting, or change a current production procedure. Regardless of the specific goal, memos are most effective when they connect the purpose of the writer with the interests and needs of the reader.

**Memos can be used for the following purposes:**

- To inform of a specific purpose.
- Persuade others to take action.
- Give feedback on an issue.
- React to a situation.
- To communicate due dates or meeting times.
- Ask for information.
- To keep staff informed about important events.
- To confirm discussions or agreements.
Letters – letters are the most formal of the business correspondence. It is a written message from one organization or individual to another. Its basic function is not only to convey a message but also to influence the recipient. Business letters are highly effective tools that can be used to achieve your purpose.

Letters can be divided into two main categories based on the intended recipients:

1. **Business to business letters** – these are letters that businesses send in normal business situations both internally and externally

2. **Business to customer letters** – these are letters that businesses send to their customers and are usually external.

Letters can be used for the following purposes:

- To convey a thought.
- To make inquiries.
- Send replies.
- To place an order.
- To express an opinion.
- As a sales tool.
- To thank a person.

**Activity - Correspondence**

Mr. Jones is in the owner of a small business in your town. He is shocked to read a letter in the local newspaper from a disgruntled customer, complaining about the poor customer service received at the business. Mr. Jones will have to respond to this publicized criticism in some way.

1. What audience will he need to consider in his response?

2. For each of these audiences, should Mr. Jones send an email, memo, fax or letter?

Record your response in your course journal.
FORMAT OF BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

When you send e-mails, memos, letters or fax messages, all the messages must have the following three parts:

- Opening (or Introduction).
- Body (Containing the Message).
- Closing (Summary of Actions).

These message categories dictate how you approach the opening, body and closing of your business correspondence.

E-MAIL

Emails may be written for a business purpose or for a personal purpose. Personal emails do not have any strict rules to adhere to however business email etiquette has a strict format. The following must be included when writing an e-mail.

Subject
Always add an appropriate subject line which defines the purpose of email, in short. No matter if you are writing a business email or a personal email, writing a subject is a must. If you do not include it, your recipient may not read or respond to your message.

Salutation
Email etiquette salutation requires you to address the recipient in an appropriate way. If you are communicating for the first time or the recipient is a senior person, then address him by his surname, unless you are on first name terms with the other person.

Content
Emails need to be short and precise. Hence. Define the purpose of the email in the first paragraph and provide the details in the following paragraphs. Do not exceed the length of the email more than 4 paragraphs.

Action
If you expect any response from the recipient, then express it in a polite way. 'Could you please...' or 'I would be grateful if...'.

Attachment
If you are sending an attachment along with your email message then make sure to mention it in your main message.
Conclude
Put an end to your message in a polite way. 'Best wishes', 'Regards' just to name a few. If you did not put a comma after the greeting, then there is a no need to put one after the concluding statement as well.

Signature
Include your full name, at the end of your email message in the leftmost corner.

Figure 2.2A – Example of Email

Today e-mails have become the fastest means of business communication; however, like any other form of communication, emails should be clear, concise and readable. Adhering to email etiquette allows you to get your point across effectively.

OBSERVING E-MAIL ETIQUETTE
Be clear, concise, and polite when you send an email message. Plan your email like letters and memos.

- Decide on the purpose.
• Decide on the content.
• Write all the ideas in point form.
• Put these ideas into sequence appropriate to the purpose.
• Whenever you start a new topic use a new subject heading.
• Use subject lines which may be used to retrieve the message.
• Edit your material before emailing.
• When you send a message via email, you must be very careful because your email can be forwarded to anyone or everyone else.
• Ensure that your messages are easy to read.
• Refrain from giving too much information.

**Table - Advantages and Disadvantages of Email**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages of Emails</th>
<th>Disadvantages of Emails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Email is a faster and more efficient channel than regular mail (sometimes referred to as snail mail).</td>
<td>• It can be difficult to distinguish between casual and formal messages because of their similar layout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most messages reach anywhere in the world within minutes of being sent.</td>
<td>• It can be send at any convenient time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It can be send to different receivers at the same time</td>
<td>• There may be a time lag if the receiver does not read their email for a few days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Email can be stored and sent at off-peak telephone rates</td>
<td>• The system is inaccessible to those who are computer illiterate or not online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It saves paper</td>
<td>• Its contents may reappear later in a variety of printed forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A message can be written and edited quickly by several people before it is sent</td>
<td>• It can be overused.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table - The DO’s and Don’ts of Email Etiquette

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO’s</th>
<th>DONT’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Include an informative subject line.</td>
<td>• Don't use email if the message needs to be private or secure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Include all the key point of your message.</td>
<td>• Don't send an email you wouldn't want anyone else to read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be brief.</td>
<td>• Don't leave subject line blank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make it easy for the reader to reply yes or no.</td>
<td>• Don't use all capital letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make it easy to read, combine upper &amp; lowercase, use white space</td>
<td>• Don't forward a message without a brief comment why you're forwarding it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and legible font.</td>
<td>• Don't overrun emails with smiley faces or other emoticons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use symbols occasionally to emphasize.</td>
<td>• Don't let emotions or offensive language detract from your message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Edit e-mail carefully.</td>
<td>• Don't send without checking for mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be clear and concise.</td>
<td>• Don't use jargon that your readers do not understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• read your message before sending.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity – Crafting an E-Mail

Now that you know about emails - Take a moment to answer these questions

1. How can you increase the readability of your email message?
2. How do you use the subject line in an e-mail?
3. In what ways can you be courteous when preparing your email message?
4. Besides wording the content of emails messages, what other steps should
you take to be careful?
Record your responses in your course journal.

Supplementary Information: For more information on E-mail etiquette please visit the following web sites:

- Workawesome.com. (nd.). Awesomely Effective Email Communication. (Web Site). Available at: http://workawesome.com/communication/effective-email-communication/

MEMORANDA (MEMOS)
The memo is a less formal means of sending business correspondence and is mainly used for internal communication. It is usually direct in its approach. A memo has no inside address, no salutation and no complimentary close. Being less formal than letters, most memos began with a title, such as Memo or Memorandum or Interoffice Correspondence

Memos must have the following elements:

- **Title**: (include the readers name or job title)
- **Cc**: (include other persons who will be getting the message)
- **To**: (include the readers name or job title)
- **From**: (include your name and job title)
- **Date**: (Current date)
- **Subject Heading**: (indicate what the message is all about)

Depending on the subject, the memo should make its point in 2 – 3 paragraphs, making it easier for the respondent to understand the message. If the message is quite simple, you should get to the point quickly. Some memos are as short as one paragraph or even one sentence. However, the length of the memo is determined by purpose and audience.
Introduction

The opening paragraph of a memo usually indicates the purpose of the memo. Choosing how specific your introduction will be depends on your memo plan style. The more direct the memo plan, the more explicit the introduction should be. Including the purpose of the memo will help clarify the reason the audience should read this document. The introduction should be brief, and should be approximately the length of a short paragraph.

Context

The context of the memo describes the event, circumstance or background of why you are communicating. One or two paragraph (depending on the information) or a few sentences may be used to establish the background of your message.

Conclusion

It is important that you close with a courteous ending that states what action you want your readers to take.

The format of a memo usually follows the general guidelines of business writing. It is usually a page or two long, and should be single spaced and left justified. Instead of using indentations to show new paragraphs, you may skip a line between sentences. Your memo should be concise and easy to read. Therefore it is beneficial to use headings and lists to help the reader pinpoint certain information. The memos have the following features:

- The TO line: this enables the memo to be “addressed,”
- The FROM line: this enables the memo to be “signed”
- The DATE line
- The SUBJECT line: this identifies the topic of your memo. To write a good subject line, answer this question: “In no more than three words, what is this memo really about?”
- Message/Content: For easy reading, put important points or details into lists rather than paragraphs, as this will draw the readers' attention to the section and help the audience remember the information better. Using lists will help you be concise when writing a memo.
Figure - Example of a Memo

ST. John’s Hospital

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Employees

FROM: Raymond Johnson
        Chief Medical Officer

DATE: January 25, 2011

SUBJECT: Wendy Roders

Please be advised that Ms. Wendy Roders from the Medical Records Department will be retiring next month after more than thirty years of faithful service to the Hospital.

A get-together is being planned in her honor. It will be at eight o’clock on Saturday March 13, 2011 at the Sandals Grand Restaurant. Tickets are $70 per person, which includes a buffet dinner.

Kindly indicate your willingness to attend by informing the receptionist before the end of the week.

Evaluating a Memo or E-mail

A good memo or e-mail should meet the following guidelines:

- Follows standard format.

- Includes certain features.

- Date line (appears automatically in e-mail).

- To line, which includes the name and often the title and/or department of the receiver.

- From line, which includes the name (appears automatically in the e-mail) and often the title and/department of the sender: on a paper memo, the From line must be initialed by the writer before the memo is sent.
• Subject line, which is a clear, accurate, but brief statement of what the memo is about.

• Is organized into paragraphs, covering the subject fully in an orderly way.

• Includes no inappropriate content.

• Uses clear, simple language.

• Maintains an appropriate tone, neither too formal nor too conversational.

• Contains no typographical or mechanical errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, or grammar.

LETTERS

Business letters are one of the most common forms of communication used in business. It is the most formal of all correspondence used today. The letter leaves a record of all contacts made to the recipient, therefore it must be clear, concise and void of all grammatical errors.

In order for business letters to be effective tools of communication they should include the following;

- A style that is suitable to the reader.

- A tone that promotes good relations between the sender and the receiver.

- Message that is appropriate and can be understood by the receiver.

Standard Parts of the Letter

Usually letters follow the stipulated format of the organization, however all letters must include the following elements:

1. Heading/Return Address.

2. Date.

3. Inside address.

4. Salutation.

5. Body.
6. Complimentary close.

7. Signature Block.

8. Reference Section.

Let’s explore each section.

- **Heading** - A heading shows where the letter comes from. If letterhead stationery is not used, the address, not your name, is typed above the date 2 inches from the top.

- **The Return Address or Letterhead** – the return address is usually designed at the top of the sheet. It bears the company’s name, address and any other contact information.

- **Date** – MM.DD.YY. The month should be fully spelled out and the year written with all four digits October 12, 2005. The date is usually aligned with the return address.

- **The Inside Address** - the inside address identifies the person receiving the correspondence. It includes the recipient's name, company, address and postal code. Add job title if appropriate. Separate the recipient's name and title with a comma. Double check that you have the correct spelling of the recipient’s name.

- **The Salutation or Greeting.** The type of salutation depends on your relationship with the recipient. It normally begins with the word "Dear" and always includes the person’s last name. **Use every resource possible to address your letter to an actual person.** If you do not know the name or gender of your receiver, address it to Dear Sir/Madam (or Dear Sales Manager or Dear Human Resources Director).

- **The Subject Line (optional)** – though this may be an optional inclusion, it helps the recipient in dealing successfully with the aims of your letter. Normally the subject sentence is preceded with the word **Subject:** or **Re:** Subject line may be emphasized by underlining, using bold font, or all capital letters. It is usually placed one line below the greeting but alternatively it can be located directly after the "inside address," before the "greeting."

- **The Body (which includes the message)** - The body is where you explain the reason for your communication. It is the main part of the business letter. It includes information that will make the receiver know who you
are and why you are writing the communication. Begin with a new paragraph when you wish to introduce a new idea or element into your letter. Depending on the letter style you choose, (blocked, semi-blocked or simple) paragraphs may be indented. Regardless of format, skip a line between paragraphs.

- **The Complimentary Close** – this is a polite closing to your letter. Depending on the style chosen for the letter the complimentary close would be either at the left margin or its left edge is in the center. It begins at the same column the heading does.

- **Signature** - The signature is the last part of the letter. You should sign your first and last names. The signature line may include a second line for a title, if appropriate. The signature should start directly above the first letter of the signature line in the space between the close and the signature line.

- **Reference Section** - The reference section may include information about the message composer, the typist, and sometimes word processing data. Only initials are used. They are typed two spaces below the name and positions of the person signing the letter.

- **Initials** - Initials are to be included if someone other than the writer types the letter.

**Optional Parts of the Letter**

When appropriate, any of these optional parts can be included:

1. Attention line
2. Subject Line
3. Enclosure(s)
4. Copy Notation
5. File or Account number and mailing notation
6. Postscript

- **Attention Line** - To send a letter direct to a person or department, attention line is used especially when we don’t know a particular person or know only the person’s surname. Attention line is written between the inside address and salutation two spaces below and above respectively.

- **Subject Line** - It helps the reader to know at a glance what the letter is about. The subject line may include or omit the word subject. It is placed
below the salutations. It may be started from left hand margin or indented. The typing may be capitals or lowercase and underlined or all capitals.

- **Enclosure(s)** - An enclosure or attachment notation is included to remind the reader to check for additional pages of information. The enclosure is typed single or double space below the reference initials.

- **Copy Notation** - When persons other than the addressee will receive a copy of the message, it is noted by writing ‘C’, ‘PC’, ‘Copy’ or ‘CC’ followed by the names of these persons just below the reference initials or the enclosure notation.

- **File or Account number and mailing notation** - File or account number and Mailing Notation to aid in filing that file, loan, or account number be typed above the body of the letter.

- **Postscript** - Sometimes an extra message is added at the end of a letter. It may be something important or some personal comment. Write Ps or Ps and leave two spaces before the first word of the postscript.

The following are accepted postscript styles:

m / s

Enclosure

Ps. Mail the card today!

**BUSINESS LETTER FORMAT**

The format of the letter represents a visual of the business correspondence. Letters are classified into three formats.

- **Full Blocked format** – this is the most accepted format in the business world. In this format all elements are aligned to the left margin and no indentation lines

- **Semi-blocked format** – in this format the elements the first line of each paragraph is indented and the return address, date, closing and signature begin to the right of the center of the page

- **Modified Blocked** – similar to the semi blocked format. However in this format the elements in the first line of each paragraph are not indented.
All three formats are in common use, with the modified blocked format style with the indented paragraphs considered the most traditional format. Full blocked style, on the other hand, is the most contemporary and is rapidly becoming the norm.

**Figure - Full Blocked Format**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Name (and logo)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone/Fax number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail (optional)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2 blank lines after letterhead)

**Current date**

(4 blank lines)

Mr./Ms. Name of person you are writing, title

Company name
Address
City, Zip
Country (use only if writing to another country)

(2 blank lines)

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name: or...  Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,
(1 blank line if there is a subject; 2 blank lines if there is no subject)

Subject Line (Optional): Title of subject  before the salutation.
(1 blank line)

**Body Paragraph 1:** Explain who you are and why you are writing this letter

............................................................................................................................................................

(1 blank line)

**Body Paragraph 2:** Use facts, details and experiences to support your opinion or request.

............................................................................................................................................................

(1 blank line)

**Body Paragraph 3:** Tell the reader what you want him/her to do or what you will do for him/her.

............................................................................................................................................................

(1 blank line)

**Short sentence:** End your letter by saying something courteous to your reader.

(2 blank lines)

Sincerely, or... Sincerely yours,  -Capitalize only the first word in the complimentary close, and follow the phrase with a comma.

(3/4 blank lines)  --> Your handwritten signature

Your Name
Figure - Example of Full Blocked Format Letter

Cosmopolitan Enterprises

16 Clarke street- Port St. John
Appleton@hotmail.com

March 17, 2011

Mr. John Lambert

WINDWARD PACKAGING
38 STREET CHINA TOWN
VIEUX FORT
ST. LUCIA

(2 BLANK LINES)
DEAR MR. /MS. LAST NAME: OR... DEAR MR./MS. LAST NAME, 
(1 BLANK LINE IF THERE IS A SUBJECT; 2 BLANK LINES IF THERE IS NO SUBJECT)

SUBJECT LINE (OPTIONAL): TITLE OF SUBJECT BEFORE THE SALUTATION.
(1 BLANK LINE)
BODY PARAGRAPH 1: EXPLAIN WHO YOU ARE AND WHY YOU ARE WRITING THIS LETTER
............................................................... ............................................................... .......................

(1 BLANK LINE)
BODY PARAGRAPH 2: USE FACTS, DETAILS AND EXPERIENCES TO SUPPORT YOUR OPINION OR REQUEST.
............................................................... ............................................................... .......................

(1 BLANK LINE)
BODY PARAGRAPH 3: TELL THE READER WHAT YOU WANT HIM/HER TO DO OR WHAT YOU WILL DO FOR HIM/HER...
............................................................... ............................................................... .......................

(1 BLANK LINE)
SHORT SENTENCE: END YOUR LETTER BY SAYING SOMETHING COURTEOUS TO YOUR READER.
(2 BLANK LINES)

SINCERELY, OR... SINCERELY YOURS, -CAPITALIZE ONLY THE FIRST WORD IN THE COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE, AND FOLLOW THE PHRASE WITH A COMMA.

(3/4 BLANK LINES) ---> YOUR HANDWRITTEN SIGNATURE
DIFFERENT TYPES OF LETTERS

As letters are the most common form of communication they are used for different functions. The following are examples of some of the different letters that businesses use in their attempt at being efficient.

- **Acknowledgement Letter**: This type of letter is written when you want to acknowledge someone for his help or support when you were in trouble. The letter can be used to just say thanks for something you have received from someone, which is of great help to you.

- **Apology Letter**: An apology letter is written for a failure in delivering the desired results. If the person has taken up a task and he fails to meet the target then he apologizes and asks for an opportunity to improve in this type of letter.

- **Appreciation Letter**: An appreciation letter is written to appreciate some one's work in the organization. This type of letter is written by a superior to his junior. An organization can also write an appreciation letter to other organization, thanking the client for doing business with them.

- **Complaint Letter**: is written to show one that an error has occurred and that needs to be corrected as soon as possible. The letter can be used as a document that was used for warning the reader.

- **Inquiry Letter**: The letter of inquiry is written to inquire about a product or service. If you have ordered a product and yet not received it then you can write a letter to inquire when you will be receiving it.

- **Order Letter**: This letter is as the name suggests is used for ordering products. This letter can be used as a legal document to show the transaction between the customer and vendor.

- **Letter of Recommendation**: This type of letter is written to recommend a person for a job position. The letter states the positive aspects of the applicant's personality and how he/she would be an asset for the organization.
Figure – Example of an Invitation Letter

Name of business  
Street  
City, state, zip  
phone number  

August 15th, 20--  

Dear valued customer:  

Our records show that you have been our customer since our grand opening last year. We would like to thank you for your patronage by inviting you to our preferred customer Back-to-School Extravaganza, which will be held this Saturday.  

Saturday's sales event is invitation-only. All of our stock, including electronics, will be marked down 20% - 50%. Our doors will open for our preferred customers at 8:00 a.m. Complimentary coffee and donuts will be served. Public admission will begin at noon.  

Please accept the enclosed $5 gift certificate to use with your purchase of $30 or more and the $10 gift certificate to use with a purchase of more than $100.  

We look forward to seeing you on Saturday. Please bring this invitation with you; it is necessary for admittance.  

Sincerely,  

Your Title
Figure – Example of an Inquiry Letter

Kenneth Beare  
2520 Visita Avenue  
Olympia, WA 98501

Jackson Brothers  
3487 23rd Street  
New York, NY 12009

September 12, 2000

To Whom It May Concern:

With reference to your advertisement in yesterday's New York Times, could you please send me a copy of your latest catalog. I would also like to know if it is possible to make purchases online.

Yours faithfully

(Signature)

Kenneth Beare  
Administrative Director  
English Learners & Company
Document Makers  
2398 Red Street  
Salem, MA 34588  
March 10, 2011

Thomas R. Smith  
Drivers Co.  
3489 Greene Ave.  
Olympia, WA 98502

Dear Mr. Smith:

Are you having trouble getting your important documents formatted correctly? If you are like most business owners, you have trouble finding the time to economically produce good-looking documents. This is why it is important to have a specialist take care of your most important documents.

At Documents Makers, we have the skills and experience to come in and help you make the best possible impression. May we stop by and offer you a FREE estimate of how much it would cost to get your documents looking great? If so, give us a call at and set up an appointment with one of your friendly operators.

Sincerely,

(signature here)

Richard Brown  
President
Good Will Letters - The purpose of a good will letter is to foster the recipient’s good will towards the writer of the letter and his or her company product or service. Examples of goodwill letters are appreciation letters and thank you letters.
Remember the following when considering the use of good will letters

- A good will letter may be sent to different types of customers, such as loyal customers, new customers or potential customers

- Good will letters are usually written individually for a specific occasion. Special occasions may include expressing of gratitude, congratulations, sympathy or seasonal good wishes

- Customer-related goodwill letters are sent to a particular class of persons, especially loyal customers

- These letters should be written as soon as an appropriate occasion arises.

**Letters of Complaint** - Did you know that the letter of complaint is written by a person or organisation expressing displeasure about a service or product received? In writing a letter of complaint, remember the following:

- Do not be rude.

- Do not make general accusations of incompetence.

- Do not threaten action that is not justified by the situation or that you are not prepared to implement.

**ADDITIONAL TIPS**

In every business, there are different forms of correspondence that are used. Each type of correspondence has a purpose for its existence and has to be used effectively to achieve that purpose. A good memo and a good letter must employ the appropriate tone, it should uphold the image of your business by reflecting a high degree of professionalism.

Watch your sentence structure; proof read the letter several times to be sure you are saying what you want to say.

- Do not send photocopies or generic letters; you can create a model letter which can be used many times with slight revisions

- Do not e-mail or fax any business correspondence (resumes, applications, letters, etc.) unless you are specifically asked to do so. Even then, follow it up with a hard copy in the mail

- Be sure to sign the letter before you mail it
Remember that your letters represent you and may leave a lasting impression on the reader. It is very important to develop good letter writing skills.
UNIT SUMMARY

In this unit you examined three important types of business correspondence. More and more organisations are communicating with each other by e-mail and other forms of electronic messages. However the letter is still preferred for more formal exchanges, especially those in which speed of delivery is not a major factor. All three types of business correspondence require that you pay close attention to audience, purpose and tone. If you have a clear understanding of your purpose, and analysed your audience, you should experience little difficulty achieving the appropriate tone for the situation.

UNIT ASSIGNMENTS

Below are three assignments that you must complete and submit to your instructor for review, comment and grading.

Assignment One

A product that you have been using for a very long time and one that you especially like is suddenly no longer available in retail stores in your area. Write the manufacturer an inquiry letter requesting information about the product and how to place an order.

Proceeding as if you have received the information requested above write a letter ordering the product.

Once you have completed your assignment submit it to your instructor for review or feedback.

TIPS:

Here are some points to remember when writing an enquiry letter:

- State clearly what you want- do you need some information? A price list? A quotation?
- Keep your enquiry brief and to the point
- If necessary indicate the time frame you need a response to be sent to you
Assignment Two

Write a letter of complaint to the Manager of your Local electricity company. Your electricity has been disconnected for the last two days; however you had settled your current electricity bill six days ago. Your letter must have features of the blocked style of letter writing.

Once you have completed your assignment submit it to your instructor for review or feedback.

Assignment Three

The writer of the letter provided on the next page has committed a great many fundamental blunders, typos and mechanical errors. Rewrite the letter fixing all problems. Provide a copy of your revised letter to your instructor for feedback.
January 30, 2011

Ms. Janella Patrick
Northwest plumbing
3309 New lane Road
Vieux Fort-NYL 3349

Dear Northwest plumbing:

Last week your workers installed a new 50-gallon hot water heater in the basement of your North Side Plaza retail store, now the heater is leaking all over the floor.

Every time I call your phone number I get a recording that says you will return my call but you never do. As this has been going on for more than a week I must insist that you either call immediately or send a service person.

I’m getting tired of mopping up water!!!

Please see to this at your very earliest convenience!

Your’s truly

Robert creek

ROBERT CREEK
STORE MANAGER
UNIT 3—BUSINESS MEETINGS, REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

UNIT INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will focus on meetings, formal reports and formal presentations as an important form of communication in an organisation. Business meetings are a useful method to face-to-face communication between a group of people who may meet to share, discuss and exchange information. A meeting is only useful if it is well organised and if those attending know why it is being held and what is meant to be achieved. At meetings business professionals are often asked to make formal presentations using some form of visual aids. In addition a meeting may be reviewing and make decisions about a business report that has been circulated to peers. This unit will focus on what it takes to have efficient and productive meetings, produce effective presentations and write formal reports.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to:

1. Identify different types of meetings.
2. Describe the different types of meetings which take place in business.
3. Outline the elements necessary to plan a productive meeting and present a formal presentation.
4. Create essential documentation used in meetings and reports.
5. Organise and structure meetings.
6. Write company reports.
7. Plan and deliver business presentations at a meeting or other locations.

UNIT READINGS

As you complete this unit you are required to read the following chapters/articles:

- Genv.net. (nd.). Running a Meeting. (Web Site). Available at: http://www.genv.net/en-us/do_it/running_a_meeting

ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

In this unit you will discuss meetings as an important forum for communication within a business. Thereafter you will complete a series of activities that will bring will help you identify what it takes to have efficient and productive meetings. In this unit you will be assessed as in the following ways:

- In-text activities throughout the unit.
- Self-assessment exercise which will be completed at the end of the unit.
TOPIC 3.1 – BUSINESS MEETINGS

INTRODUCTION
Much of the communication that takes place in the workplace happens in small group meetings. It has been estimated that managers spend most of their time attending meetings. Unfortunately too many of those meetings are unproductive because specific goals have not been set for the meetings. To ensure productivity of meetings, it is important to take great care in the planning and conducting of such meetings.

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this topic you should be able to:

1. Explain the definition, terminologies and concepts related to meetings.
2. Differentiate between the different categories of meetings.
4. Identify the different types of documents used during meetings.
5. Discuss the requirements for valid meetings.

MEETINGS
What are meetings? – Meetings are gatherings in which persons work together to achieve a common goal. The best preparation for a meeting is having a specific goal that would be best handled in a face to face situation. Meetings provide a forum where individuals can share, discuss and exchange information as well as analyse and solve problems. Meetings can be conducted in one location (the office), but because of the advancement of technology, today meetings may be conducted on the phone, via teleconferencing and also via the internet.

A meeting is an effective useful communication tool because it allows persons within the workplace to:

- benefit from each other’s view point and opinion
- share, discuss and exchange information
- analyse and solve problems
- discuss issues of mutual interest
- exchange up to date information to make sure that everyone is aware of current events, schedules and developments

- Talk about planned events developments and exchange ideas and suggestions for action.

**MEETING TERMINOLOGY**

During meetings there are specialist words and phrases that are used. Some to these are Latin words that are still formally used today. (Taylor, 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>For a particular purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjourn</td>
<td>To postpone or put off with the intention of resuming later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casting vote</td>
<td>The decisive, formal vote cast by the chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convene</td>
<td>The formal term used to call a meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex officio</td>
<td>Describes a person entitled to attend a meeting because of the importance of that persons position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxy</td>
<td>Someone entitled to vote on another’s behalf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quorum</td>
<td>A certain number of people who must be present to make a valid meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sine die</td>
<td>“without date” used in relation to an adjournment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unanimous</td>
<td>Everyone in favor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLASSIFICATION OF MEETINGS**

Depending on the topic of the meeting, meetings may be classified as **formal** or **informal**.

- **Formal meetings** have set rules and procedures that must be followed and a completed written record must be made. In formal meetings, the organisation has to ensure that decisions taken at the end of the meeting are based on a legal framework and that the decisions are legally correct. It is important that persons attending such meetings be made fully aware of the procedures which govern these meetings.
- Informal meetings have no set rules (unless some rules have been devised by the organisation). In some cases a completed written record can be made on completion of the meeting.

**Figure – Examples of Formal and Informal Meetings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMAL</th>
<th>INFORMAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual General Meeting</td>
<td>Departmental meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Ordinary General Meeting</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Meeting</td>
<td>Middle management meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Meeting</td>
<td>Working parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management Meeting</td>
<td>Project groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team briefings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let’s explore each type of meeting.

**Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

AGMs are held once a year to assess the operations of a business over the year. All shareholders are invited to attend the AGM, however they must be given 21 days notice of the meeting date and venue.

**Board Meetings**

Board meetings are held as often as individual businesses require. They are attended by all directors and chaired by the chairman of the board.

**Departmental Meetings**

These meetings are called by the head of a department or manager of a certain section. All staff will be invited to attend so that information can be
passed on or reports received from some members of staff regarding specific projects.

**Working Parties**

Working parties may be set up to work together on a specific project or problem. At meetings, progress reports will be given and decisions for further action be taken.

The success of any meeting depends largely on the effectiveness of its leader. If the leader is prepared and has selected participants carefully, the meeting will generally be productive. A good meeting is a cross-flow of discussions and not limited to one individual only. Good leaders guide, mediate, probe, stimulate and summarize the meeting; however they also let others express their ideas. A good meeting leader is responsible for the following:

- Keeping the meeting moving along.
- Pacing the meeting and limiting the time spent on each item on the agenda.
- Summarizing the meeting achievements.

**Convening a Meeting**

For a meeting to be valid, it is usually necessary that the following be taken into consideration:

1. **The meeting is properly constituted** – in the event that members at the meeting are appointed or elected, it is important that they be notified of their appointment or election according to the founding document of the assembly

2. **The meeting be properly convened** - for meeting to be properly convened they should take the following procedure:
   - Notices must be sent out to persons who will be attending the meeting
   - Adequate time be given before the meeting can be convened
   - A reasonable time and place must be identified
   - The matters to be discussed must be communicated to the parties involved unless otherwise stated
• Usually a time frame of 14 days is given from the time the notice of the meeting is sent out to the time the meeting is convened.

3. **A quorum be formed** - A quorum stipulates the minimum number of persons who need to be available at a meeting before it can begin. Usually the organisation stipulates this number; however it is necessary to establish procedure for dealing either a situation of when there is no quorum present. In the absence of a quorum, the meeting may be adjourned until a quorum is reached or the total membership present may be considered a quorum.

4. **Motions are properly presented** – A motion is an idea for action on which the rest of the people in the meeting vote and the organisation may usually specify the procedure for proposing a motion. If there is need to change the motion, than an amendment to the motion can be proposed and voted on. If an amendment motion is accepted, it becomes a substantive motion and can be debated and voted on.

5. **Resolutions are properly approved** – when a motion has been properly approved it becomes a resolution.

6. **The method of voting be specified** – the commonly used methods of voting include:
   - Show of hands.
   - Poll.
   - Ballot.
   - Voice.

7. **Satisfactory records be maintained** – it is important that after a meeting has been conducted that satisfactory records of the meeting be kept and made available to anybody who wishes to enquire about the meeting in the future.
**Activity - Voting**

Describe the circumstances where you would use the different methods of voting specified above.

Record your response in your course journal.

**DOCUMENTING MEETINGS**

Even if the meeting is very informal, it is unlikely that it will have no paperwork at all. Even if no notes are made, it is still possible that everyone will need a list of all the items to be discussed at the meeting. This information will should be circulated to persons well in advance of the meeting to allow them the opportunity to acquaint themselves of the matters to be discussed before the meeting.

There are some specific meeting documents that need to be made available, all of which serve a useful purpose.

**Notice of the Meeting** – this document tells persons where and when the meeting will be held. This serves as written notice of the event. For informal meetings notice may be sent via an e-mail or a memo. The notice of the meeting is sent out at a suitable time to allow those expected for the meeting enough time to prepare for the meeting. Notices usually contain the following information:

- name of the organisation convening the meeting
- address of the convening organisation
- type of meeting
- date on which the notice was written
- date, time and place of the meeting
- business to be transacted
- secretary’s or organisations phone number
- name and signature of the person sending out the notice
Agenda – this document tells persons what will be discussed at the meeting. The list of items to be discussed is usually incorporated into the notice to save time. Agendas usually contain the following information:

- **Registration**: this section is used mainly for taking the record of persons present at the meeting

- **Welcome and apologies**: this section contains the welcome remarks made by the chairperson followed by the announcements of the names of those who indicated that they would be unable to attend the meeting.

- **Confirmation of minutes of the previous meetings**: this section allows for members who were present at the last meeting to confirm that they have read the minutes of the previous meeting

- **Matters arising from the minutes and not on the agenda**: this section discusses matters that may arise out of the minutes but have not been placed on the agenda. If the issue being raised from the minutes is already on the agenda then it is left to be discussed later

- **Any other business**: this section that appears at the end of the agenda incorporates any relevant and important information that needs consideration but has not been placed on the agenda at the time it was circulated.

An example agenda is provided on the next page.
Figure – Example Notice and Agenda

Management Designs and consultants

1154 -332 upper land Road

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The next meeting of the Committee will be held in room 209 at the International conference center on Tuesday 8 March 2011

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the previous meeting
3. Matters arising
4. New fire regulation
5. Planned electrical rewiring assignment
6. Any other business
7. Date and time of next meeting

Malipo John- Company secretary
15 March 2011

Chairpersons Agenda –this document helps the chairpersons run the meeting more effectively. This lists the items to be discussed with additional useful information and noting down what has been agreed. These documents are usually only required for formal meetings and some chairpersons do not use them at all.
### Figure – Example Chairperson Agenda

**Meeting: HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**Date/time:** 8 March 2011  
**Place:** International conference center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Apologies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea James on leave until further notice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Minutes of the previous meeting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Matters arising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New fire regulation-preparation of documentation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regarding the new fire code for the building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned electrical rewiring assignment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be distributed among the 15 rewiring agents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Any other business</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Date and time of next meeting</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggest 19 April 2011  

**Malipo John- Company secretary**  

15 March 2011

**Minutes** – these documents record what was discussed and the action people agreed to take – both for future references and as a reminder of what were discussed during the meeting. There are different types of minutes for different types of meetings:

- **Verbatim minutes** – these are used primarily in court reporting where everything needs to be recorded word for word

- **Minutes of narration** – provides a concise summary of all the discussions which took place during the meeting.
• **Minutes of action** lists only the conclusions and the action agreed during the meeting.

• **Minutes of resolutions** are produced for very formal meetings, such as the AGM.

Minutes are prepared for the following reasons:

- To record the decisions that is made at a meeting.
- To avoid any misunderstandings that may arise after the meeting has been completed.
- For future reference.
- As a legal record.

Minutes include the following elements:

- The name of the organisation.
- The type of meeting.
- When and where it should be held.
- The name of persons present and the contributions that they have made during the meeting.
- The items discussed in the same order as they appear on the agenda.
- The action column giving the initials of all those who agreed to do something before the meeting.
- Space for the chairperson to sign and date the meeting.

**TECHNIQUES OF MINUTE-TAKING**

The following conventions apply while writing minutes:

- Minutes are always written in the third person, past tense and using reported speech. You should therefore never write ‘I’, ‘We’ or ‘you’. The past tense is used because the meeting has now ended, so you are writing about a past event. As you are using reported speech, ie, reporting what people said, you should never use quotation marks.

- Slang and colloquial expressions are not written in minutes. Neither are strong adjectives, expletives or exaggerated statements.
• Good minute writers avoid repetition.

Remember that it is important to communicate the date and venue of the meeting, giving your audience sufficient time or notice. The notice of a meeting, the agenda and the minutes are the three documents used during meetings. Reference can however be made for the use of other documents when the need arises.
Figure - Sample Minutes of Meeting

Camping for a Cause Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 14
4:00-5:00 p.m. at Lincoln H.S. Commons

Meeting participants: Dave, Naveena, Rachel, Tony, Shilpi, Lily

1. Opening/Introductions: Tony has just joined Camping for a Cause.

2. Regular Updates: Naveena gave an update on our finances. $50 of our Youth Venture money has been spent. A discussion was then held about the financial goals for the first camping night. It was agreed that we want to raise $1,000. An entrance fee for participants will raise part of this money, but other fundraising efforts are also necessary. **Action Item:** Naveena will draft a donation request letter and bring it to the next meeting.

3. Website Update: Naveena launched our website last week with help from Lily. Naveena would like more volunteers to help maintain the website. Tony volunteered to help maintain the website.

4. Upcoming Informational Meeting: We will hold an informational meeting on December 15th at 4:30 to get people interested in camping and refugee issues. We plan to invite guest speakers and offer refreshments. It was decided that we will be serving pizza at the meeting. Rachel and Lily offered to design a promotional poster for this meeting. **Action Items:** Dave researches pizza prices. Shilpi will see if any of her colleagues are willing to be the guest speaker. Rachel and Lily meet at the library on Friday at 5:00 to design posters. Any volunteers are welcome to join. Lily talks to her mom about printing the posters.

5. First Camping Night: The first Camping for a Cause camping event is tentatively scheduled for March. The location, date, and supervision needs to be approved by the Principal. **Action Items:** Dave arranges a meeting with the Principal to work out details. Every team member asks at least one adult to be a supervisor.

6. Closing: The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on November 28 in Lincoln High School Commons.
MEETING PARTICIPANT ROLES

When running a meeting, it is important to know who is doing what. Assigning team members a specific role can help the meeting run more smoothly. Each team is different, but below are some examples of meeting roles:

1. **Team Leader/Facilitator:** A Leader is usually responsible for setting a base agenda, facilitating meetings, and encouraging communication among team members as needed. This is the person in charge of motivating the team to accomplish its task and making sure the Venture is staying on track.

2. **Recorder/Secretary:** The Team Recorder is responsible for writing down the team's key points, ideas, and decisions. He/She is also in charge of taking minutes (notes) at each team meeting, and distributing them to team members after the meeting. It is important to record comments as accurately as possible. If the Recorder can't write fast enough, ask the speaker to slow down or repeat a comment. Recording the team's ideas is important, so invest the time needed to do it well.

3. **Treasurer:** A treasurer is responsible for keeping correct and up-to-date records of the team's money. He/She should also be in charge of making sure the group stays within the guidelines of the budget. When an event or activity is being planned, the group should always consult the treasurer to make sure there is enough money to support the cost.

4. **Time-Keeper:** A time-keeper makes sure the meeting keeps within time limits. Time-keepers should be assertive about keeping the meeting on track, making sure the meeting starts and ends on time, and keeping the discussion focused.

5. **Evaluator:** An evaluator is in charge of leading evaluation at the end of the meeting. He/She asks the group about what worked, what didn’t work, and what was missing from the meeting.

6. **Active Participant:** Every meeting attendee that is not serving as the facilitator, secretary, or evaluator can be asked to be an active participant. Active participants give feedback on agenda items, listen to their peers, volunteer for action steps, encourage the group, and have a positive attitude. Active participants show they are engaged through eye contact, body language, and appropriate responses to questions.
Giving each team member a role for the meeting—and rotating these roles each meeting—is a great and simple way to share responsibility and power among members.

**CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE MEETINGS**

The process used in a meeting depends on the kind of meeting you plan to have, e.g., staff meeting, planning meeting, problem solving meeting, etc. However, there are certain basics that are common to various types of meetings. These basics are described below.

**Selecting Participants**

- The decision about who is to attend depends on what you want to accomplish in the meeting. This may seem too obvious to state, but it's surprising how many meetings occur without the right people there.

- Don't depend on your own judgment about who should come. Ask several other people for their opinion as well.

- If possible, call each person to tell them about the meeting, its overall purpose and why their attendance is important.

- Follow-up your call with a meeting notice, including the purpose of the meeting, where it will be held and when, the list of participants and whom to contact if they have questions.

- Send out a copy of the proposed agenda along with the meeting notice.

- Have someone designated to record important actions, assignments and due dates during the meeting. This person should ensure that this information is distributed to all participants shortly after the meeting.

**Developing Agendas**

- Develop the agenda together with key participants in the meeting. Think of what overall outcome you want from the meeting and what activities need to occur to reach that outcome. The agenda should be organized so that these activities are conducted during the meeting.

- In the agenda, state the overall outcome that you want from the meeting.
• Design the agenda so that participants get involved early by having something for them to do right away and so they come on time.

• Next to each major topic, include the type of action needed, the type of output expected (decision, vote, action assigned to someone), and time estimates for addressing each topic.

• Ask participants if they'll commit to the agenda.

• Keep the agenda posted at all times.

• Don't overly design meetings; be willing to adapt the meeting agenda if members are making progress in the planning process.

• Think about how you label an event, so people come in with that mindset; it may pay to have a short dialogue around the label to develop a common mindset among attendees, particularly if they include representatives from various cultures.

**Opening Meetings**

• Always start on time; this respects those who showed up on time and reminds late-comers that the scheduling is serious.

• Welcome attendees and thank them for their time.

• Review the agenda at the beginning of each meeting, giving participants a chance to understand all proposed major topics, change them and accept them.

• Note that a meeting recorder if used will take minutes and provide them back to each participant shortly after the meeting.

• Model the kind of energy and participant needed by meeting participants.

• Clarify your role(s) in the meeting.

**Meeting Ground Rules**

• You don't need to develop new ground rules each time you have a meeting. However, it pays to have a few basic ground rules that can be used for most of your meetings. These ground rules cultivate the basic ingredients needed for a successful meeting.
Four powerful ground rules are: participate, get focus, maintain momentum and reach closure. (You may want a ground rule about confidentiality.)

List your primary ground rules on the agenda.

If you have new attendees who are not used to your meetings, you might review each ground rule.

Keep the ground rules posted at all times.

**Time Management**

One of the most difficult facilitation tasks is time management -- time seems to run out before tasks are completed. Therefore, the biggest challenge is keeping momentum to keep the process moving.

You might ask attendees to help you keep track of the time.

If the planned time on the agenda is getting out of hand, present it to the group and ask for their input as to a resolution. (Also see Time Management.)

**Evaluations of Meeting Process**

It is amazing how often people will complain about a meeting being a complete waste of time -- but they only say so after the meeting. Get their feedback during the meeting when you can improve the meeting process right away. Evaluating a meeting only at the end of the meeting is usually too late to do anything about participants' feedback.

Every couple of hours, conduct 5-10 minutes "satisfaction checks".

in a round-table approach, quickly have each participant indicate how they think the meeting is going.

**Evaluating Meeting Success**

Leave 5-10 minutes at the end of the meeting to evaluate the meeting; don't skip this portion of the meeting.

Have each member rank the meeting from 1-5, with 5 as the highest, and have each member explain their ranking.
- Have the chief executive rank the meeting last.

**Closing Meetings**

- Always end meetings on time and attempt to end on a positive note.
- At the end of a meeting, review actions and assignments, and set the time for the next meeting and ask each person if they can make it or not (to get their commitment).
- Clarify that meeting minutes and/or actions will be reported back to members in at most a week (this helps to keep momentum going).

**Meeting Facilitator Roles and Tools**

If you are the facilitator for the meeting, it would be important to remember the following information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Dialogue Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get the meeting started.</td>
<td>&quot;Today we need to review ____ patients. Are there other urgent concerns?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage communication and involvement of all members.</td>
<td>&quot;What are the rehabilitation needs that you see?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask team members for opinions and feelings to encourage discussion.</td>
<td>&quot;What is your view of the family’s request?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for a summary of the discussion.</td>
<td>&quot;What are the care plan goals we have agreed upon?&quot; Can someone summarize?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase what someone has said to help members understand each other.</td>
<td>&quot;Are you saying that we need more information on liver function?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for specific examples to improve understanding.</td>
<td>&quot;Please give some examples.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify assumptions.</td>
<td>&quot;Your recommendation assumes that the patient is too confused to make an independent decision.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meetings are an important element in business, and how you conduct a meeting becomes an essential part of your business. Meetings provide a forum for generating and sharing ideas or information. They are also a tool for managing a group and giving the group the opportunity for face-to-face contact. You have learnt that meetings can either be formal or informal and both these types have their own relevance in the business. It is important to remember also that there are specific documents that need to be used at a meeting. These documents will determine the rules and conduct of the meeting.

**SUMMARY**

Give yourself a big pat on the back! You have acquired a great deal of information on how to become an effective communicator. In this topic you were introduced to meetings that are gatherings in which people work to gather to achieve or attain a goal or objective, and you learnt that meetings are a very important component of effective business communications. We looked at the different types of meetings that you could employ in today’s business environment as well as the documents (such as notices, agenda, and minutes) and procedures necessary to follow when conducting a meeting. Good documentation is essential to ensure productive and effective meetings.
UNIT 3 – MEETING ASSIGNMENTS

Based on what you have learned about meetings you are asked to complete the following two assignments and submit them to your instructor for review, feedback and grading.

Assignment One – Meeting Preparations

You have been asked by your manager to organise a meeting with all your company employees in order to inform them of the company decision to relocate office to a new town, and to discuss also the possibility of layoffs.

(1) What preparations will you make for the meeting?

(2) What documentation will you prepare for the meeting?

(3) Create an agenda for this meeting.

Once you have completed this assignment submit it to your instructor for review, feedback and grading.

Assignment Two – Meeting Preparations

You have just started working for windward islands catering company. On your first day you were asked to attend a committee meeting. The meeting was scheduled to start at 9:00 am but it was late by an hour. The meeting began with no agenda nor minutes from the previous meeting. There was a lot of noise from members who were at the meeting and persons were preoccupied with other activities rather than listening to the meeting. No body seemed to notice that you were there and after the meeting you still did not know what the purpose of the meeting was...

1. Identify the steps that you would take to make this meeting successful.

2. Do you think that this meeting was governed by any meeting procedures? Briefly discuss these procedures.

3. What do you think the impact of such a meeting would be for a business?

Submit your observations to your instructor for review, feedback and grading.
TOPIC 3.2 - BUSINESS REPORTS

INTRODUCTION
Reports are documents designed to record and convey information to the reader. Reports are part of any business or organization; from credit reports to police reports, they serve to document specific information for specific audiences, goals, or functions. The type of report is often identified by its primary purpose or function, as in an accident report, a laboratory report, a sales report, or even a book report. Reports are often analytical, or involve the rational analysis of information. Sometimes they simply “report the facts” with no analysis at all, but still need to communicate the information in a clear and concise format. Other reports summarize past events, present current data, and forecast future trends. While a report may have conclusions, propositions, or even a call to action, the demonstration of the analysis is the primary function. A sales report, for example, is not designed to make an individual sale. It is, however, supposed to report sales to date, and may forecast future sales based on previous trends. This chapter is designed to introduce you to the basics of report writing.

Business reports are therefore a type of assignment in which you analyze a situation (either a real situation or a case study) and apply business theories to produce a range of suggestions for improvement.

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this topic you should be able to:

1. Identify the different types of reports that are used in today's world
2. Explain the roles and purpose of written reports in business communication
3. Identify the main components reports
4. Apply the basic steps in the preparation of reports
5. Select a suitable structure and format for the report

REPORTS
You will now be introduced to one of the most essential documents in business communication – the Report. But let us first try to understand what this document is by answering the questions below.
Activity – What is a Report

1. Describe when you should produce a formal report?
2. What should a formal report contain?

Record your responses in your course journal.

A Business Report is an impartial, objective, planned presentation of facts to one or more persons for a specific business purpose. An orderly, objective message used to convey information from one organizational area to another or from one institution to another to assist in decision making or problem solving.”

PURPOSE OF A REPORT

A business report has a number of purposes including.

- Examine available and potential solutions to a problem, situation, or issue.
- Apply business and management theory to a practical situation.
- Demonstrate your analytical, reasoning, and evaluation skills in identifying and weighing-up possible solutions and outcomes.
- Reach conclusions about a problem or issue.
- Provide recommendations for future action.
- Show concise and clear communication skills.

When writing the report, it is important that you consider the audience you are writing for: are you writing for the CEO or will the report be available to all staff concerned? It is also vital that you ensure an appropriate level of formality, sensitivity, fairness, and objectivity.

Table - Purpose of Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Reports</th>
<th>Common Examples</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To monitor and control Operations</td>
<td>Plans, operating reports, personal activity reports</td>
<td>Internal reports move upward on recurring basis; external reports go to selected audiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To implement policies and procedures</td>
<td>Lasting guideline, position papers</td>
<td>Internal reports move downward or on a non-recurring basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Reports</td>
<td>Common Examples</td>
<td>Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To comply with regulatory requirements</td>
<td>Reports IRS, SEC, EEOC, Human Rights Commission</td>
<td>External reports are sent on a recurring basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To obtain new business or findings</td>
<td>Sales proposals</td>
<td>External reports are sent on a nonrecurring basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To document client work</td>
<td>Interim progress reports, final reports</td>
<td>External reports are sent on a nonrecurring basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To guide decisions</td>
<td>Research reports, justification reports, trouble shooting reports</td>
<td>Internal reports move upward on a non-recurring basis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLASSIFICATIONS OF REPORTS**

Reports may be classified as follows:

- **Formal reports** are carefully structured; they stress objectivity and organization, contain, much detail, and are written in a style that tends to eliminate such elements as personal pronouns.

- **Informal reports** are usually short messages with natural, casual use of language. The internal memorandum generally can be described as an informal report.

- **Regular and Routine Reports** - these are reports that are written on a regular basis. They include sales reports, maintenance reports, financial reports, progress reports, health and safety reports etc.

- **Occasional Reports** - these are reports that are written to deal with particular incidences that may happen in or around the job. They include Accident reports and disciplinary reports.

- **Specially commissioned reports** – These are reports that a writer for special purposes and for special review. These include Market Research reports, personnel reports, policy reports Investigatory reports, market forecasting reports etc.
BUSINESS REPORT STRUCTURE

Business reports typically adopt the sections listed below.

- Introduction.
- Discussion.
- Conclusion.
- Recommendations.

Introduction

This is the first section of the report and is easiest to write. The purpose of the introduction is to:

- State the purpose or aim of the report, which may include who has asked for it, if relevant.
- Provide background details relevant to the situation, such as a brief overview of historical developments, as well as definitions of any terms that are unlikely to be recognized by the audience.
- Summaries the problems and recommended solutions.
- Clarify any limitations, restrictions, and/or assumptions made in undertaking your investigation of the situation, such as restrictions on time, lack of money, limited access to information and people, and/or assumptions made about the organization because of the lack of information available.

In general, one page is more than adequate to address the issues typically required in an introduction.

Discussion

The discussion section is generally the only section where you are able to support your analysis and reasoning with ideas and, concepts available within the course. Secondly, it is the only place where you can actually provide evidence to back up your conclusions and recommendations. Therefore, ensure that you draw on evidence from the literature, course materials, as well as your own observations from the actual case or organization, where applicable.
A key task of the discussion is for you to be able to identify the problem(s) and then consider a range of possible solutions. Consequently, it may be useful in preparing this section to identify your conclusions and recommendations first, before proceeding to support these outcomes in the discussion.

Once you have planned the points you need to cover in your discussion, it is very appropriate to look at creating different sub-sections within the discussion that encompass and frame each of the issues, with meaningful headings for each sub-section. When writing each sub-section within the discussion, the following structure may be useful for demonstrating the process you used to carry out your analysis and evaluation.

- **Identify the problem**: Example: The problem involves a lack of communication among staff members in the business

- **Identify the cause**: Example: This is caused by a lack of communication skills and a lack of leadership from support people.

- **Identify the symptoms**: Example: As a result, the business is constantly in conflict with its customers as customer relations is very poor.

- **Identify the possible solutions**: This can be achieved by organizing communication skills workshops for staff as well as customer service workshops.

**Conclusion**

This is arranged as a numbered, bulleted-list.

- Arrange each point in order of importance, rather than necessarily in the order found in your discussion.

- Match each point in sequence with the list of recommendations.

- Each point provides a brief summary of one of the problems outlined in detail in the report.

- Ensure each point links with the report’s objectives.

- Write each conclusion in the present tense.

- Each point needs to be specific and clear.
Recommendations

This is also arranged as a numbered, bulleted-list.

- Each recommendation should appear in sequence with the order of points in the list of conclusions.
- Each recommendation should provide a response to each problem identified in the list of conclusions.
- Each recommendation should be action-oriented, concise, and clear.
- Each recommendation should also be realistic and feasible within the social, economic, and political climate.
- Write each recommendation in the future tense, as appropriate.

The order of these sections varies depending on whether it is an inductive or deductive report. Business reports will also need a reference list, and sometimes a covering letter, covering memo, and/or executive summary.

Types of Business Reports

Reports come in all sizes, but are typically longer than a page and somewhat shorter than a book. The type of report depends on its function. The function of the report is its essential purpose, often indicated in the purpose statement. The function will also influence the types of visual content or visual aids, representing words, numbers, and their relationships to the central purpose in graphic, representational ways that are easy for the reader to understand. The function may also contribute to parameters like report length (page or word count) or word choice and readability. “Focusing on the content of your longer business documents is not only natural but necessary because doing so helps ensure complete, correct information.” Bovee, C., & Thill, J. (2010).

Informational Or Analytical Report

There are two main categories for reports, regardless of their specific function or type. An informational report informs or instructs and presents details of events, activities, individuals, or conditions without analysis. An example of this type of “just the facts” report is a police accident report. The report will note the time, date, place, contributing factors like weather, and identification information for the drivers involved in an automobile accident. It does not establish fault or include judgmental statements. You should not see “Driver was falling down drunk” in a police accident report. Instead, you would see
“Driver failed sobriety tests and breathalyzer test and was transported to the station for a blood sample.” The police officer is not a trained medical doctor and is therefore not licensed to make definitive diagnoses, but can collect and present relevant information that may contribute to that diagnosis.

The second type of report is called an **analytical report**. An analytical report presents information with a comprehensive analysis to solve problems, demonstrate relationships, or make recommendations. An example of this report may be a field report by a Ministry of Health official concerning the an outbreak of common cold, noting symptoms, disease progression, steps taken to arrest the spread of the flu, and to make recommendations on the treatment of patients. Bovee, C., & Thill, J. (2010).

Table 4.1 describes some common reports that, depending on the audience needs, may be informational or analytical.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Laboratory Report</td>
<td>Communicate the procedures and results of laboratory activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Research Report</td>
<td>Study problems scientifically by developing hypotheses, collecting data, analyzing data, and indicating findings or conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Field Study Report</td>
<td>Describe one-time events, such as trips, conferences, seminars, as well as reports from branch offices, industrial and manufacturing plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Progress Report</td>
<td>Monitor and control production, sales, shipping, service, or related business process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Technical Report</td>
<td>Communication process and product from a technical perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Case Study</td>
<td>Represent, analyze, and present lessons learned from a specific case or example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Needs Assessment Report</td>
<td>Assess the need for a service or product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Comparative Advantage Report</td>
<td>Discuss competing products or services with an analysis of relative advantages and disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Feasibility Study</td>
<td>Analyze problems and predict whether current solutions or alternatives will be practical, advisable, or produced the desired outcome(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Function</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Instruction Manuals</td>
<td>Communicate step-by-step instructions on the use of a product or service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Compliance Report</td>
<td>Document and indicate the extent to which a product or service is within established compliance parameters or standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Cost-Benefit Analysis Report</td>
<td>Communicate costs and benefits of products or services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Decision Report</td>
<td>Make recommendations to management and become tools to solve problems and make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Benchmark Report</td>
<td>Establish criteria and evaluate alternatives by measuring against the establish benchmark criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Examination Report</td>
<td>Report or record data obtained from an examination of an item or conditions, including accidents and natural disasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Physical Description report</td>
<td>Describe the physical characteristics of a machine, a device, or object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Literature Review</td>
<td>Present summaries of the information available on a given subject</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Adopted from: Business Communications for Success by Scott McLean.*

**WHAT MAKES A GOOD BUSINESS REPORT?**

Business reports are commonly used in most businesses. They are used to provide a formal, verifiable link among people, places, and times. Some reports are needed for internal communication: others are vehicles for corresponding with outsiders. Some are required as a permanent record; others are needed to solve an immediate problem or to answer a passing question. Many move upward through the chain of command to help managers monitor the various units in the organization; some move downward to explain management decisions to lower-level employees responsible for day-to-day operations.

A well-prepared business report will provide **COMPLETE, ACCURATE** information about an aspect your business operations. The subject of a report may vary from expenses to profits, production to sales, marketing trends to customer relations. The information provided by a report is often meant to influence decisions, to determine changes, improvements, or solutions to problems. Therefore, the report must also be **CLEAR, CONCISE, and READABLE.**
The format of a business report may vary, from a brief informal report intended for in-house use to a voluminous formal report intended for a national public distribution. Some reports consist entirely of prose while others consist of statistics; and still other reports may employ a combination of prose, tables, charts, and graphs.

The style of a report depends upon the audience. An informal report to be read only by close associates may be worded personally; in such a report “I” or “we” is acceptable. A formal report, on the other hand, must be impersonal and expressed entirely in the third person. Note the difference

**STYLE EXAMPLES**

**Informal Example 1** - I recommend that the spring campaign concentrate on newspaper and television advertising.

**Formal Example 1** - It is recommended that the spring campaign concentrate on newspaper and television advertising.

**Informal Example 2** - After discussing the matter with our department managers, we came up with the following information.

**Formal Example 2** - The following report is based upon information provided by the managers of the Accounting, Marketing, Personnel, and Advertising Departments.

**DECIDING ON FORMAT AND LENGTH**

**Preprinted Form**: Basically a “fill in the blank” reports. Most are relatively short (five or fewer pages) and deal with routine information, often mainly numerical. Use this format when it’s requested by the person authorizing the report.

**Letter**: Common for reports of five or fewer pages that are directed to outsiders. These reports include all the normal parts of a letter, but they may also have headings, footnotes, tables, and figures.

**Memo**: Common for short (fewer than ten pages) informal reports distributed within an organization. Memos have headings at the top: To, From, Date, and Subject. In addition, like longer reports, they often have internal headings and sometimes have visual.(organizational plan)

**THE MEMO REPORT**

A memo report is a cross between interoffice memo and a formal report

Memo reports can be used to:
- Answer a request for information
- Report progress
- Make recommendations
- State facts
- Communicates ideas
- Send statistical data
- Explain trend within an organization
Figure - Example of a Memo Report

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 16, 2012
TO: Jonathan Purdy
Physical Plant Supervisor
FROM: Bonnie Cardillo - Nurse

SUBJECT: Incident Report

John Fitzsimmons, a claims adjuster, slipped and fell in the front lobby of the building, striking his head and momentarily losing consciousness.

DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT
At approximately 2:55 p.m. on Friday, October 13, Fitzsimmons was returning from his break when he slipped and fell in the front lobby, striking his head on the stone floor and momentarily losing consciousness. According to Beverly Barrett, the receptionist, the floor had just been mopped and was still wet. She paged Mike Moore, the security officer, who in turn paged me. When I arrived at approximately 3:00 p.m., Fitzsimmons had revived. I immediately checked his vital signs, which were normal. He refused further medical attention and returned to work. I advised him to contact me if he experienced any subsequent discomfort, but to my knowledge there has been none.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Two ideas come to mind:
1. Perhaps we should remind all employees to contact me first (rather than Security) in situations involving personal injury.

   The sooner I’m contacted, the sooner I can respond. Obviously, time can be an important factor if the problem is serious.

2. To prevent other occurrences of this nature, perhaps the maintenance staff should be provided with large, brightly colored warning signs alerting employees and the public alike to the presence of wet floors.

   I see these signs in use at the mall, the hospital, and elsewhere, and they don’t appear expensive. I have also noted that many are bilingual, bearing both the English warning “Caution: Wet Floor” and the Spanish “Cuidado: Piso Mojado.” No doubt they can be ordered from any of the catalogs regularly received by your office.
**Types of Memo Reports**

1. Informational Memorandum Reports.

2. Analytical Memo Reports.

**Informational Memorandum Reports**

The central purpose of informational reports is to inform and to summarize information, similar to the speech to inform. Obviously, these reports vary widely in content, depending on type of business, purpose, topics discussed, and readers’ needs. The following reports are often used in organizations:

Information Memo reports will:

- Inform
- To summarize some information requested
- Organize information objectively
- Make recommendation

**Progress Reports**

Progress reports show, “progress,” accomplishments, or activity over time or at a given stage of a major assignment. The organizational plan is usually inductive, including topics similar to these.

1. Introduction (purpose, nature of project)
2. Description of accomplishments during the reporting period.
3. Unanticipated problems (if any)
4. Plans for the next reporting period.
5. Summary (overall appraisal of progress to date)
6. (Periodic report)
Figure - Example Progress Report

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 10, 2012
TO: Judith Ayres
Accounting Department
FROM: John Daly - Physical Plant

SUBJECT: Progress Report on Capital Projects

As requested, here’s the progress report on the five capital projects identified as high-priority items at last spring’s long-range planning meeting:

- Replacement of front elevator in Main Building
- Replacement of all windows in Main Building
- Installation of new fire alarm system in all buildings
- Installation of emergency lighting system in all buildings
- Renovation of “B” Building basement

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Periodic Reports

They are routine reports prepared at regular time interval—daily, weekly, monthly quarterly or annually.

Examples of such reports are:

1. Sales Reports
2. Financial Reports

Analytical Memorandum Reports

This analytical memorandum report, seeks to analyze a situation or problem; it may end with or without a specific recommendation.

Such reports:

- On the causes of decline in Sales Volume.
- On the evaluation of a person before recruitment.
- On individual being considered for promotion.
• On the analysis of a particular book.

Recommendation-Justification Reports

Many analytical reports will have a special purpose: to recommend a change or remain with the status quo (policy), support the idea that something is desirable or undesirable (value), or defend the accuracy of information (fact). Your report may be in response to a specific request, or it may be voluntary.

Table 4.1A - Common Elements of a Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Function/Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Cover</td>
<td>Title and image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Like the cover of a book, sometimes a picture, image, or logo is featured to introduce the topic to the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Title Fly</td>
<td>Title only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Example: Feasibility Study of Oil Recovery from the X Tar pit Sands Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>Label, report, features title, author, affiliation, date, and sometimes for whom the report was prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>A list of the main parts of the report and their respective page numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction......2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Background......3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Element</td>
<td>Function/Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Informational abstract: highlight topic, methods, data, and results&lt;br&gt;Descriptive abstract: (All of the above without statements of conclusion or recommendations) This report presents the current status of the X tar pit sands, the study of oil recoverability, and the findings of the study with specific recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduces the topic of the report &lt;br&gt;<strong>Oil sands recovery processes</strong> include ways to extract and separate the bitumen from the clay, sand, and water that make up the tar sands. This study analyzes the feasibility of extraction and separation, including a comprehensive cost/benefits analysis, with specific recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>Key elements of body include:&lt;br&gt;- Background&lt;br&gt;- Methodology&lt;br&gt;- Results&lt;br&gt;- Analysis and Recommendations&lt;br&gt;Background: History of oil extraction and separation from tar pit sands.&lt;br&gt;Methodology: Specific analysis of the site based on accepted research methods.&lt;br&gt;Results: Data from the feasibility study.&lt;br&gt;Analysis and Recommendations: Analysis of the data and recommendations based on that analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Concise presentation of findings&lt;br&gt;This portion clearly indicates the main results and their relation to recommended action or outcome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Function/Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>References</td>
<td>Bibliography or Works Cited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>Related supporting materials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organized from: Business Communications for Success by Scott McLean

Organization Of Reports
Reports vary by size, format, and function. As you begin to prepare your report, you will need to be flexible and adjust to the needs of the audience while respecting customs and guidelines. Reports are typically organized around six key elements:

- Whom the report is about and/or prepared for.
- What was done, what problems were addressed, and the results, including conclusions and/or recommendations?
- Where the subject studied occurred.
- When the subject studied occurred.
- Why the report was written (function), including under what authority, for what reason, or by whose request.
- How the subject operated, functioned, or was used.

Organizing Memo Reports
- Itemize the information.
- Present the fact with absolute fairness and accuracy.
- Be careful not to mix your opinion with the facts you report.
- Reserve your comments for your conclusions and recommendations (letter report).

Letters Reports
Letter reports are of two types:
1. Informational Letter Reports.

2. Analytical Letter Reports.
Informational Letter Reports – include:

- A staff report to financial officer regarding issues concerning personnel turnover in the sales department
- A report in reply to inquiry about product and services provided by your Company

Analytical Letter Reports - include investigation of an issue or problem.

A letter report is simply a report in letterform: it is often used when sending information to a reader outside your organization. It includes:

1. Date
2. Inside Address
3. Salutation
4. Body (the heart of the report)
5. Complimentary close
6. Signature
7. Reference section

Often the letter report has a subject line, usually placed a line or two below the salutation. Its length may range from two to five (seldom more) pages. And it may have two purposes: informational or, analytical.

Organization of Short Informal Reports

Format

1. For brief external reports, use letter format, including a title or a subject line after the reader’s address that clearly states the subject of the document.

2. For brief internal reports, use memo or manuscript format.

3. Present all short informal reports properly.
   a. Single-space the text.
   b. Double-space between paragraphs.
c. Use headings where helpful, but try not to use more than three levels of headings.

d. Call attention to significant information by setting it off visually with lists or indentation.

e. Include visual aids to emphasize and clarify the text.

Opening

1. For short, routine memos, use the subject line of the memo form and the first sentence or two of the text as the introduction.

2. For all other short reports, cover these topics in the introduction: purpose, scope, background, restrictions (in conducting the study), sources of information and methods of research, and organization of the report.

3. If using direct order, place conclusions and recommendations in the opening.

Body (Findings and Supporting Details)

1. Use direct order for informational reports to receptive readers, developing idea around subtopics (chronologically, geographically, categorically).

2. Use direct order for analytical reports to receptive readers, developing points around conclusions or recommendations.

3. Use indirect order for analytical reports to skeptical or hostile readers, developing points around logical arguments.

4. Use an appropriate writing style.
   
   a. Use an informal style (I and you) for letter and memo reports, unless company custom calls for the impersonal third person.
   
   b. Use an impersonal style for more formal short reports.

5. Maintain a consistent time frame by writing in either the present or the past tense, using other tenses only to indicate prior or future events.

6. Give each paragraph a topic sentence.
7. Link paragraphs by using transitional words and phrases.

8. Strive for readability by using short sentences, concrete words, and terminology that is appropriate for your readers.

9. Be accurate, thorough and impartial in presenting the material.

10. Avoid including irrelevant and unnecessary details.

11. Include documentation for all material quoted or paraphrased from secondary sources, using a consistent format.

You will also need to pay attention to these essential elements when you consider your audience, or those who have an interest in the report. That may include the person(s) the report is about, whom it is for, and the larger audience of the business, organization, or industry. **Ask yourself who the key decision makers are who will read your report, who the experts or technicians will be, and how executives and workers may interpret your words and images.** While there is no universal format for a report, there is a common order to the information as stated above. Each element supports the main purpose or function in its own way, playing an important role in the representation and transmission of information.

**WRITING A REPORT**

Report writing lends itself to a more formal, factual and objective style. As you write your report it must be clear, it must have a purpose and it must contain the summary of the main findings and if necessary some realistic recommendations. Many reports require some form of primary or secondary research, and as the writer of these reports you must stay clear of bias or prejudice as this will taint the message being conveyed in the report. To avoid any situations that may reflect bias or prejudice, you should use the third person in your communication. For example “it became evident that” instead of “I observed that ....”

When writing your reports you need to be clear of the following:

- Who has requested the report?
- Why are you writing the report
- What are the objectives of the report?
• What is the time frame for preparing this report?

• Who is receiving this report? What do they need the report for?

• Is it a formal or informal report?

• Is it for internal or external purposes?

• What type of language will be appropriate for the report?

• Will you have to get assistance from other persons to write the report?

• Will you have to present the report? To whom? And when?

**Reading the Report**

After you have written your report it is important to make sure that you read through the report and make sure that it is clear and conveys the message. You will also have to read and understand other reports that others have written. Remember that what your audience must be able to understand what you have written so that they can provide solutions or recommendations to the report.

Your report will probably resemble the one below. Make sure that you complete the report with the appropriate information so that your supervisor is able to read the message and take the necessary action.

By learning the skills necessary for report writing, you can learn how to effectively communicate with your external and internal audiences. Reports are documents that provide information which can be used for a variety of purposes. Depending on the type of message that you would like to convey to your audience you will have to do some sort of research, either primary or secondary research. The effectiveness of your reports depends on your ability as writer to be objective. Your report needs to be clear, logical and understandable.

Remember that most reports have a format that needs to be followed. To give good effect to the report it may sometimes be necessary to include visuals either in the form of graphs or charts. This all depends on the nature of the report.
**SUMMARY**

In this topic you were introduced to Reports and Report structures. It is important to remember that the business report is a formal document used for the dissemination of information in and outside of the business. Reports are likely to reflect issues within a business that could determine the effectiveness of the business. The success of the report is reliant on the report writer who has to be clear and precise in the message that needs to be delivered to the audience. A report may be described as descriptive when it is used to provide detailed descriptions about a particular situation. It may also be described as persuasive when it is prepared following an investigation on a particular situation. Sometimes reports are written in the form of letters or memoranda, and may sometimes be written on completion forms if the information required is short. In this unit you learned that reports have sections that need to be followed if the message is to be conveyed appropriately.

**UNIT ASSIGNMENT**

Complete the following assignment and submit to your instructor for review, feedback and grading.

**Instructions**

You are working for a bottling company in your area. For the last few days there has been some unrest among the employees due to unsanitary conditions at the company. Today the employees of the organisation have decided to go on strike so that their grievance of the situation may be made public. As the Human Relations officer of the company design a form with at least 7 suitable headings which you would use in order to get information from the workers to enable you to write a report on the strike to the head of the company. State briefly the importance of each of the headings that you have chosen.
TOPIC 3.3 – PRESENTATION SKILLS

INTRODUCTION
At times a business professional must produce and deliver a formal presentation often supported by PowerPoint or some other visual media. The effectiveness of the presentation is measured by the audience response. Depending on the propose of the presentation this response could be in the form of a commitment to your products and services; increased sales; support from your stakeholders; etc.

Mastering the art of presentation is not always an easy task, especially for those who struggle with public speaking. This topic will explore the art of formal presentations and provide guidance on how to effectively deliver the information to your audience.

OBJECTIVES
Upon completion of this topic you will be able to:

1. Analyze your target audience for a formal presentation.
2. Produce content appropriate for the target audience.
3. Effectively employ visual aids.
4. Confidently deliver a formal presentation.

STEPS IN PRODUCING A FORMAL PRESENTATION
There are five phases in the preparation of formal presentations. Each of the five phases is summarized below, and will be described in detail in the remaining chapters of this guide. Refer to Appendix Three for a detailed breakdown of each phase and its required steps.

Planning Phase. In this initial phase, the presenter must establish the goals and objectives of the presentation based on the target audience needs and interests. He or she must analyze the target audience, define the goals or objectives of the presentation, outline the key points that need to be made in support of the objective(s) of the presentation, and identify the location, logistics and media requirements that will support the presentation.

Design Phase. Once planning is complete, the speaker must develop the main ideas that he or she wishes to communicate to the audience using supporting data and examples. The presenter must write a script of the presentation, and develop a strategy for handling questions from the audience. Often business presentations require review and/or approval from a superior. If not it is still a
good idea to have an informal review done by your supervisor, manager or colleague to ensure that you have not overlooked critical information. Review is best done at the end of the design phase, before significant time has been invested in the development of the presentation and the supporting materials.

**Preparation Phase.** Once the design has been completed and approved, the speaker must produce the video and audio support and handouts etc. required to support the presentation. The presentation script is written and the supporting materials produced.

**Delivery Phase.** After the completion of the Preparation Phase, the speaker must now practice the presentation to master and feel comfortable delivering the information in accordance with the script, and with using the supporting materials and equipment. On the day of the presentation, the speaker must ensure that the room is adequately equipped for the presentation. During the presentation, the speaker will circulate handouts and answer any questions that arise (as identified in the Planning Phase).

**Follow Up Phase.** The Follow-Up is a very important process that is often overlooked by most presenters. It is important to reflect back on the presentation, assessing the strong and weak points of its planning and delivery. The presenter may produce an “action item” list for questions/issues that could not be answered or resolved during the presentation. The presenter may also write summary minutes for future reference. It is good business practice to send a thank you note to your host, particularly if you were an invited speaker. Finally, the speaker should modify the existing presentation package.

**AUDIENCE ANALYSIS**

For a presentation to be successful, it must be audience centred. Indeed, the characteristics of the audience significantly shape the goals and objectives of the presentation and what you, the presenter, wish to accomplish in presenting the material. By carefully analyzing your audience, and tailoring your presentation to that audience, you increase the likelihood of delivering a successful presentation and maximally prepare yourself for negative reactions and difficult questions. Consequently, everything you do in preparation must take the needs and desires of the audience into consideration. To best serve the needs of your audience you must determine:

1. Broad demographics of your target audience (age, gender, education level, socio-economic status, position in the organization, membership in a relevant organization or special interest group, to name a few).
2. What motivated them to attend your presentation?

3. How well do they understand the subject matter?

4. What is their attitude towards you, your organization (if external) and the subject matter is?

5. How will they likely react to the presentation?

An audience analysis does not have to be a formal long drawn out process. It can be treated as a mental exercise. If you give presentations to the same audience (i.e. your office peers and superiors) on a regular basis, you will gain more insight into their needs, expectations and background each time you present. This should make each presentation more targeted each time. In all cases the presenter must ensure that he or she asks the right questions and determines what the impact of the collected data has on the potential goals, objectives and content of the presentation.

LOCATION, LOGISTICS AND MEDIA
You now know who your target audience is and what key points you will be presenting. You should now consider where you will be speaking, and what equipment and materials you need to ensure the success of your presentation. Determine:

- Where will the presentation occur? Am I familiar with the room?
- Will I be presenting in the morning, afternoon, or evening?
- Sitting or standing, will my audience members be able to see me?
- Can I just speak or do I need other equipment and/or materials to facilitate the presentation of information (flip chart & markers, Overheads, short video, handouts, whiteboard, computer, note pads and pencils for the audience etc.)?
- Could the use of supporting materials detract from my presentation?
- What is going on in adjacent rooms? Could noise from these rooms distract the audience?
• Are there any obvious distractions? Where will late-comers enter the room (e.g., at back?)

• Where is the nearest washroom?

• Are my visual aids easy to see from different places in the room?

• How far am I from my audience? Will audience members at the back of the room be able to hear me? What are the acoustics of the room like?

**KEEPING YOUR CONTENT INTERESTING**

Since audience retention is lowest during the main body of the presentation, it is important to do everything you can to keep the content as interesting as possible. The following is a list of strategies that can be adopted to keep the information interesting. Note that not all strategies are appropriate for every subject matter.

• **Make Comparisons.** Draw comparisons between the material that you are presenting and other related but different material. This is an excellent technique to use if you are presenting technical information to non-technical people because it gives them a way of understanding your material.

• **Add Humour.** Depending upon the subject matter, humour is an effective tool for relaxing your audience. Once your audience is relaxed they may be more receptive to your ideas and they may retain them longer. Remember, humour doesn’t necessarily mean telling a witty joke – you may find a cartoon, a video clip, etc. that clearly illustrates the point you are trying to make. Only use humour if you are totally comfortable in the delivery of humour and the humour is relevant to the goals and objectives and it is done in a tasteful and respective manner.

• **Quote Others.** This is particularly effective if the person being quoted is a well-known and respected expert in his or her field. If possible, choose quotes that are current and that are relevant to your audience (e.g., taken from a local newspaper).

• **Personalize.** Share your personal involvement in a subject or project with your audience. It makes the presentation more interesting and memorable to your audience.
• **Support Ideas with Examples, Illustrations and Statistics.** You can maintain the interest of your audience and increase your credibility as a subject matter expert by supporting your key ideas and concepts with relevant examples, illustrations and statistics. One word of caution here – use supporting materials sparingly. Since you can only present a small amount of material, you must choose the most striking (“need-to-know”) information.

• **Involve Your Audience.** This may be accomplished by asking your audience planned questions, having them complete a worksheet or other materials, or inviting members to share relevant experiences. Allowing your audience to be active participants in the learning process will increase their retention of the material. Audience participation must be well planned and controlled.

You may choose to use one or more of these strategies in creating your presentations. Variety, itself, will likely increase the alertness and interest level of your audience and that may positively impact on audience retention and learning.

**DESIGN OF VISUAL AIDS**

For a visual aid to be effective, it must be well designed. Since well-designed visual aids promote understanding, it’s worthwhile looking at what makes a visual aid “good”. A good visual aid...

• Focuses on one important concept rather than touching upon multiple ideas, which is distracting to the viewer.

• Takes the characteristics of the audience into account. For example, a “well-designed” visual aid on a new technology will likely be very different for a technical versus a non-technical audience.

• Minimizes the use of text whenever possible. You are already speaking on the issue so why not present your supporting information in another way (e.g., graph, illustration). Just remember; only include graphics that add to what you are saying.

• Uses consistent, highly readable fonts. Stay away from fancy lettering and full capitalization (both of which are difficult to read). Also, use keywords and phrases rather than full sentences.
Uses colours thoughtfully (i.e., to contrast or emphasize ideas or to make images more lifelike). Haphazard use of colour can result in an unattractive visual aid that detracts from the presentation.

Other characteristics will become apparent to you when you begin producing different types of presentations using a variety of media. Always keep in mind the fact that visual aids are meant to support your presentation. Visual aids should never be stand-alone. However, should the unfortunate situation arise, your presentation should be able to stand on its own, without visual support.

**HANDOUTS**

The purpose of a handout is to help your audience remember the information that you presented, and to remind members of how you would like them to respond to your message. The ideal handout is one well-written summary page, which outlines the key issues and resolutions discussed by the presenter. Handouts should also provide the audience with a technical or more detailed description of the materials covered in the presentation. Handouts may also serve as a backup in the event that some or all of your visual aids are unavailable (e.g. a projector breaks down).

Handouts are intended to enhance your presentation and support your intended presentation goals and objectives. So don’t include everything you know about the subject on the handout; only those points that support your intended outcomes. You should also include a list of relevant names and contact information, and anything else that the audience would have wanted to write down.

In general you should not distribute handouts before or during a presentation. Often your audience becomes distracted and that may prevent them from hearing and processing your message. It is best to distribute handouts at the end of the presentation when you are no longer trying to maintain the audience’s attention. But if your message is instructional in nature, or when the handouts may also be used as a note taking device (such as PowerPoint handouts), or when the handout will act as an advanced organizer to guide participants through the presentation then you should distribute the handouts to all participants before the presentation and give them time to leaf through it before you begin your introduction. You should also explain to the audience, the purpose and effective use of the handout before you begin your presentation.
DURING THE PRESENTATION: VOICE, BODY LANGUAGE & IMAGE

Your credibility as a speaker is only partly determined by what you say. How you present yourself and the material also determines how well your audience receives your message. The following tips are offered to help you deliver your presentation in the most professional and effective manner possible.

Vocal Techniques

Try to maintain a natural, conversational tone throughout your presentation.

Use language that is appropriate to your audience. If you are speaking on a topic that your audience is not familiar with, do not use jargon words or phrases and define the terminology.

Try to project your voice to your entire audience. You will need to speak somewhat louder than you would during a normal conversation. You can find a volume that is comfortable for your audience when you practice in front of your “trial” audience.

To increase the dramatic effect of your presentation, you may consider varying the intensity of your speech. Varying the intensity of your speech is also an effective way to emphasize key words or concepts.

Be careful not to speak too fast or too slowly. Again, test different rates on your “trial” audience. As with intensity, varying rate can help to maintain your audience’s attention and assist in creating the mood you wish to create.

Strategically placed pauses can draw attention to important points you wish to make and also helps with pausing.

A technique used by speakers to overcome filling nervous pauses with “uh”, “uhm” etc. is to practice the presentation a couple of times in the following way. Each time you notice yourself saying a filler word, repeat that word several times. You will become more aware of your nervous chatter, which will help you control and eventually remove it from your speech.

Eye Contact

Establish and maintain eye contact with your audience. In doing so you communicate confidence to your audience, and will be perceived to be more credible than someone who cannot look directly at the participants. Eye contact also provides valuable feedback from you audience. (Do they look bored, confused, and/or defensive?). If you are a new presenter and you are
having difficulty making eye contact with your audience, you may find one of following strategy helpful to you.

Before you begin presenting, pick a spot on the back wall (just above the audience) and present to that spot.

Over time, as you become more comfortable, pick a few friendly looking audience members, who are scattered throughout the room, and present to them.

As you gain experience and your confidence grows you will begin to look more naturally at your audience while presenting to them.

Image/Dress

Since you are giving business presentations you will want to maintain a professional image and be comfortable at the same time. Choose an outfit that is clean, neat, and comfortable, and that is appropriate for the occasion. This does not mean that you must always wear a business suit. In fact, you may choose to wear a suit for formal presentations and to wear more casual business attire for informal gatherings. By analyzing your audience you should get a pretty good idea about how formal the meeting will be, and you can choose an outfit that is appropriate to the occasion. Keep jewellery and other accessories to a minimum. Choose pieces that are discrete and complementary to your outfit. You don’t want your attire to become the focus of your presentation. Finally, as always, ensure that you are well groomed. Go light on any makeup and even lighter on perfumes and colognes, which some audience members may be allergic to.

Using Gestures

Gestures are a natural and common part of everyday speech. If you use gestures during your presentation, make sure that they are appropriate to the message you wish to convey to your audience. As with visual aids, they should add to your meaning, so do not use gestures for the sake of having them. Moreover, avoid keeping your hands in motion throughout your presentation. Such non-verbal behaviour is distracting to your audience, and reduces the meaning on any gestures that may be important to the message you are trying to convey. If you are not sure what your hands are doing while you present, videotape your next presentation (or practice session in front of “trial” audience). You will learn a lot about your non-verbal behavior, and may discover distracting mannerisms that you never knew you had. Again, once you are aware of them, you can begin working to eliminate them.
Facial Expression

Quite simply, your facial expression should be appropriate to your message. If you are talking about a solemn or serious subject, do not try to smile throughout the presentation. It will be confusing and distracting for your audience. Try to have a varied and friendly facial expression. Most importantly, be natural and true to the tone of the subject matter.

Posture & Body Movement

As with all other non-verbal behavior, a presenter’s posture and body movement can add to or detract from the message he or she is trying to communicate to the audience.

Avoid the following behaviors, which are distracting to your audience.

If you use a podium, do not rock it back and forth or grip the sides of it. You will appear nervous and possibly even defensive.

Don’t sway or pace around the room. Again, you will seem nervous and your unnatural movement will distract the audience.

If you feel more comfortable standing, stand straight, with you feet a comfortable distance apart. Bend your knees slightly and distribute most of your weight to the balls of your feet. If you prefer to move (from time to time) around the room, take the necessary steps to move to your new position and then return to your comfortable standing position. There is advantage to moving occasionally around the room. It can help you to connect with your audience and to maintain your audience’s attention and interest. You may also find that occasional movement helps you to become more relaxed. Movement can also help you to change the mood or pace of the presentation.

With respect to posture, if you are standing, stand up straight and hold your head up. The recommendations are the same if your are sitting – sit up straight and hold your head up. Also, if you are sitting, ensure that all audience members can clearly see you. Adopt an open posture. Do not cross your arms in front of you (which is usually seen as a defensive stance) but rather let your arms hang comfortably by your side when you are not gesturing to your audience.
Handling Nervousness

Even the most experienced presenters experience nervousness from time to time. Common signs of nervousness include having a dry mouth or tight throat, shaking, perspiring and/or having “butterflies” in your stomach. Nervousness often stems from a feeling of being unprepared, so ensure that you are well prepared and practiced prior to the day of the presentation. Also, take the time to prepare answers to questions you are likely to be asked, and prepare supporting overheads for any difficult questions. In doing this, you will go into your presentation knowing that you are maximally prepared. Some experts suggest that you complete the following visualization exercise to reduce nervousness. Visualize yourself as a confident and competent presenter giving a successful presentation. This will help you to focus on your positive attributes and on the strengths of your presentation.

Before the presentation eat lightly and avoid caffeine. Arrive at the venue early so that you can become familiar and comfortable with the room and to check that all equipment is available and working. You may even want to memorize the opening remarks of your presentation and warm up for the presentation by practicing the introduction a couple of times before the audience arrives. Another reason you may wish to memorize your opening statements is that for most presenters, the first few minutes are the hardest. Getting off to a smooth start can be a huge confidence builder.

Before you begin your presentation, take a moment to concentrate on your breathing. When we are nervous, our breathing tends to become shallow – to combat this practice taking slow, deep breaths. The air should fill your diaphragm. This usually results in a reduction in the feeling of nervousness. Remember to breathe throughout your presentation. Also, make sure that you have a glass of water available (you may have to bring your own) so that if you experience a dry mouth or throat, you can pause, take a quick drink, and then continue with your presentation. And if you experience voice shakiness try lowering the pitch or increasing the volume of your voice.

Again, pre-presentation nervousness is very common. When you experience it remember that you are not alone. Remind yourself that you are well prepared and that you are ready to present to your audience. Use the techniques above to turn the nervousness into beneficial rather than detrimental energy.
Answering Questions ...when?

Whether it is best to answer questions during or after your presentation is a difficult question to answer.

Some experts advise against answering questions during the presentation because it breaks the flow of the presentations and often the questions being asked anticipate topics that will be covered later. Since you have spent considerable time preparing to speak, you want to ensure that you deliver your entire message. In contrast, some experts recommend that you answer questions as they come up rather then waiting until the end. These experts reason that the answers to the questions will be more meaningful to the audience as a whole if given while the topic is being covered. If you choose to answer questions throughout your presentation, make sure that you schedule some time for question and answer time for each topic and stick to your schedule. That way you will be able to answer most questions without losing the flow of the presentation.

A second option is to answer all questions at the end of your presentation. This way you will ensure that you cover all the material without interruption. A disadvantage to choosing this approach is that your audience may remember more about the particular questions asked than about the summary of your presentation (because audience members tend to remember the beginnings and endings of presentations best and you have ended your presentation with a question and answer period). This could be detrimental to the overall success of the presentation if you have trouble answering any questions or dealing with difficult audience members.

An alternative approach is to schedule a question and answer session prior to your presentation summary. This way you will insure that you cover all the required material, deal with any questions that arise, and end the presentation on a strong note, by summarizing your key points. If you have any difficulty during the question and answer session, you have an opportunity to re-establish your credibility and re-state your ideas during your final summary.

General Rules for Answering Questions:

Here are some general rules for responding to inquiries from your audience:

- Be positive and open to questions. You are an expert in your subject matter and have spent time preparing answers to potential audience
questions. Approach this part of the presentation as an opportunity to further state and clarify your message.

- Before you respond, ensure that you understand the question. You can do this by repeating or paraphrasing the question. In doing so, you will ensure that all audience members have heard and understood the question.

- Remain focused. Respond to the question in terms of its relevance to your presentation goal. To do this you might follow a procedure similar to that used to prepare for impromptu speeches.

- Prepare overheads (or other supporting materials) for difficult questions a head of time. Your audience will be impressed by your preplanning and preparations.

Handling Difficult Questions and/or Audience Members

From time to time you will be faced with a question that is too difficult or time consuming to answer or that somehow diverts you from the goals and objectives of your presentation. Here are some strategies for handling difficult questions and/or difficult audience members.

If you are unable to answer a question be straightforward about it with your audience and offer to follow up with an answer to the question in writing. Then make it your top post-presentation priority to provide your audience members with the answer to the question. Never try to “ bluff” your way through a question – the audience can usually tell and it will not leave a favourable impression.

If someone asks a question that is diversionary or that is about a subject that will be discussed later, answer the question briefly and/or indicate that the subject will be dealt with later in the presentation and then refocus the audience back to the original topic and continue.

If someone asks you a series of vaguely related questions or has trouble getting to the point, you must tactfully “step in” and help the questioner focus his or her question to a key issue. You might approach this as if you were paraphrasing the person’s question – e.g., “If I understand you correctly, you are looking for clarification on…”

If you encounter an argumentative audience member, acknowledge the person’s concern by stating that his/her point deserves further analysis, offer to follow up with that person on the issue at a later date, and then refocus
your audience back to the original topic and continue. Always be diplomatic and never argue with your audience member. Arguing is a waste of time, and if you make an audience member look foolish or wrong you risk making an unfavourable impression on the rest of the audience.

An effective strategy to use if you are asked a question that cannot be answered or that is designed to put you on the defensive is to reflect the question back to the questioner. Another option is to put the question on the floor for all audience members to comment on. Recognize that with this type of question, the questioner has anticipated your answer and is ready with a reply to contradict your response. Don’t play the game. Acknowledge that the issue is important to that individual, offer to discuss it further at a later time, refocus your audience back to the original topic, and then continue.

Remember that in most cases, audience members will be friendly and questions will be straightforward. Let your audience know that you welcome their questions and feedback. Ensure that your audience clearly understands the goals of your presentation and what actions you would like from them after the presentation.

**SUMMARY**

The ability to deliver effective presentations is a key competency for all business professionals. You must be able to communicate your message to an audience. You must be able to influence that audience to act in the way that you would like them to. To do so you must think about your audience, you must design a visually effective presentation and you must learn to deliver it in a confident and professional manner.

**ASSIGNMENT**

The final assignment for this unit requires that you produce and deliver a formal presentation to an audience of your choice. You will be required to submit a copy of your PowerPoint presentation and a video tape of your presentation to your instructor for review, feedback and grading.

**Instructions**

Select an audience that you are familiar with. Offer to provide a formal presentation about your business idea or a topic that you have expertise in. Produce an appropriate 20 to 30 minute presentation. Identify an appropriate location to deliver the presentation and provide an appropriate handout for the audience.

Once you have completed your presentation solicit verbal feedback from your
peers. Produce a two or three page report based on the feedback from the audience.

Submit the presentation, handout and peer feedback report to your instructor for review, feedback and grading. If possible you should also forward a video tape/digital format of your actual presentation.
UNIT SUMMARY

This unit concentrated on improving your meeting, report writing and presentation skills. All of these competencies are important to a business professional. Much of what we do in a business is communications. When dealing with a large workforce or remote clients, suppliers and stakeholders the primary delivery method is often written communications; either in the form of paper-based correspondence or digital communications. You, as a business leader, must master these skills and become an effective communicator.
COURSE SUMMARY

LESSONS LEARNED
You are encouraged to reflect upon the lessons learned from this course. You should create your own list of lessons learned. You should note areas or topics that you would like to explore further. Just because the course has ended you should continue to gain additional expertise by reading Communications and Business journals, articles and books. You may even want to participate in workshops and conference in Business Communications.

It is hoped that you will take the knowledge and skill you have learned during completion of this course to help improve your personal and business communications skills. This course should support the entrepreneur who is just starting out and individuals working in more mature organizations.

Good luck in the future.

COURSE JOURNAL SUBMISSION
By now your course journal should be very full. You should submit it to your instructor for review, feedback and grading. He or she will ensure that you get your original journal back so that you can continue to record your communications discoveries as you move forward with your business.

COURSE EVALUATION
As a final step you are asked to complete a course evaluation. Your institution will provide you with the form and instructions on how to complete it and submit it.

<The hosting institution should insert instructions on how to complete and submit a course evaluation. You should include a course evaluation form as an Appendix.>