CHAPTER 13

Communication in Organizations

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THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

One of the primary reasons you are in college is to get that perfect job, to become a professional in a chosen career. As a professional, you will spend a significant portion of your time associated with one or more organizations. In the workplace today, organizations are constantly changing: structures are changing, organizational decision making is changing, and requirements for employee productivity are also changing. Indeed, one of the key variables in employee success is communication effectiveness. Much of what you have learned thus far in this text will allow you to be an effective organizational communicator. In this section, we explore several additional concepts that will assist you in fine-tuning your communication skills to meet the complex organizational demands. Like groups, organizations play a very important role in our lives. Today's organizations require more teamwork than in past decades. The business world is expanding, and new markets are opening around the world; this globalization requires employees to understand and adapt to a multicultural world. Communication in this multicultural world means knowing, understanding, and adapting to different communication rules across cultures. Management theorist Peter Drucker (1992) believes that contemporary organizations are now looking for “the new knowledge worker,” who possesses four key characteristics: (1) a college education, (2) the ability to apply analytical and theoretical thinking, (3) a commitment to lifelong learning, and (4) good communication skills. Drucker suggests that the single most important characteristic of this “new knowledge worker” is his or her ability to communicate with others who do not share the same worldview.

Information technology is also dramatically changing the nature of the workplace. Computers and telecommunications allow us to communicate instantly across geographic boundaries. Thus, the complexity of organizational life and the rapidly changing role of technology mean more demands upon individual organizational members than ever before. Those who are successful in this changing world of work are those who develop what organizational theorist Pamela Shockley-Zalabak (1999) calls “communication competency”: knowledge, skills, values, and sensitivity. Employees must possess knowledge about the organization’s communication environment. They must be sensitive to others and understand their feelings and meanings. Values reflect concern for the well-being of others in the communication situation and an understanding of responsibility within those situations.

Organizations today depend upon creative and flexible people, workers who can solve problems working with others who may not share their points of view. To prepare for these complex organizations, communication competency is critical. Your present educational experiences provide an excellent opportunity to learn communication competency in organizations, since the school you attend is a distinct
organization that you must negotiate successfully. Many of the skills you are now developing will prepare you for the workforce. The first step in developing communication competency in organizations is understanding the cultural and systemic components of organizations.

**ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES**

It is critical to understand that organizations operate as distinct cultures. An organization’s culture represents the actions, practices, language, and artifacts of a group. A culture is revealed symbolically. We understand a culture in numerous ways—by the way people explain the culture, by the tools used to create and maintain that culture, and by the values and beliefs that guide actions and practices. An organization’s culture results from the accumulation of learning and behavior among a group of people and of how those individuals communicate their understanding of each other as members of the culture. Organizational culture persists through the organization’s personnel changes. As a result, communication creates and sustains culture, while simultaneously influencing how individuals communicate and interact. Many symbolic practices make up culture, including language, stories, rites and rituals, and structure.

**Language**

Each organization develops its own vocabulary with which it refers to its members’ activity. One of the first ways organizational members learn expressed values is through the organization’s mission statement. Have you read your university’s mission statement? What does it tell you about the organization’s value system? The vocabulary or language expresses the organization’s past, present, and future values. The box Cultural Links: Organizational Cultures and Mission Statements describes the role of mission statements in organizations.

**Cultural Links**

**Organizational Cultures and Mission Statements**

Organizations are unique cultural systems that share a set of beliefs, values, and norms, which are communicated among the people within the organization. These powerful, unifying forces are typically reflected in the heroes, villains, rites, rituals, communication flow, symbols, and stories of the organization. However, most organizations outline their values, beliefs, and objectives in carefully crafted mission statements in an attempt to capture and reflect the essence of its culture. A mission statement, according to Radtke (1998) should be an inspiring, goal-oriented, clear, jargon-free, succinct paragraph that resonates with the people inside and outside the organization. A mission statement should answer at least three questions:

1. What are the opportunities or needs that we exist to address? (the purpose of the organization)
2. What are we doing to address these needs? (the business of the organization)
3. What principles or beliefs guide our work? (the values of the organization)

As a part of a university or college, you are part of an organization with a mission. Do you know that mission? Find your school’s mission statement. In some cases, it may be challenging to find these statements; they may not even exist. If you discover these mission statements, analyze them carefully. How well
Language also reveals a great deal about such things as power relationships among members. How people are addressed provides information about their status. The level of formality or informality of language tells individuals how to act with peers, supervisors, or customers. Are supervisors in the organization referred to by their first names or addressed as Ms. Johnson, Mr. Obama, or Dr. Singh? Whether language is formal or informal may also provide insights about how organization members should dress or whether people are encouraged to discuss personal or social interests while at work. What special language or vocabulary have you come to understand as part of your university experience?

Stories

One way organizational members talk about their culture is through stories and myths. Organizational history is explained through corporate stories. These tell of past successes and failures, helping organizational members understand the type of risks that are acceptable. They provide members with an opportunity to recognize past and present “heroes” as well. Stories provide a critical socialization function for new members of the organization. They provide information about how work is done, about the appropriateness of many kinds of communication, and about the values and beliefs among organizational members. While new employees are normally provided with rule books or “standard operating procedures,” stories allow new members to compare what is “written” with what is unwritten but “understood” by its members. A final function of stories is that they provide opportunities for members to feel connected to one another and to the organization as a whole.

Rites and Rituals

The organization’s rites and rituals often symbolize the “tools” members use to create and maintain culture. Examples include the annual holiday party, the company picnic, or performance reviews. The most famous “rituals” of university life might include surviving registration, learning the maze of financial aid, and, of course, participating in graduation with all its pomp and circumstance. There are also other
annual or seasonal rituals on college campuses such as homecoming parades, fundraisers for nonprofit agencies, or tailgate parties.

**Structure**

An organization’s structure is revealed in two ways—through the roles that individuals play and the rules and policies that govern the organization. Thus, in order to communicate effectively within the organization, employees must understand the roles, rules, and policies that make up the organization’s underlying support and framework.

**Roles**

Just as power relationships are revealed by how employees address one another, organizational structure can also be identified by individuals’ titles or by the roles they play in the group. In the university system, faculty have many titles that refer to such things as their level of education, their longevity, and their level of professional standing among their peers. A lecturer or adjunct, an instructor, an assistant professor, an associate professor, or a full professor may teach one of your classes. These titles reflect the person’s teaching responsibilities, his or her rank within the organizational hierarchy, and to some degree, his or her status among other faculty. There are, of course, other titles in the hierarchy, such as associate dean, dean, vice president, provost, president, chancellor, and trustee. These titles reflect an individual’s job description and levels of responsibility within the university. Organizational charts that depict the relationships among the various offices and roles in your university will help you understand who’s who and will give you a better sense of how communication flows within the organization.

**Rules and Policies**

Another example of structure is in the rules and policies by which organizational members make decisions. Every organization has a set of operating policies that are mandated by various authoritative figures or bodies such as the board of trustees, the president, or department heads. When you entered your college, you probably received a student handbook or code of conduct containing your school’s rules and policies. Rules are more or less formal, depending upon the organization and the type of product or service they provide. Like our earlier discussion of group rules and norms, organizational rules also may develop either implicitly or explicitly. As with groups, the more explicitly the rules are developed in the organization and the more rules members agree upon, the more effective the organizational communication may be. Policies are formal statements about what is and is not expected of organizational members. The most common types of policies in any organization refer to such things as pay, benefits, hiring and firing, promotion, leave, and so on.

Once individuals in organizations learn how to “read” the culture, they can interpret “what it means to work here” much more effectively. Think about the last job you had. Did you learn what was expected of you by reading the corporate manual or by observing the company’s day-to-day standard operating procedures? Did you get more information from watching others and hearing stories about “heroes and villains”? When individuals can interpret cultural symbols correctly, they begin to establish the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in that organization.

Understanding that an organization develops its own unique cultural characteristics can assist all members in developing a greater comprehension of the organization’s “work life.” Grasping the language, stories, rites, rituals, and structure can allow members to reduce uncertainty about their jobs and help them shape and adapt relationships within the organization. As a result, individuals come to know their place within the organizational system through knowledge of its culture. The box Communication Links: Uncertainty Reduction Theory describes the ways in which new employees attempt to understand the cultural characteristics of an organization new to them.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN
Communication in Organizations

Communication Links

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Berger and Calabrese (1975) developed uncertainty reduction theory (URT) to explain the discomfort that arises when people meet one another and the subsequent desire to reduce the discomfort through communication strategies. These researchers assert that people use three types of strategies: passive, active, and interactive. Let’s consider how each of these strategies play out in an organization where daily rumors indicate that the company is planning to downsize.

First, the employees are likely to use passive strategies. Usually this means they will try to silently analyze what’s going on; they will be more alert to the climate and who talks to whom. They may also try to pick up bits of conversation and piece together an explanation of the situation. They will likely begin investing significance in everyday behaviors and reflecting upon them (e.g., “You know, the boss wouldn’t make eye contact with me today in the hall; I wonder if that means I’m on the ‘hit list’ for the upcoming downsizing?”). This first phase may be considered the silent phase, when others’ communication is carefully monitored and when nonverbal communication carries more weight.

Second, the employees will likely use active communication strategies if they want more information. In this phase, they will analyze the situation together, talk among themselves, and try to gain more information through the grapevine. They may gossip, backbite, or blame others for the impending downsizing in order to vent frustrations, especially if there’s an absence of direct information from credible sources. If information is not forthcoming, some employees may even try to connect with people from other departments or sectors of the organization in order to “get a feel” for what’s going on and what to expect. This second phase may be considered a venting phase, when information is withheld; or it may be the investigative phase, when people begin talking with one another to gain more information indirectly. In either or both cases, verbal communication becomes more important.

Third, the employees will likely engage in interactive strategies to gain more concrete information. In this phase, employees will go directly to a credible and qualified source to find out whether the rumors are true. For example, the employees may approach their immediate supervisor, a union representative, or someone in a position of higher authority in order to find out the facts. Like the second phase, this phase relies on verbal communication; however, rather than relying on speculation and assumption or indirect communication, the employees use direct communication. This strategy, like the active strategies, relies more heavily on verbal communication.

While these strategies may not necessarily be used in order, they provide a template for understanding how people respond in organizations when uncertain situations develop. As you move into the work world, remember these principles, because they will help you understand, as well as select, communication strategies in uncertain times.

ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS: THE SYSTEMS MODEL

Understanding organizations as systems means recognizing that every organization exists within a larger environment. A system is a set of parts (individuals) that are interconnected (relationships) within its environment. The larger environment provides resources to the organization (input)
and utilizes the products or services the organization creates (output). What the organization does with these products and services is called throughput. To illustrate, a university system depends upon the larger environment for a variety of human, information, or fiscal resources such as students, faculty, and other employees; knowledge and information; and money from the state, benefactors, grants, and tuition fees. The university also depends upon such physical resources as electricity, computers, books, equipment, and furniture. The university system generates output through its graduates, who are potential employees, and through additional knowledge and information from research, community service endeavors, and tax dollars paid by university workers. The university processes all the resources from the environment in classrooms, meetings, research projects, and other types of activities, and this becomes the essence of “throughput” at a university. Every system is unique, just like every college or university is unique. And every individual within the organization is connected with one another in the system.

In order to understand the way a system operates, we will discuss several characteristics, including wholeness, interdependence, openness, adaptability, and equifinality. Systems theorists Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn (1966) suggest that a systems approach focuses on problems of relationships, structure, and interdependence rather than on concrete objects in the organization. Let’s look at the relationships between the parts (individuals) of a system and the way individuals understand and process feedback to understand the system.

**Wholeness**

The first characteristic of a system is wholeness, or the unique configuration of the system’s parts. Most organizations have different departments, offices, or individuals, but the way these elements coordinate activities constitutes the system. Restructuring the system will not threaten the wholeness of the organization. Some universities, for example, are organized by the college structure. The university has several colleges. Each college consists of several departments. In our universities, for example, the Communication Department is a part of the College of Arts and Sciences. The chair or head of our department is responsible to the college’s dean. Some larger universities, on the other hand, have an entire College of Communication that consists of several different departments such as broadcasting, film studies, journalism, communication studies, and others. Though uniquely configured, each of our institutions remains a whole organization; it is not a loose coalition of independent, autonomous units.

**Interdependence and Synergy**

It is necessary to understand how the parts of the system function together in an interdependent fashion to create the whole. In a family, team, or business, the relationships among people make the group a system. As we discussed in the chapter on group communication, every part in the system can impact every other part of the system. Thus, systems theorists suggest, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Collective energy, or synergy, increases when the parts work together. This synergy can be negative or positive. Negative synergy results from ineffective communication and misunderstanding. Positive synergy results from recognizing the interdependence between system components and competent communication within the system.

**Openness**

Every organization interacts differently with the environment. Environments are dynamic and changing. Today’s organizations must monitor the environment and adapt to changing resources in that environment. The concept of openness refers to
how the system uses feedback to adapt to changes in the larger environment. For example, changes can be economic (changes in the stock market, in number of customers, or in cost of supplies), political (changes in legislation that affect the organization), or human (changes in technology require more worker training). Openness also means that organizations that exist in a larger system are constantly impacted by events in that larger system.

On September 11, 2001, the tragedies in New York and Washington reverberated around the world and in our schools. Many of us knew someone connected to another person working in the World Trade Center or in the Pentagon, so the events caused shock waves on our campuses. Many faculty at our universities canceled classes, called loved ones just to hear their voices, or talked with coworkers about their feelings. The outpouring of assistance—from raising money to donating blood—reverberated across the country and solidified our commitment to fellow Americans in need. The events of September 11 also demonstrated the incredible diversity in our American system and showed the variety of our feedback in response to tragedy. Some individuals traveled thousands of miles to assist with the rescue efforts in New York City. And while some Americans responded by reaching out to Arab Americans, others responded with hatred and violence against these individuals. We are diverse in how we give, in how we love, and in how we hate. Most of these responses are related to our individual levels of openness. In the same way, organizations respond differently to the environment depending on their respective levels of openness. For the most part, organizations that are not flexible and adaptable begin to solidify.

**Adaptability through Feedback**

Changes in the larger environment, then, require organizations to adapt quickly and responsibly. In order to adapt to changes, the organization must become more proactive in seeking out information and must adopt a flexible approach to larger environmental change. **Adaptability** is critical to contemporary organizations, which must constantly adopt new policies, procedures, products, and services to respond to the rapidly changing global environment. After September 11, airports around the country were closed for days, and some airlines laid off thousands of employees. Other organizations set up funding mechanisms and matched employee contributions to the “September 11th Fund,” which assisted victims and their families. General Electric Corporation, for example, donated $10 million to the fund. In other words, these organizations adapted to the crisis at hand with philanthropic feedback.
Organizations must also recognize that strategies that work in one situation will not necessarily work in another. Strategies are contingent upon many environmental factors. For example, today’s organizations must monitor the environment and create unique ways of adapting. A range of new jobs that focus on monitoring the environment—marketing, sales, public relations, and others—have opened up in organizations. Individuals in these jobs must have effective communication skills in order to recognize changes and to communicate those changes to others in their organization.

**Equifinality**

The final characteristic of any system is equifinality. This refers to recognition that the end product (whatever output the organization produces) can be produced in several ways. Every system has the capacity to identify and develop several ways to reach its goals. For example, think of the number of options you have when choosing an Internet provider. No matter which provider you choose, you accomplish virtually the same thing—the ability to send e-mail, surf the Net, join a chat room, and so on. Each provider, though, has some unique features. Another example of equifinality can be seen in the number of colleges and universities that offer communication degrees. Although there are many different ways colleges or universities might offer this degree, each may require slightly different courses or experiences within their programs. Students achieve the same goal but travel somewhat different paths to achieve it, depending on the program’s focus.

**Communication in the System**

Through organizational communication, we gather, interpret, and utilize information from the environment outside the system. Communication allows the organization to coordinate the interdependent parts within the system. Openness to feedback allows an organization to adapt and adjust itself to environmental change. Communication and creativity within and throughout the system open a range of options in developing, modifying, marketing, and selling the organization’s products and services. Think back to the types of advertising or marketing strategies that convinced you to attend your college or university. Did admissions counselors come to your school? Was the institution’s website creative and interesting? Did you watch videos or receive a DVD? Did you receive brochures or letters? Did you go to campus and take a tour guided by a student representative? Did you speak with a faculty member? You can probably identify some key communication strategies that helped guide your decision.
Goodall (1997) suggest the following principles to guide communication with superiors:

1. **Plan a strategy.** Understand the individual and the context of your appeal.
2. **Determine why the superior should listen.** Connect your appeal to something important to your boss.
3. **Tailor the argument to the supervisor’s style and characteristics.** Will he or she respond more favorably to statistics or a story? Adapt your evidence to his or her needs.
4. **Assess the supervisor’s technical knowledge.** Do not assume his or her knowledge base, know it.
5. **Hone your communications skills.** Be clear and articulate in your appeals.

Communication must always be adapted to audience knowledge, expectations, values, and beliefs. Keys to successful communication to subordinates in the organization are openness and support. Empathic listening is critical to the success of many relationships. Subordinates commonly criticize their superiors for withholding information. They need and want to know information that impacts their work. Thus, effective supervisors pass along information to subordinates and provide them with opportunities for input in discussions that impact workplace behavior and decision making. Supportiveness in communication includes showing concern for the relationships and demonstrating respect for individuals while promoting accomplishment of tasks. Both empathic listening and genuine support from supervisors enhance employee motivation in the workplace. These communication strategies also empower subordinates by building confidence and trust, as you can see in the box Communication and Career Links: Key Principles for Successful Organizational Relationships.

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**Communication and Career Links**

**Key Principles for Successful Organizational Relationships**

A few years ago, a young man stormed into one of our offices without an appointment and demanded, “There are no seats left in the sections of the basic course that fit my schedule. You have to enroll me in the 12:30 p.m. Tuesday/Thursday section right now because I’m a senior, and I can’t graduate unless I take this stupid course.” His attitude, demeanor, and communication strategy was, to say the least, ineffective. Not surprisingly, he found that his approach failed to get him what he needed and actually hindered him.

In response, one of your authors said, in a direct but courteous manner, “Before you say more, allow me to help you. First, in the ‘stupid course’ in which you need to enroll, we teach principles of communication that will help you should you encounter a similar circumstance like this again in your life. However, if you think about it, you probably already know about some of these principles. So, if you’d like to go out of my office, come in again, and use what you think might be a more appropriate communication approach, I’ll act as though our first encounter didn’t occur. What do you say?” Sheepishly, the young man went out, knocked at the door, and this time significantly adjusted his approach; he introduced himself, softened his tone, explained what he wanted, and received the help he needed. This story illustrates an important principle: *You can more easily get what you need from others when you communicate in a kind, polite, and direct manner that affirms the other person’s humanity.* This is true in both college and work contexts. Consider these key principles that can help guide your communication choices when working with others in organizations:

1. **Work on developing a trusting relationship with others.** People are the most important resource in organizations. Trusting relationships between and among people are the glue that holds an organization together. When
you have built trust with others, you can more easily approach them and ask for assistance or offer explanations. For example, if you have developed an honest relationship with your professor, when you tell her that you missed class because you were not feeling well, she is more likely to believe you without the need for any outside confirmation. When your immediate supervisor trusts you because you have proven that you can accomplish assignments in a timely manner with excellent results, you will get even more challenging opportunities and perhaps, eventually, a promotion.

2. Treat everyone, regardless of rank in the organization, with respect. Very often students (and faculty too) forget that staff and other support personnel at colleges and universities are essential to the function of the organization. They often have information power (i.e., they know what you need to know) or can help you gain access to a person, place, or equipment you need. Practice genuine, common courtesy in your dealings with everyone since they may literally hold the key to what you need now or later. You can, of course, “be nice to get what you want,” but this will probably backfire at some point, because if you are not authentically respectful to everyone, you may at some point “forget to put on your kind face” and unwittingly offend someone.

3. When disagreements or difficulties arise, respond, don’t react. What will you do if you disagree with the grade you received on a project? Many students tend to complain to others in the class, or, in some cases, appeal the situation to someone else, without ever discussing the issue with their teacher. These are reactive responses that seek retribution, not a resolution. This can escalate the spiral of conflict with your professor who, in most instances, has more organizational power than you. However, if you respond by first approaching your professor in a kind, direct manner and asking questions to clarify the reason for your grade, you open possibilities for dialogue that will solve, rather than exacerbate, problems. Even if you are not satisfied with the result, you may uncover important insights that will help you in completing the next assignment with greater success. Response, rather than reaction, has equal application in the workplace. Undoubtedly, you will encounter coworkers or supervisors with whom you disagree; however, how you handle these differences will impact your satisfaction with your job, the climate of the workplace, and possibly your future with the organization.

4. Don’t be afraid to say you’re sorry or take responsibility. It is never easy to apologize. None of us enjoy being wrong. It is equally difficult to take responsibility to correct what we have done wrong. Given that we are all human and make mistakes or have bad days, relationships in organizations are likely to become strained at some point; we must be willing to make apologies and accept responsibility for doing the right thing, even if it’s difficult. This is not just true for students and employees; it is also true for professors or supervisors. James Autry (2001) tells of a time in his career when he was in conflict with his immediate supervisor who micromanaged his department. Autry felt that his creativity and energy were being squelched, so he decided to accept an attractive offer from another company. Upon hearing of his resignation, the CEO of the company, who was traveling in another city, called him and asked him to delay his decision until they could talk. When the CEO returned, he apologized to Autry, explained that he had hoped the situation with Autry’s supervisor would resolve itself, and promised to fix the situation if Autry would stay. Autry explains, “To make the story short, I stayed. I didn’t stay for more money or power or position. I stayed because I believed the CEO. I had always believed in him as a visionary leader, but it was at that moment that I got the measure of him as an honest, authentic human being—one willing to admit mistakes who did not allow his sense of position or his ego to prevent him from apologizing to someone lower in the hierarchy” (p. 11).
Communication with Peers

Horizontal or peer communication provides social support to individuals and builds employee morale. We have discussed effective communication in work teams and its benefits in terms of decision making and relationship maintenance. Peer communication also entails talking across departments or units and with customers or suppliers. Today, focus on customer service is essential to business success. Opportunities for feedback between units in the organization and between the organization and its customers, coupled with rapid response to that feedback, can increase organizational effectiveness and success.

Ultimately, individuals at any level of the organization must understand the complexity of its relationships and expectations. Communication that is clear, constant, and supportive within the variety of relational contexts enhances individual, team, and organizational effectiveness.

Using Networks and Channels Effectively

Effective organizational communication is dependent upon the appropriate use of networks and channels of communication within the organization. Who talks to whom? Why? How? When? Where? These were some of the questions we posed in Chapter 1 during our analysis of communication situations, including those within organizations. A network links organizational members either formally or informally and describes how information travels throughout the organization. Some formal networks are used to disseminate critical information to all employees while other networks are more informal and provide information on issues of socialization.

Formal networks, or channels, are used most commonly when information is communicated either up (reporting the results of a particular job) or down (giving orders or advising on policy adaptation). Informal networks or channels are used most commonly among peers at similar levels of the organization although sometimes the grapevine (a common name for the most pervasive informal organizational channel) is used by many individuals at all levels. The grapevine can be a positive communication channel, because it is one of the fastest ways to disseminate information. Individual members may use the grapevine to confirm information that comes from more formal channels. It assists members in interpreting and understanding information. However, the grapevine can also become a negative channel if organizational members use it
as a substitute for more formal channels, such as trying to find out about critical policy or personnel changes when formal channels are lacking in information. As a result, if formal channels do not provide adequate information or allow individuals to interpret information accurately, the informal grapevine rumors replace reliable information.

**Communicating Outside the Organization**

Many of you will find jobs where you will be dealing with individuals outside the organization, such as customers, clients, suppliers, legislators, community leaders, and others. Managers today recognize that in order to ensure continued profit in the constantly changing marketplace, effective communication between the organization and its customers and other organizations is essential. Businesses must develop and nurture long-term relationships with numerous external audiences. This is not simply a matter of economics; it is also a product of expectations. Organizations are expected to accept and enact proactive social responsibility in their communities and in the broader global marketplace.

Organizational theorist Matthew Seeger (1997) suggests that organizations have four primary responsibilities to audiences both within and outside the organization: philanthropic, environmental, product, and employee. Philanthropic efforts include donations of time and money to local, regional, or national charities, including arts and cultural programs. Environmental responsibility concerns the organization’s impact on environmental resources. Product responsibility addresses product safety and conscientious use of materials in product development and production. Finally, employee responsibility includes efforts to provide a safe and motivating workplace. In the past, a common organizational philosophy was, “Let the buyer beware!” Today, however, the reverse may be true. Let the organization beware if its products and services do not conform to customer (and other audience) expectations of social, environment, or product responsibility. Organizations, therefore, are not just about doing business but about building relationships through service and support. This is true of the “business of higher education” as well as more traditional business endeavors. The box Computer Links: Communicating Social Responsibility through a Website explains how organizations are using their websites as one of the most important channels for communicating about the ways the organization conducts itself responsibly.

**Computer Links**

**Communicating Social Responsibility through a Website**

One of the most common communication channels used by organizations today is a website. In this way, an organization can communicate to multiple stakeholders in a cost-effective way. Millions of businesses today rely on their website to reach audiences across the world as well as in their own backyard. With the proliferation of websites, consumers need tools to evaluate the credibility, honesty, and ethicality of the information disseminated by organizations. Internet technology has made the communication of ethical values and behavior both more efficient and more complex in our diverse and fast-paced society. Organizations have the ability to communicate more quickly to larger numbers of stakeholders, and they can take advantage of advances in technology to make this communication more focused to meet the needs and expectations of those stakeholders.

As you think about the type of organization you would like to eventually work for, what critical questions do you have about the organization’s culture,
Today's worker faces numerous challenges in the workplace. Historically, workers could count on lifetime employment if they did a good job, but today that guarantee is gone. Communication in the workplace thus takes on greater importance as workers attempt to negotiate their jobs in an uncertain climate. Greater misunderstanding between and among supervisors and subordinates complicates that negotiation. The more misunderstanding occurs within an organization, the more workers are likely to feel fear and distrust, and the less likely they may be to communicate with others.

The Diverse Organization

The workforce today looks dramatically different from that of twenty years ago. Cultural, racial, and gender diversity have never been so pronounced. For example, the number of workers over fifty-five is growing. Additionally, census data tell us that the fastest-growing ethnic population in the United States is Hispanic. As a result, the white, male-dominated workforce of yesterday is being replaced by organizations filled with individuals who look, think, and act in radically different ways.

Organizations at the turn of the twentieth century and through WWI and WWII were predominantly manufacturing based. Today, the manufacturing sector is decreasing while the service industry is exploding. Another change is workers' levels of education are much higher than ever before in history. This educated workforce demands not only pay and benefits commensurate with their levels of training and experience but also employment opportunities that are satisfying and motivating. One way to motivate workers is including them in communication and decision-making processes.

Today's educated workers also demand a more equitable balance between work and home life. Individuals want to balance their job requirements with their family's needs. In the past, all employees were expected to work the same hours, get the same benefits, and develop the same sense of loyalty to the organization. Work was work, and employers expected no intrusions from personal or family issues. Today, however, issues of child care, elder care, and other responsibilities impact employees' lives. Organizations must also consider the number of workers with substance abuse or emotional problems. Increasingly, contemporary employers must develop counseling
services to assist employees with substance abuse problems, family struggles, mental health issues, legal problems, child and parent care, or other personal issues.

Organizations that respond to these employees' needs with appropriate policies and benefits and who communicate with them in caring and sensitive ways will remain competitive in today's marketplace. Flexibility and adaptability, hallmarks of systems theory, must become the norm for contemporary organizations. Employees, too, must be flexible and adaptable to the diversity of individuals, values, and communication styles of their customers, superiors, coworkers, subordinates, and others.

**Personal Relationships in Organizations**

Because today's workforce demands more satisfying personal relationships at work, organizations must also adapt to these new expectations. Workers today spend more than forty hours a week on the job; thus, the opportunity for enhanced social and personal relationships with coworkers is increased. Long-term relationships, both on and off the job, have the greatest potential for success when the partners are matched in such things as level of education, interests, and activities. Today we are just as likely to find these matches in our workplace as out of it.

Organizational theorists Dillard and Miller (1988) suggest that the motivation underlying romantic relationships in organizations is complex, as it involves love and ego. Employees motivated by love are looking for long-term companionship and partnership. Those motivated by ego are looking for sexual excitement and adventure. The consequences of these romantic relationships can, according to Dillard and Miller, provide improved work performance. However, negative perceptions of other employees can create problems for romantic partners. For example, if the romantic relationship ends, coworkers may continue assuming the relationship has negatively impacted the parties involved. Moving from the impersonal to the personal and to the romantic stage of a relationship with a coworker may be highly satisfying, but it could also backfire and have negative consequences both for the individuals and the organization.

Romantic relationships are not the only types of personal relationships that we might develop through our work, however. The potential for developing deep and long-lasting friendships also exists. Sharing the trials and tribulations as well as the joys and successes of our everyday work experiences with close friends adds an additional level of satisfaction to our work experience.

**Motivation in Diverse Organizations**

The diverse workforce consists of individuals who seek motivating and satisfying employment. But this diversity also means there is no “one-size-fits-all” motivational approach. As a result, organizations must recognize and adopt a variety of approaches to motivating workers. While communication is the common denominator in all types of motivation, the best motivational device or strategy will fail if its message and timing are not matched to individual and organizational needs. Organizational managers must seek out information from employees about what is motivating to them. Likewise, employees must be willing to communicate their needs and expectations to their supervisors. Kreps (1991) defines motivation as "the degree to which an individual is personally committed to expending effort in the accomplishment of a specified activity or goal" (p. 154). Eisenberg and Goodall (1997) suggest that communication can function in two ways to motivate: Managers can provide information and feedback about employee tasks, goals, and performance, and they can communicate encouragement, empathy, and concern.

Schutz (1958) suggests there are two levels of motivators important to individuals. The first level is primarily economic and includes such things as pay, benefits, and vacations. The second level is more subjective and includes motivators
like inclusion in decision making and opportunities for input into policies, procedures, and products. These are motivating to us as workers because we feel a sense of ownership of our jobs, a sense of pride in our individual accomplishments, and a sense of being respected by others for our knowledge and expertise. Each of us wants to engage in work that offers us personal satisfaction and professional opportunity.

The key to motivating employees, then, is to develop opportunities for collective decision making and risk taking. Effective organizational communication also requires developing multiple channels for information to flow through the organization and creating communication situations that encourage negotiation among participants.

**UNDERSTANDING AND AVOIDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

As we noted earlier, an organization creates and maintains its unique culture. However, internal and external audiences demand that the culture be based on responsibility and sensitivity to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation. Effective and ethical organizations establish cultures of equal opportunity and provide workplaces free of discriminatory actions. For example, one area of prohibited discrimination is sexual harassment. Sexually harassing behavior humiliates people. While women are more commonly victims of sexual harassment, sexually hostile environmental harassment may be targeted at any individual in the organization.

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, harassment on the basis of sex violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The act defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment occurs when

1. submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment;
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting an individual; or
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Situations 1 and 2 are often referred to as “quid pro quo” sexual harassment and usually occur in relationships where there is an obvious power difference between the parties (such as supervisor to subordinate or faculty to student). Situation 3 is often referred to as “hostile environment” sexual harassment and more commonly occurs between coworkers or between students. Sexual harassment may be physical (such as unwanted touching, hugging, kissing, patting, pinching), verbal (i.e., referring to a woman as a “babe,” “girl,” or “honey”; discussing sexual topics or telling sexual jokes; asking personal questions of a sexual nature; or making sexual comments about a person's clothing or anatomy), or nonverbal (i.e., such as looking a person up and down, staring at someone for a prolonged time, or making sexually suggestive gestures with hands or through body movements).

It is the organization’s responsibility to prevent sexual harassment by developing policies and training that educate employees about appropriate behavior and that provide them with opportunities to report harassment. Organizations should investigate these reports promptly and confidentially and should not retaliate against employees who report unacceptable behavior. Responding to this issue through education, training, and communication helps to sustain healthy interpersonal relationships among employees and can benefit the organization in numerous ways. When we work in supportive and caring organizational climates, we are motivated to be productive and creative in our professional responsibilities.
Regardless of the type of culture developed in the organization or the nature of the relationships among employees, some form of communication technology must be utilized. While face-to-face communication is still important in today’s organization, advanced technology has made messaging faster, made access to and processing of information much easier, and made communication with others across geographical distances much more accessible. Some technology has made the office virtually obsolete. Computer, video, and teleconferencing capabilities allow us to reach others wherever we are and whenever we want. The Internet allows us to access information from any library in the world with a few clicks of a mouse. Organizations may use computer-assisted technology to send images and voices across time and space or use computer-assisted decision-aiding technology such as databases or programs that provide information to decision makers. For example, Ganga and Lerner (2004) report that in 2001, 15 percent of employed people, almost 20 million workers, worked at least one full day a week at home. Of these, 3.4 million workers had a formal arrangement with their employers that allowed them to work at home. For the most part, these arrangements were possible because of increased technology.

The effects of this technology on contemporary organizations are significant. In order to acquire and keep a good job and to remain competitive, you must understand and develop expertise in many types of communication technology. For the organization to remain competitive, it means that training must be ongoing to meet changing technology.

Technological advancements also provide opportunities for organizations to monitor and improve employee productivity. Computerized monitoring of employees is the norm in businesses today. However, managers must recognize that abuse of individual rights and privacy (also possible because of changing technology) negatively impacts corporate culture. Employee–employer rights issues are complex and continue to cause concern for employees and employers alike. As an individual beginning your career or updating your skills for a career change, you need to know how, why, and when your behavior at work will be monitored. To counter the impact of technology that monitors your behavior, be up-to-date on the latest advances in technology and use it wisely so as not to jeopardize your job or your unit’s productivity.

First impressions often have the most impact on whether or not a personal relationship will blossom or wither, or in the case of your professional life, whether or not you will be offered a position. All of the communication skills we have discussed so far in this text will assist you in making the best impression when you interview for the job/career you have been preparing for in college. But the interview itself is not the first step in the job-search process. Before you interview, you should first research the type of organization you want to work for and learn what the business needs and expects of its employees. Therefore, one of the first steps in your research is to develop an understanding of the qualities or skills necessary for work in a particular organization. Second, you must know how to prepare the required employment materials that will assist you in getting that job.

The Job Search Process

One of the best places to begin your research is the Internet. A host of websites provides information on every aspect of the job-search process. You can learn how to
write and post a résumé, write cover letters, find job opportunities, prepare for interviews, determine commonly asked questions, and get advice on interview attire. Most companies offer a wealth of information through their websites about who they are and what they do. Many of these websites even have links aimed at potential employees. In fact, many organizations guide you through the steps for submitting an application, posting a résumé and cover letter, and requesting more information on the company.

In this section, we provide information that will assist you on a job interview, but first we discuss the types of skills most employers look for in potential employees. Despite advances and changes in technology within organizations, employers still seek candidates who can show they have effective and flexible interpersonal communication skills. As we said earlier, flexibility is critical to effective interpersonal communication in diverse and multicultural organizations. The ability to speak intelligently and assertively with colleagues, superiors, and subordinates is vital. Working effectively in groups and managing conflict in problem-solving teams are equally critical.

Key skills employers expect from workers today include self-motivation, assertiveness, ambition, as well as cultural sensitivity and understanding. Once you have developed your skills in these critical areas, you are ready to find your ideal job. After you have identified the job you want, investigated what the organization expects of you, and written and submitted your résumé and cover letter, you may be called for an interview. Remember that the résumé and cover letter may get you an interview, but the interview itself will be what lands you the job.

The résumé briefly describes your educational, employment, professional, and extracurricular experiences. Critical information that you must provide in the résumé includes education (college and/or graduate school); work history (both paid and volunteer); professional or academic organizational experience (fraternity, sorority, political, or professional); and awards, scholarships, military experience, and references (names, titles, work addresses, phone, and e-mail). The résumé must be well organized, neat, and error free. A general rule is to keep the résumé to one or two pages. Use keywords and action verbs throughout the résumé to describe critical skills you have developed through your wide range of experiences. Once you have written a first draft, proof it for errors. Then have someone in your college or university career center evaluate it and offer constructive advice. You might also ask a trusted professor or mentor to assess it as well.
A cover letter should accompany your résumé unless you are hand delivering the résumé to the person conducting the interview. Simply type “cover letter guidelines” into any search engine to find many suggestions and examples.

However, as a general guideline, your cover letter should be no more than one page long, follow a simple business letter format, and include three paragraphs. The first paragraph identifies the job in which you are interested and how you heard about the position. The second paragraph is what some call the “sell paragraph.” Here you explain how your skills, experience, and background specifically relate to the company and its position. This paragraph should demonstrate that you have done your homework about the company and have a clear sense of how you can benefit the organization. The third paragraph should explain how you intend to follow up on the letter and should indicate that your résumé is enclosed. Like your résumé, the cover letter should be clean, correct, and concise. If you provide employers with a well-done cover letter and résumé, you will be well on your way to being contacted for a job interview.

**Interviewing**

Before arriving for your interview, you should have conducted thorough research on the company or firm. Know some of its history, its products or services, its various offices or plants, its economic health in the past few years, and its goals and objectives. You should also know something about its employee benefits and work issues like training, promotion, and performance expectations. Again, this information can be obtained from company websites, from staff members already employed there, or from library and specialized publications that report on the status of companies worldwide. Reference books like *Dun and Bradstreet’s*, *Moody’s*, or *Standard and Poor’s* list virtually all businesses, their products, locations, and other valuable information. Doing the appropriate homework will help you understand the organization and how you can mesh with its missions and objectives. Furthermore, you will be well prepared to answer and pose questions during the interview process.

**Types of Interviews**

So, you know what employers expect, you have prepared a strong résumé, and you’ve researched your company. Now you’re ready for the interview. But what type of interview? One type of interview is the information-gathering interview. For example, you may have done this type of interview when preparing a paper in one of your classes. Individuals doing survey research interview patrons in their local mall. Journalists do this type of interview when preparing for a story. In an information-gathering interview, you may have opportunities to meet professionals working in a job you might like to pursue and ask them questions. A key to effective information gathering is knowing the person you will interview and to prepare a set of specific questions in advance. Prepare open-ended questions that call for explanation rather than closed-ended questions that require simply yes or no or one-word answers. Also, prepare follow-up questions to make sure you get all the information you need, but be prepared to deviate from your list if important information surfaces during the interview. Visit [www.quintcareers.com/information_interview.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/information_interview.html) for help with drafting suitable and useful questions for the information-gathering interview.

Remember that the person or persons you interview are taking valuable time from their work to speak with you. Be courteous, attentive, and sensitive to both their verbal and nonverbal communication, and be flexible so that you can respond to their needs during the interview. Show up on time, dress appropriately, and use the interviewees’ time appropriately. Take good notes, listen attentively, express your thanks, and send a follow-up thank-you letter.

If you are ready for an employment-selection interview, then be prepared to sell yourself and your qualifications. This means that you must be able to explain, in
detail, how you can be an asset to the organization. The most common types of
questions that will be asked focus on what you can bring to the job, how you
have prepared for the job’s responsibilities, and why the employer should hire you
over other candidates. You will probably be asked to identify your strengths and
weaknesses for the job as well as your goals for the next five years. Go to www
.collegegrad.com/ezine/22tooughi.shtml for help answering interview questions.
Remember, the first five minutes of the interview are critical in establishing the
impression that you are prepared and experienced and, thus, are the best candi-
dates for the position.

How to Be Interviewed

The interviewer will also likely ask if you have any questions regarding the job and
the company. Successful applicants respond to questions clearly, directly, and sub-
stantively, and they prepare questions that show they are truly interested in working
for the company. Ask about the organization’s working environment and culture,
or inquire about a project that employees are working on. Refer to sources of infor-
mation you reviewed in preparing for the interview such as the company’s website
or annual report. Be alert for verbal and nonverbal signals that communicate
whether the interviewer is interested in continuing the interview or whether he or
she is ready to end the discussion. When you think the interviewer is ready to end
the interview, express appreciation for the interviewer’s time and interest in your
candidacy, shake his or her hand firmly, and tell the interviewer that you are truly
interested in this position.

Successful applicants for a job in today’s highly competitive market know
themselves, express confidence, exhibit a high level of organization prior to and
during an interview, and show enthusiasm and interest in the type of work they will
be doing. Unsuccessful applicants fail to express themselves clearly, are unrealistic
about the type of work they will be doing, are unclear about their future in the
organization, or are focused on “selfish” issues like salary, benefits, or vacations.

Avoiding Common Mistakes in the Interview

Perhaps the most common mistake that interviewees make is having unrealistic
expectations. These may center on the skills and knowledge the interviewee thinks
he or she has, or salary expectations that do not fit the job. Unrealistic expectations
also can be related to communication. You may expect an employer or fellow
employees to communicate more than they do, or you may believe that your com-
unication is “enough” for others, when they expect more of you. While you may
take for granted that your communication style is effective, others may not. In order
to avoid unrealistic expectations, engage in practice interviewing. You may be able
to practice interviews at your campus Career Center or its equivalent. Practicing for
interviews can mean the difference between successfully landing a job or continu-
ing your job search.

Following Up the Interview

After you complete the interview, there are a few things you can and should do to
follow up. A thank-you letter can increase the odds of an interviewer remembering
you and keeping you high on his or her list of candidates. This also provides you
with an opportunity to add any additional information requested by the interview-
er. If anyone other than the interviewer was instrumental in helping to arrange the
interview, such as a secretary or administrative assistant, send him or her a thank-
you letter as well. It is also wise to contact your references if the interviewer has
requested letters of recommendation or communicated that he or she will be in con-
tact with them. There is not complete agreement on whether you should call the
interviewer after several days to ask about the progress of your application. However, if the interviewer has given you a deadline for a decision with regard to your hire, and the deadline has passed, it is a good idea to call and ask whether your application was successful. This phone call also communicates your continued interest in the job.

Your success in interviewing for and obtaining a position and in working within an organization is dependent upon your experience, knowledge, expectations, abilities, and communication skills. We come to any organization as a person with knowledge and with a predisposition to act in certain ways; however, successful organizational communicators must learn to adapt knowledge and predispositions to the organization’s goals and expectations. This means each member must balance individual skill and creativity with the organization’s rules and structure. Organizations are most successful when they recognize and provide opportunities for individual creativity within their formal structure. The workforce of today and of tomorrow is increasingly diverse, and within this mix are employees with unique and valuable abilities, values, and communication styles. Valuing this diversity, and providing opportunities for communicating social inclusiveness, enhances the communication competency of individuals and the success of organizations. The box Campus Links: Should I Work While Attending College? can help you make effective decisions about working while you are in school.

Campus Links

Should I Work While Attending College?

Ask yourself the following questions:
- What is your personal experience with working while in college?
- What valuable or helpful lessons have you learned from working while in college?
- What difficulties have you encountered while trying to hold a job and go to college?
- What would you tell an incoming student regarding working while attending college?

According to Orszag, Orszag, and Whitmore (2001), students today are more and more likely to work while in college. Since 1984, the fraction of college students aged sixteen to twenty-four who also work full or part time has increased from 49 to 57 percent. Not only are students more likely to work while attending college today, but they are also more likely to work full time. The share of students working full time while going to school full time has nearly doubled, rising from 5.6 percent in 1985 to 10.4 percent in 2000. They categorize working students into two groups: those who primarily identify themselves as students but who work in order to pay the bills, and those who are first and foremost workers who also take some college classes. Two-thirds of undergraduates who work consider themselves “students who work”; the other third consider themselves “workers who study.” In their study, these researchers identify several positive and negative impacts that working part or full time has on a student’s educational experience.

Positive Impacts of Working Part Time
- Part-time student employment may have beneficial effects: for example, an on-campus research position may spark a student’s interest in further academic programs or provide important work experience that will improve future labor market prospects.
- Working part time as a student generally appears to replace nonproductive activities, such as watching television and visiting with friends.
- Students who work fewer than ten hours per week have slightly higher GPAs than students who work more than ten hours per week.

Negative Impact of Working Full Time
- Full-time employment may impair student performance. For example, 55 percent of those students working thirty-five or more hours per week report that work negatively affects their studies.
- Students working full time also reported the following liabilities: 40 percent report that work limits their class schedule; 36 percent report it reduces their class choices; 30 percent report it limits the number of classes they take; and 26 percent report it limits access to the library.
Up to this point, we have largely focused on organizational communication theory and its application in the work setting. However, organizational communication also directly relates to your higher education experience since, after all, your college or university is an organization. While there are numerous issues that we might consider, let’s focus on how communication flows in a college or university and what this means for you as a student.

Increasingly, higher-learning institutions are facing lean economic times. Many states face budget crises, and state legislators are calling for greater accountability from colleges. Likewise, private institutions often face equally difficult economics because the overall economy impacts donations, endowments, and other revenue streams. As a result, many colleges, both public and private, have announced tuition hikes to help defray the burgeoning costs. However, you may not be aware that such intentions even exist unless you listen to the local news or read the school newspaper. The point is this: Many decisions that impact your college experience are made by boards or administrators, and you only learn about the policies after they are instituted. Consequently, although you may have insights or information you would like to add, you do not have the opportunity to voice your concerns. This is, obviously, a communication problem. But how do you solve it? First, you need to understand the flow of communication in your college or university. This means becoming acquainted with who, how, and when decisions are made and what opportunities, if any, you have to speak to decision makers directly or indirectly through student government representation or other intermediaries. In short, if you want to add your voice, you must understand organizational structure and the flow of communication within that structure.

This may be far removed from your everyday interests, so let’s consider some additional situations. Let’s assume you’ve seen your advisor and, to your knowledge, have registered for classes for the upcoming semester. However, at the semester’s start, you realize you are not registered at all! Where do you go to address this problem? How can you effectively communicate your needs when you find the appropriate contact person? These and similar organizational communication issues are an all-too-real part of college life. To respond, you have to understand organizational structure and how to get help.

To take another example, as teachers, your authors have all had students arrive unexpectedly at our office doors in tears because they thought they were all set to graduate, only to discover that they lacked one course or credit hour. How could this distressing situation occur? How could a student think he or she is ready to graduate and not be? This is a real organizational communication problem that can and does have a disturbing impact on students’ lives. However, you can save yourself...
these heartaches by learning how your college or university’s organizational communication system operates and making it work for you. In the end, it’s up to you to gather and process all the information necessary to complete your college education. This means you must learn to communicate in the organization of which you are now a part. Consider the information in the box Campus Links: Using Campus Services, which helps outline the organizational nature of colleges and universities. You will, however, need to educate yourself about your institution more specifically and implement the other communication skills you are learning in this textbook in order to navigate and succeed in your college environment.

**Campus Links**

**Using Campus Services**

In essence, many colleges are truly mini-communities that offer students an array of services and opportunities. Find out what your school offers by browsing through its phone directory, scrolling through an online copy of the student handbook, or looking at your college or university website. While what you find may differ from one school to the next, many college support services can be found in offices categorized under the following headings: academic outreach; technology support; health, fitness, and safety concerns; personal matters; and financial assistance. Learning to use these organizational resources can enhance and simplify your college experience.

**Academic Outreach**

Academic outreach services focus on helping students perform well in the classroom or providing students with opportunities to enhance what they’ve learned in the classroom.

- **Academic advising** often involves interaction with faculty, staff, and peers working together to plan, select, and register for the appropriate courses leading toward one’s choice of degree programs.
- **Career advising services** may help students determine what career or field is right for them. It may also provide declared majors with important advice about degree requirements or developments in students’ chosen programs or fields of study.
- **Disability services** provides accommodations for students who are qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students who qualify for assistance may be provided with test readers, note-takers, recorded textbooks, and the like.
- **International affairs** offers support and assistance to international students attending the college as well as to American students planning to study abroad. This support may be academic (such as planning on-campus work shops on understanding American culture) or social (as in putting on weekend trips to help students make friends and see local sights).
- **Job placement** may assist students in locating part- and full-time employment as well as internships or cooperative educational opportunities both during college and after graduation. Job placement may also host job fairs, résumé and interviewing workshops, and on-campus interviews.
- **Tutoring centers** provide students with one-on-one or small group tutoring in beginning and upper-division courses. Generally, schools offer tutoring in mathematics, English, foreign language, sciences, and other challenging courses.

**Technology Support**

While many campuses have on-site computer labs and support staff, much of the learning students do now is from remote locations via the Internet using their own home computers or laptops. As a result, it is important for students to know that technical support and instruction are available and how to access them.

- **Computer labs** are found on most campuses. They may be located in residence halls, classroom facilities, or learning centers. Normally, they have an on-site monitor and are available to all registered students.
- **Help desk** support is provided online or live (via phone) to students who need computer help or online course assistance. As more and more campuses implement technology in the learning environment, an increasing number of students may need to use help desk services.
- **Library or instructional media center** offers students facilities for study or research. Librarians and media specialists are trained to help students at any point in the research process and are familiar with the latest search engines.
Health, Fitness, and Safety Concerns

Like most small communities, colleges also have services to meet the health, fitness, and safety needs of their residents, whether they live on campus or commute.

- Health center offers students the services of physicians or nurse practitioners as well as registered or licensed nurses. Health centers may have pharmacists or lab technicians too. While on campus, many students make the school’s health center their primary source of health care.
- Intramural sports are offered at most campuses to provide students with good exercise and offer them a chance to build friendships with others. Intramural team sports are open to all students interested in some friendly competition and normally are offered at several times throughout the day.
- Physical education center or fitness centers offer students workout and training facilities. Many campuses have weight rooms, aerobic equipment, and sports injury or nutrition workshops.
- University police protect members of the campus community and enforce the laws and regulations to provide a safe living and learning environment. Campus security officers may also work together with local and regional law enforcement professionals on cases of mutual concern.

Personal Matters

Members of any community, including a campus community, have personal matters that need to be attended to. Many students today are raising children or caring for aging parents, working part or full time while going to school, or struggling with personal or family issues. Because life goes on while students are getting their education, many schools respond with services and opportunities that can positively impact students’ lives both inside and outside of the classroom.

- Campus ministries offer students an array of denominations and services to meet their spiritual and religious needs. Some campuses have religious organizations on campus while others cooperate with local or regional churches and provide transportation to off-site services.
- Child care centers are found on many college campuses today. Indeed, an increasing number of students with young children are returning to college or starting school for the first time. As a result, many campuses provide on-site child care or offer information about other child care providers or preschool facilities in the community.

Financial Assistance

Skyrocketing college costs are making it increasingly difficult to pay for an education. Consequently, colleges and universities have professionals on staff to help students find ways to meet the short-term financial challenges of college so they may reap the long-term benefits of their educational investments. Financial aid offices help qualified students identify means of financial support such as grants and scholarships; part-time, on-campus employment; low-interest loans; or special funding sources (i.e., Veterans Administration benefits, BIA tribal grants, or ROTC scholarships for students planning to serve in the military). Normally, students’ eligibility for financial assistance is determined when students file a FAFSA, or a Free Application for Federal Student Aid application.
In the world of work today, structures are changing, organizational decision making is changing, and requirements for employee effectiveness are also changing. As a college student, you need to understand how to negotiate the organizational environment of your institution. More importantly, once you begin your career in the working world, understanding how to develop and maintain effective organizational relationships is vital to your work success. In this chapter, we have identified some essential elements of effective communication in organizational settings:

- “The new knowledge worker” today must possess four key characteristics: college education; analytical thinking; commitment to lifelong learning; and good communication skills.
- Organizations operate as distinct cultures. A culture represents the actions, practices, language, and artifacts of a group.
- A number of symbolic practices make up culture, including language, stories, rites and rituals, and structure.
- The characteristics of organizational systems include wholeness, interdependence, adaptability, and equifinality.
- Effective organizational communication is dependent upon the appropriate use of networks and channels of communication within the organization.
- You are entering an era where the cultural, racial, and gender diversity in organizations has never been so significant.

Questions for Discussion
1. What are the elements of organizational cultures?
2. What are the components of an organizational system?
3. What communication behaviors will best allow you to adapt to the diversity of the modern workplace?
4. What are the essential elements of a good résumé?
5. What must you do to effectively prepare for a job interview?
6. What questions should you be prepared for in the interview?
7. What should you do to follow up after the interview?

EXERCISES
1. Draw a floor plan for your “ideal office.” Analyze the symbolic communication in that floor plan. What are you communicating to others about yourself?
2. Interview an individual working in the profession you have chosen. Ask questions about the culture in his or her organization. Ask the individual to list what he or she believes are the most effective organizational communication behaviors.
3. Develop a list of ethical principles and practices for communication in organizations. Under what circumstances would you say no to a manager or supervisor who asked you to violate your ethical values and beliefs in accomplishing some project? Under what circumstances would you “blow the whistle” on someone in your organization who violated the law?
4. Develop a list of employee and employer “rights” on the job. What limits should be placed on the rights of employers to monitor employee behavior on the job? Off the job?

KEY TERMS
- Organizational culture
- Language
- Stories and myths
- Rites and rituals
- Roles
- Rules and policies
- Environment
- Wholeness
- Interdependent
- Synergy
- Openness
- Adaptability
- Equifinality
- Informal networks
- Motivation
- Sexual harassment
- Information-gathering interview
- Employment-selection interview
REFERENCES


