



Chapter One

Application. Communication Process

Key Concept

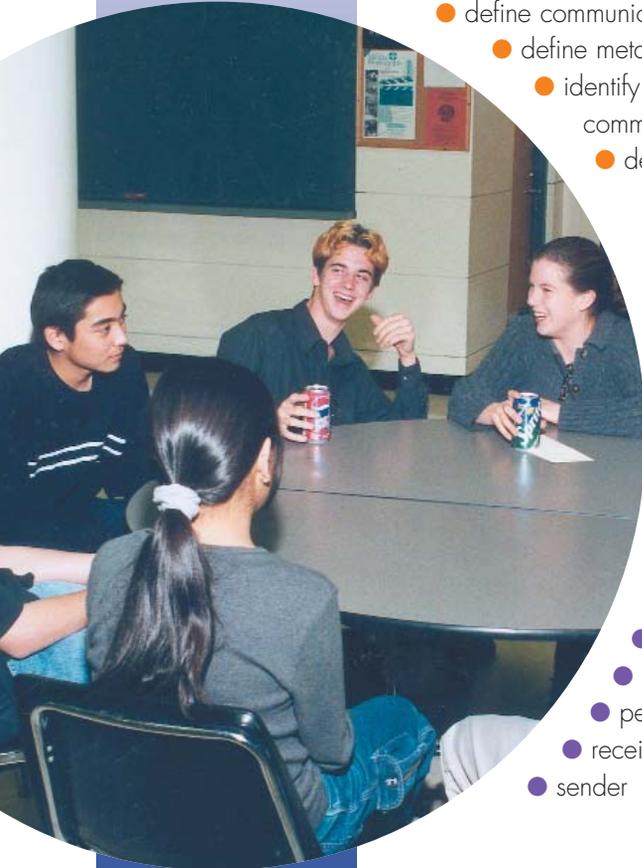
Improving communication skills and abilities requires us to talk about communication. We can talk about communication only when we have a common vocabulary.

Chapter Objectives

- define communication
- define metacommunication
- identify and analyze the related components of the communication process
- develop a basic vocabulary for talking and writing about communication

Key Terms

- channel
- communication
- communication imperative
- context
- feedback
- interference
- interpersonal communication
- intrapersonal communication
- mass media
- message
- metacommunication
- person-to-group communication
- receiver
- sender



W

e all communicate every day. So we think we understand what it is. Before you read any further, write down your definition of communication. Don't misplace it. We'll get back to it later in the chapter. Communication does come naturally to us. So, we think very little about calling someone on the phone or sending a e-mail just to ask them how they are doing. We often give thought to communication if we think it is likely to be special. For example, we prepare for a job interview or a speech. We think through what we're going to say. We even rehearse. But sometimes in day-to-day communication at work or in our social lives, we don't think about communication. We just "let it happen." Sometimes "letting it happen" works out very well. No one wants to believe that all communication is planned. Other times, if we would just stop to think about our communication, we could avoid misunderstandings, communicate more clearly, be more productive, and just get along better. Consider these two scenes:

Scenario #1

The time is Friday afternoon. This communication interaction takes place in Pilar's office. Pilar is a manager of an office that processes orders for a computer firm. The people in Pilar's office are present for a weekly wrap-up of the activities and planning for next week's needs—James, who is responsible for keeping the office on its schedule; Alicia, who is responsible for the computers and technology in the office; JaRon, who communicates regularly with the sales people who turn in the orders.

Pilar: *James, we have an important order coming through next week. The west coast order will be our biggest sale this quarter. Is everything in place to move the work through the office and make sure the order gets to warehouse and shipping?*

James: *That shouldn't be any problem, Pilar. We're in good shape. Is there any reason you think we'd have trouble? We've handled orders bigger than this.*

JaRon and Alicia remain silent.

Pilar: *No concerns. I just thought...*(Pilar's phone rings, interrupting her sentence. Pilar answers the phone.)

Sylvia: *Pilar here. May I help you?*

James: (to JaRon and Alicia): *If this order is so important, why does she take this phone call in the middle of our meeting? We've handled these orders before. What's the problem with what we've been doing?*

JaRon shakes his head and Alicia looks down at her notepad.

James: *I guess we all feel the same way.*

Scenario #2

The time is Friday afternoon. This interaction takes place in James' office before the weekly department meeting. Only Pilar and James are present.

Pilar: *James, when we meet this afternoon, I'm going to want you to speak about the upcoming west coast order. Since it's likely to be the biggest order we have this quarter, I want to be ready. (James furrows his brow.) You look concerned. Did something I said bother you? Are you okay with reviewing our procedures?*

James: *Sure. I guess I don't quite understand why. Do you have any specific concerns?*

Pilar: *No, not really. But since Alicia hasn't been here when we've processed an order this large, I'd like to have you review what we'll be doing to handle the increased paperwork. It might set her mind at ease. Also, she'll be more comfortable asking you questions if she knows that you've been through this before.*

James: *Do you want me to emphasize anything particular?*

Pilar: *Not really. I just thought...(Pilar's phone rings.)*

James: *You want to get that call?*

Pilar: *No, my assistant can pick it up at her desk. I want to be sure you're okay with doing the review. Don't emphasize anything particular, unless you think it's something Alicia needs to know.*

James: *I'll be ready. I'll even bring in that flowchart I made to show the sales staff.*

Pilar: *Great. Thanks for handling that.*

Can you see the difference between the two? Scenario #1 doesn't seem as if it's producing the kind of results Pilar wants. In fact, instead of helping Alicia understand, Pilar seems to have upset James. Scenario #2 delivers the same message to James: Pilar wants him to review the office's readiness for the big upcoming order. But James takes this message much better than he takes the same message in Scenario #1. Why?

Analysis

If we are to become more effective communicators, we must become accustomed to “communicating about communicating.” In other words, we must get used to thinking about what we say or do when we speak and listen. When we communicate about communication, we are using metacommunication. To make metacommunication a lifelong habit, we should first build a small vocabulary to help us.

Metacommunication: A Lifelong Skill for a Lifelong Learner

It's helpful to think of metacommunication as occurring at three different stages: anticipatory, adaptive, and reflective. In other words, we can metacommunicate before, during, and after communication. We practice this trait all the time, but we often aren't aware that we are doing it.

Anticipatory Metacommunication. Think about Scenario #2. It's obvious that Pilar has thought about her communication. She knows she has an upcoming meeting. She knows she wants James to review office procedures. She has communicated internally—that is, communicated with herself about the meeting and what she plans to do. She realizes that James should be given some warning about the meeting. Communication within yourself is called intrapersonal communication. Pilar has used intrapersonal communication to plan what she will talk about in the meeting and how she can best get James to help her. In other words, she anticipates the upcoming communication and plans for it.

This is anticipatory metacommunication. By thinking through (in a way, talking to herself) about her communication, Pilar has avoided problems that could come about in the message she plans to give during the meeting. But anticipatory metacommunication can also take place with others. If Pilar had shared her upcoming meeting agenda with another person, talked to her, and

listened to her, she would also have anticipated the communication with another person.

Adaptive Metacommunication. We do the same thing while we are delivering a message. In Scenario #2, Pilar notices that James furrowed his brow. Her thinking probably went something like this: *James is furrowing his brow, looking concerned. I must have said something that caused him concern. I need to find out what it is, since I don't want James to worry that something is wrong.* This intrapersonal communication sounds a little bit silly written down, but this is the kind of metacommunication people do while they are communicating. Fortunately, we can talk or listen and think at the same time. Problems often result when we don't stop to think while we are talking or listening. When we stop to think about our communication, we are practicing metacommunication and adapting to the response we are getting from those who are listening to us.

Reflective Metacommunication. After we've finished communicating, we can also take time to think about what happened. When we think about communication "after the fact," we're involved in reflective metacommunication. This kind of reflection can help us understand what we did well, what we still need to do, and how we can improve.

Have you ever thought about something you said or heard and wished you could have done everything all over again? This often happens to us when we've been in a difficult situation. After it's all over, we think, "I should have said this or that. I guess I should have explained more carefully. Now what did I say that made that kind of impression?"



Communication Management—Metacommunication

Communication Management Metacommunication	Anticipatory Metacommunication	Adaptive Metacommunication	Reflective Metacommunication
When?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prior to the actual speech, conversation, or presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • during the actual speech, conversation, or presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • after the actual speech, conversation, or presentation
Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to prepare for the communication • to plan for what you would like to happen • to anticipate problems and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to judge how communication is going • to adjust what you say or do • to help your communication be more effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to look back on communication and determine its effectiveness • to find out if more communication needs to take place • to learn how to communicate better in the future
How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spend time thinking about the upcoming communication • rehearse presentations • ask advice of others • recall past communication • research topic • understand audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain eye contact so you can gauge audience reaction • listen to questions or comments • be prepared to modify communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set aside time for an evaluation of the communication • ask others for their opinions and advice • listen • accept praise and criticism • follow up with people with whom you communicated • determine if the communication had the effect you intended



Preparing for Metacommunication

Since we are practicing metacommunication all the time, you may wonder, “What is there to learn about it?” Just as with any other subject, we can learn to communicate about communicating when we develop a good vocabulary and an understanding of process.

For example, you might be interested in a sport such as soccer. If you're going to talk meaningfully about soccer, you must know the names of the positions and the various skills. In other words, you need to know the vocabulary. Also, you need to know the rules, or how the game is played. You need to know the process.

When you're thinking and talking about communication, you also need to know the vocabulary and the process. Without the right words, you can get confused. Without understanding the process, you can't think clearly about communication. Without vocabulary and process, you're a little like a spectator at a soccer match who has no knowledge of the game. You can observe what's happening, but you can't describe it. You might know when something good happens, but you can't say why it happened. And you certainly can't tell exactly what to do to help the players play better.

Key Terms in the Communication Process

While you cannot learn every communication term at once, several key terms help you get started. They are the basic terms for understanding the communication process. They are essential to metacommunication.

- Sender: The sender initiates the communication.
- Receiver: The receiver is the target of the communication.
- Message: The message is whatever the sender communicates to the receiver.
- Channel: The channel is the means used to transmit the message from sender to receiver.
- Feedback: Feedback is the response the sender gets from the receiver.
- Interference: Interference is anything that blocks or hinders the reception or intended interpretation of the message or the feedback.
- Context: Context is the time or place where communication occurs.

These terms help us understand (and talk about) any communication act. In the examples that began this chapter, we can see all these terms in action. Pilar initiates the communication, so she is referred to as the sender. While there are multiple receivers in Scenario #1, James is the most obvious receiver in both. The message that Pilar intends is “I want you to review office procedures.” Of course, the message is received differently in the scenarios. The channel is the “oral/verbal” channel. Pilar chooses to speak her message to James. There are several examples of feedback. For example, when James furrows his brow, he is responding to Pilar’s message. He is responding through a nonverbal channel, which doesn’t include words. The phone call is interference, especially in the first example, since it detracts from Pilar’s intended meaning. Finally, the context for Scenario #1 is the weekly department meeting. The context for Scenario #2 is different: No one is present but Pilar and James, and the communication takes place prior to the department meeting.

Communication Management—Synonyms

Sometimes the terminology for communication includes synonyms. These words have the same or similar meanings to the words emphasized in this chapter.



Sender

speaker
communicator
self

Feedback

feedback loop
response

Receiver

audience
listener

Interference

noise
communication
failure
interruption
distortion
disconnect

Message

communication
the point

Context

situation
environment
occasion
setting

Channel

media
method
means

Communication Management: The Feedback Loop



Feedback is a term we all commonly use. We see newsletters with the title “Feedback.” We hear teachers and bosses ask for feedback on their ideas. We get feedback when we are graded or evaluated. If we go to a fast food restaurant, there is likely to be a “feedback card” for us to fill out about the service we’ve received. But what exactly do these concepts of feedback have to do with communication?

First, we need a better understanding of feedback. Whenever you look at a system that is well-designed, you’ll notice what is called a feedback loop. For example, a household heating system has a feedback loop called the thermostat. If you set the thermostat at 70 degrees, it constantly monitors the temperature in your house. If the temperature is 70 degrees or more, the thermostat signals the furnace to remain off. However, if the temperature drops below 70 degrees, the thermostat signals the furnace to turn on and heat the house until the temperature is back to 70 degrees.

The thermostat provides a feedback loop that constantly samples the product of the heating system (temperature) and adjusts the system to produce the desired results.

Definition: A feedback loop is a part of a system which continually monitors the system’s output and adjusts the system for better production.

Examples of a feedback loop:

Quality control check: If a person on an assembly line has a quality control responsibility, he is part of a feedback loop. Let’s say the assembly line is producing blue paint. The quality control (or “QC”) employee might check the shade of blue at various stages in the process. If the color is not right, he can spot where the problem occurred and alter the production of paint to achieve the correct shade of blue.

A “pop” quiz: A teacher will, from time to time, ask students to take an unplanned quiz. While this may help keep students on their toes, it can also be an effective feedback loop. If the teacher is providing lessons on nutrition, the pop quiz can let her know if students

understand the material. If students do well on the quiz, the teacher probably feels comfortable in continuing the lessons. If not, the teacher might go back and cover material the students do poorly on. The pop quiz helps the teacher adjust her instruction to produce the desired result: learning about nutrition.

A speedometer: As a driver approaches a reduced speed area, she might let up the accelerator. The speedometer lets her know how quickly she is slowing down. If she doesn’t slow down quickly enough, she may use the brake. The speedometer is the feedback loop that constantly checks the system output (speed or motion) and allows the system to be adjusted to produce the desired result: a speed within the posted limits.

What does this have to do with communication? Well, when you are in a communication environment, you are always part of a feedback loop. For example, when you are speaking to someone, you can see the facial expressions that will let you know if you are being understood. You can tell if the person is listening. If you feel you aren’t understood, you can change your communication by using different words, asking questions, speaking more loudly, etc.

Consider again the definition of a feedback loop: A part of a system which continually monitors the system’s output and adjusts the system for better production. In communication, we are trying to produce meaning in others (or in ourselves). We monitor the system to see if we are producing the meaning we desire. If we are not, we change our communication.

If you are explaining to your supervisor at work why you need the weekend off to get schoolwork done, you are trying to create meaning that will convince her to adjust your schedule. If you are using the feedback loop of the communication process, you are looking for her words or expressions that will let you know if she is sympathetic. If she says something like, “This is going to be a busy weekend,” then you might alter your communication. Instead of asking for the weekend off, you ask if you can have Friday and Saturday off if you promise to work all Sunday afternoon. You are doing just what the thermostat, the assembly line worker, and the speedometer do: You test the output of your system (your communication) and modify the system to produce the desired result.

A Communication Model

As with the example of soccer, knowing the key terms is not enough. If you know the word “goalie” and know what the goalie does, you do not necessarily know what a good goalie does or what rules a goalie follows. The same is true for communication. You know what a sender does, but how do all the parts of the communication process relate? How does the sender relate to the receiver?

One good way to understand the process is through a communication model. A model is a way of reducing a complex object or process to a simpler representation. A good model reveals the essence of its subject but does so in a way that allows easier understanding. In science, for example, you might use a model of an atom to understand the roles of the proton, electron, and neutron.

Building a communication model piece by piece can further our goal of understanding and using metacommunication. It is easiest to start with the first three terms: sender, message, and receiver. Viewed at its simplest, communication is a sender transmitting a message to a receiver: Pilar (sender) telling James (receiver) that she’d like him to review office procedures (message). It can be represented like this:



Figure 1.1

*The Foundation of the
Communication Process*

This is the basis for developing our communication model. At times we might wish that communication were just this simple. Have you ever heard people say, “Just tell me what you want”? Well, this is the simplest representation of that feeling. But it does not tell us much about communication in the real world. Even if we were told what someone really wanted, how would we acknowledge that we understood? How would we clarify or question? This simple model allows for nothing but one-way communication. Communication in the real world is two-way. There must be feedback.

Feedback

Feedback is the response the sender gets from the receiver. Even if you say something as simple as “please pass the salt,” you need feedback in order to know if your message was received clearly and accurately. If the receiver of your message hands you the salt, you know your message was received. If not, you know something is wrong.

In Scenario #1, Pilar (the sender) sent a message. When James heard the message, he became a sender as well. He responded defensively to Pilar. At that point, Pilar should have been able to tell that her message was not well received. We can represent the feedback like this:

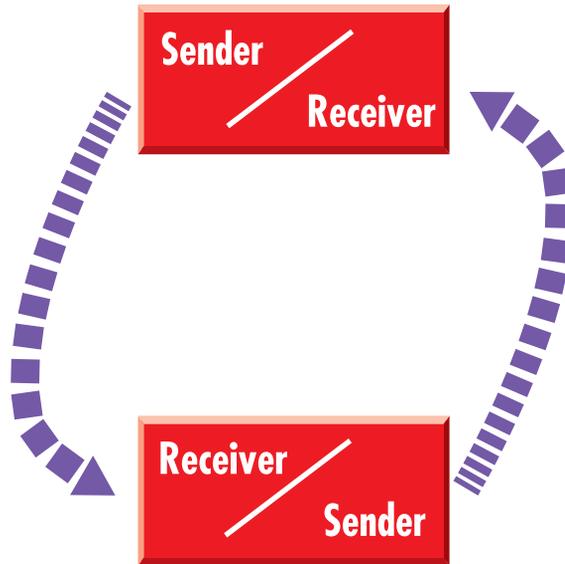


Figure 1.2

*Feedback in the
Communication Process*

Note that feedback turns a sender into a receiver and a receiver into a sender. Why is feedback so important? In metacommunication, the sender can only plan and interpret if there is feedback. A receiver can only be an active part of the process if he or she can communicate back to the original sender.

With feedback in our communication model, we can understand why we say communication is circular. Like a complete electrical circuit, communication requires not only that a message is received but that a receiver can “talk back” to the original sender. Even if the feedback is not provided in words (such as James’ furrowed brow), it can help refine and improve communication.

Feedback is essential to metacommunication. Pilar can plan her message by anticipating James’ feedback. That is anticipatory metacommunication. She can refine her message by interpreting James’ actual feedback. That is adaptive metacommunication. She can evaluate her own skills and improve her future communication by reflecting on what James said and did. That is reflective metacommunication.

Adapting your message during communication is extremely important. Without adapting, high quality communication could never take place. For

example, if you had only one idea in mind that you wanted to communicate to another person and could not change your message during your communication, you would say what you wanted and then stop, waiting to go to another topic. Would this ever lead to understanding or complex problem solving? Of course not.

Notice that including feedback blurs the distinction between sender and receiver. In our simplest model, one person is a sender and another is a receiver. How often in the real world is that the case? Even if you are taking orders from a boss or supervisor, you ask questions or share ideas. That's feedback, and it is part of real world communication. In the real world, we are almost always receiving and sending messages simultaneously. While we listen to someone explain a job to us, we nod our understanding.

Context

Now it is time to add the next piece of the model. Note that Scenario #1 takes place in Pilar's office during the department meeting. Scenario #2 takes place in James' office prior to the department meeting. Could this change in time and place make a difference in how a message is sent and received? Asking and answering that question is metacommunication. Think about James' response to Pilar in the department meeting. He was in her office. He was in front of people he worked with. It was a Friday afternoon. Could these factors have affected the way he interpreted her message or the way he responded? On the other hand, in his office with no one else around, he interpreted the message very differently. All communication occurs in a specific time and place. In addition, there are social and psychological aspects of context.

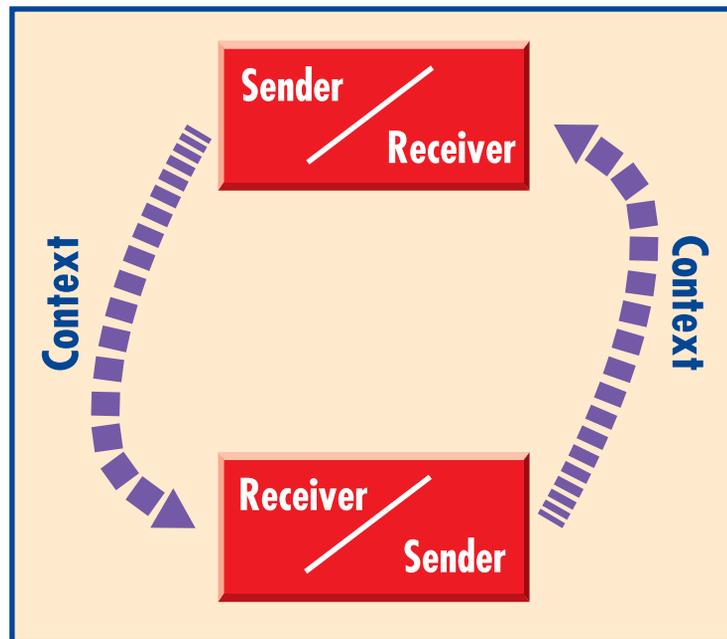
	Scenario #1	Scenario #2
Time	Friday afternoon during an office meeting	Friday afternoon, prior to the office meeting
Place	Pilar's office	James' office
Social setting	James' fellow employees are present	James and Pilar are alone
Psychological setting	James feels some pressure to respond to Pilar; he is surprised and confused.	James feels free to ask questions; he feels less threatened because Pilar has selected a safe place to share her plans.

While each dimension of context is listed separately, each affects the others. For example, the place, Pilar's office instead of James', affects the social and psychological components. To better understand context think about communication you might have with one of your teachers about a test grade. If the teacher says to you, "I'd like to visit with you about your last test," will you respond differently if you are in front of the class than if you are alone? Will you respond differently at the beginning of class than at the end? Will you respond differently after having seen your grade than before? All these changes are differences in context

In our model, we can represent context by surrounding the sender-receiver-message-feedback diagram with a simple square. That square can represent when and where the communication occurs. Think about context as containing the communication act.

Figure 1.3

*Context in the
Communication Process*



Communication Management: Communicating Within Organizational Channels



In this chapter, we are developing a communication model. Many businesses and organizations, especially large ones, use another kind of model: an organizational chart. The purpose of an organizational chart is to identify lines of authority, or hierarchy, in an organization. Even those of you who work in a fast food restaurant are part of a line of authority. Generally, the "higher" a box is on an organizational chart, the more authority the person in the box has. In the example below, the vice-president is the person with the greatest authority, followed by the director, and so on. If boxes exist on the same level, the people in the boxes have roughly equal authority, even though they might be responsible for different parts of the organization. For example, the chart shows two assistant directors who have equal authority, although one is in charge of sales and one is in charge of business. The assistant director for sales supervises a sales staff. That staff is not in the office itself, since the line attaching it is a dotted line. The assistant director for business supervises four other people within the office.

An organizational chart can also be a guide to communication patterns in the organization. These patterns tend to follow some simple rules:

- People tend to communicate more directly with people who are in the boxes joined to their own. For example, we would expect the file clerk to communicate with the receptionist, the data entry clerk, and the office manager. We would expect much less communication with the specialist or the vice-president.
- There is a tendency for communication to flow "down." In traditional organizations, the boxes at the top of the chart communicate down, directing the actions of those below.
- The organization typically restricts "upward" communication to one level. Traditionally, a secretary with a problem should take that issue to the boss, not to the boss' supervisor. Jumping a level in communication is traditionally viewed as inappropriate. For example, the computer/tech specialist would take problems

to the director and let the director take up the issue with the vice president if she thinks the vice-president needs to know.

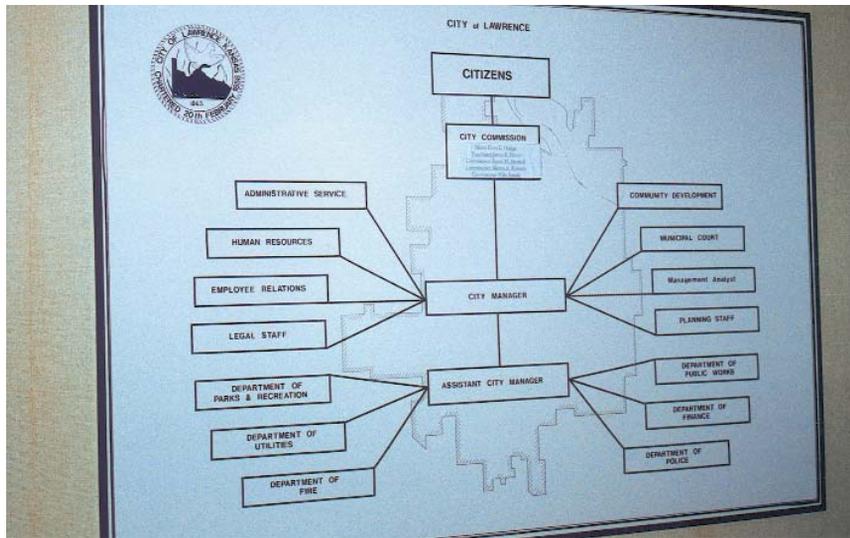
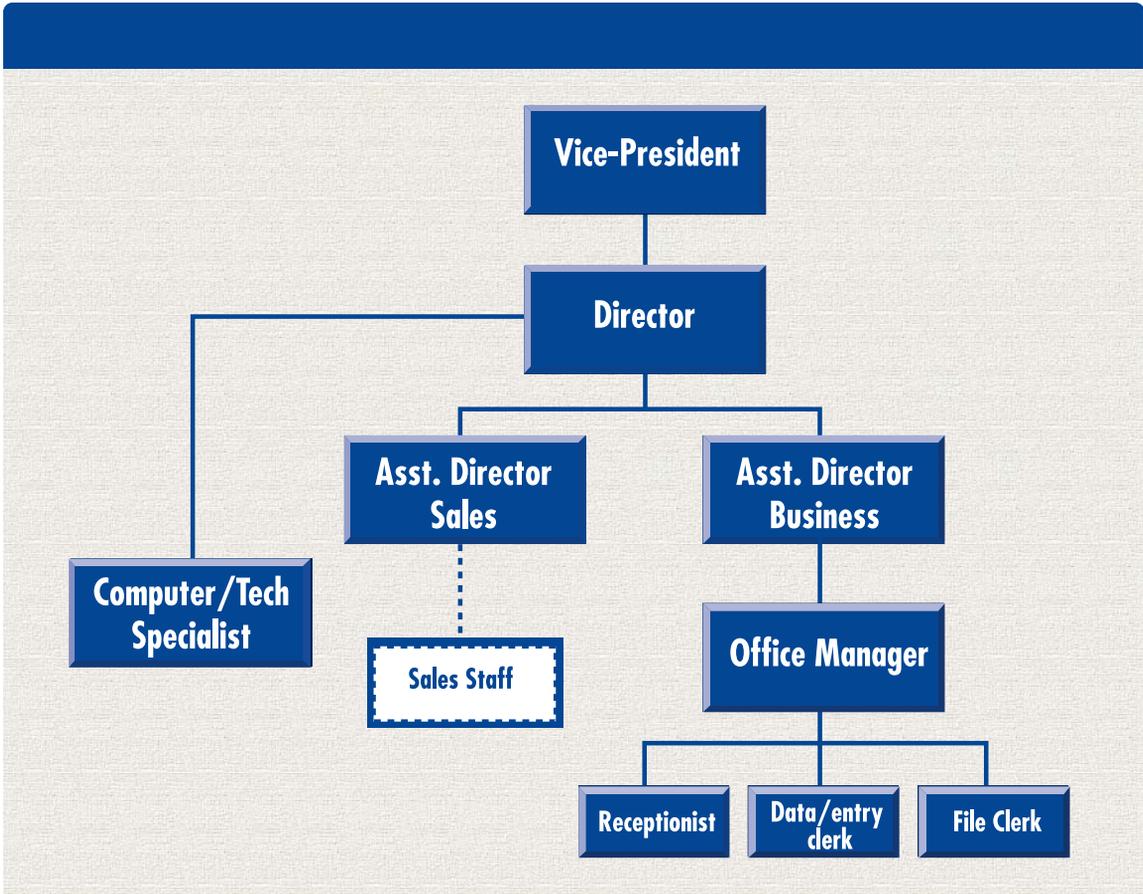
Based on the chart that follows and the "rules" above, what generalizations can you make about the communication in this organization?

- Who is more likely to communicate directly with the public: the director or the receptionist?
- Who is more likely to "give orders": the office manager or the computer/tech specialist?
- What difficulties could arise if the receptionist, data entry clerk, and file clerk notice that the computer system isn't functioning efficiently? To whom would they communicate their concerns? How might that person communicate the issue to the computer/tech specialist?

How would each of these practices help or hurt communication within this department?

- Weekly meetings with the vice-president, director and assistant directors
- Regular meetings chaired by the assistant director for business and including the office manager, the receptionist, the data entry clerk, and the file clerk
- A suggestion box in the office
- Instead of a line of authority from the director to the computer/tech specialist, a line of authority from the vice-president to the computer/tech specialist
- A policy that states that all office communication about technology improvements and concerns may go directly to the computer/tech specialist
- An "open door" policy by the vice-president that allows anyone to schedule time to visit about any work-related topic
- A requirement that all office purchases must be communicated directly to the assistant director for business

If the goal of this department were to increase the frequency and quality of communication, what policies would you suggest? Would you re-draw the organizational chart? If so, how?



Position titles are an important part of any organization.

Interpersonal Insight



Social contexts form part of the communication situation. We move in and about communication situations as quickly and as fluidly as any organism in its environment. Communication principles apply to all of these types of social relationships. To help think and communicate about communication in various social relationships, think about two major factors in defining a relationship: duration and intimacy. A communication relationship has duration. It can be long (the relationship you have over many years with a

family member) or short (the conversation you have with a stranger whom you meet waiting for an appointment). Furthermore, a social relationship has some degree of intimacy, from very intimate (your conversations with a best friend) to very casual (the conversation you have about your plans for lunch). This chart can show you how we must move from one social relationship to another many times in a day.

	High Intimacy	Low Intimacy
Long Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family members • life-long friends • neighbors <p>For example: high trust, high self-disclosure, development of personal meanings, physical closeness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business acquaintances • letter carrier <p>For example: little personal self-disclosure, restricted topics, less physical closeness.</p>
Short Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psychologist • physician <p>For example: high levels of self-disclosure, limited topics, high urgency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • casual acquaintance • someone standing in line with you • someone you talk with in an hour-long meeting <p>For example: small talk, reduced importance, little or no personal information.</p>

Channel

The channel is the means used to transmit the message from sender to receiver. Just as television programs are broadcast over many channels, messages can be transmitted through many channels. When we usually think about communication, we naturally think about talking. But communication is more than talking. What about the communication that takes place when we notice someone's facial expression? Or when someone uses a pointing finger for emphasis? If metacommunication is going to become a lifelong habit, we must recognize that communication is more than just talking.

In the interaction between Pilar and James, Pilar chose to communicate orally to James. She could have sent an e-mail, which would have been another channel for communicating her message. James used both words (verbal) and facial expressions (nonverbal) to communicate his feedback.

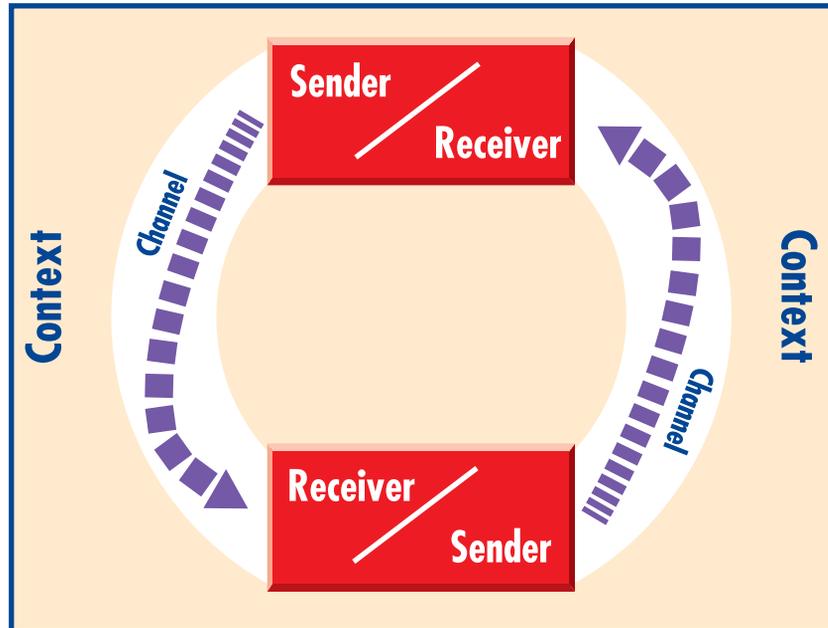


Figure 1.4

*Channel in the
Communication Process*

Interference

Our basic model is incomplete without recognizing that not all communication occurs flawlessly. Sometimes the reception of a message (or of feedback) is blocked or distorted. Communication, even in its simplest form, is seldom perfect. Sometimes we cannot hear a message because of noise. Perhaps someone is blocking our view of a speaker. Maybe we carry in our own thoughts some prejudices or worries that cause us to misunderstand a message.

Interference is anything that blocks or hinders the reception of the message or the feedback. Our model should include the possibility of interference that can arise from the context, the sender, the receiver, or the channel.

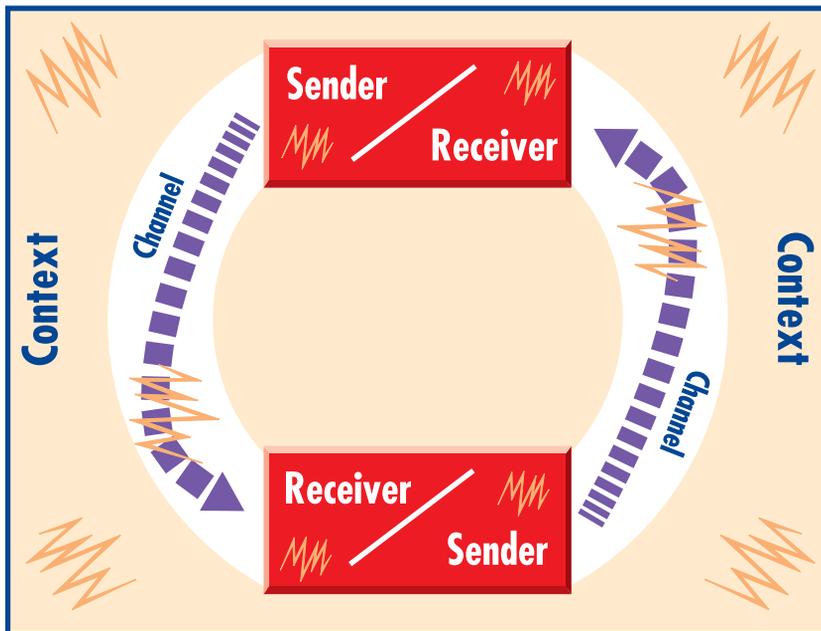


Figure 1.5
Interference

Consider sources of interference that arise in a context. The ringing phone that interrupts Pilar in Scenario #1 is a source of interference. It inhibits her communication because she chooses to answer it. James reacts negatively to Pilar’s choice to answer the ringing phone. He thinks Pilar does not really care. Is this really the message Pilar wants to send? Consider Scenario #2. Pilar ignores the ringing phone. While its noise may interfere with the conversation, Pilar’s decision to ignore the phone can communicate something important to James: Their conversation is more important to her right now than other demands on her time. James is likely to feel more important.

Interference can also arise within a person. In Scenario #1, James seems to be taken by surprise when Pilar asks him for an office review. He suspects that Pilar is not happy with the job he is doing. Perhaps he is tired; after all, it is Friday afternoon. Perhaps he is worried about how this question appears to his co-workers. Notice that in Scenario #2, Pilar anticipates these possible sources of interference and holds a “pre-meeting” with James to explain herself. By practicing metacommunication, Pilar avoids misunderstanding and a possibility of conflict with James.

Expanding the Model – Group Communication

This simple model can help us develop the vocabulary and understanding to talk about an act of communication as simple as the one we've been using as an example. More important, it can serve as the basis for understanding other acts of communication as well. Instead of considering just Pilar and James, add the other two department members in Scenario #1, JaRon and Alicia. Adding them complicates the discussion of the communication, but does not change the terms or our understanding of the process.

The context is still the same. Pilar is communicating the same message. But there are now three receivers and three instances of feedback. Moreover, the feedback is not simply directed to Pilar. All group members are senders and receivers of feedback.

It is true that JaRon and Alicia say nothing. JaRon shakes his head and Alicia looks down at her notepad. Even without saying a word, JaRon and Alicia become part of the group communication. James interprets both JaRon's and Alicia's actions to mean that they agree with him, but could they mean something else? Whatever JaRon's and Alicia's feelings, even saying nothing creates meaning for James.

The number of people involved increases the amount of feedback.



Expanding the Model – Public Speaking

The terminology of the model is still useful when applied to public speaking situations. The sender is the speaker. The receiver is the audience. Feedback can be applause, questions—any of the responses typical of a listening audience. Interference can be noise, a bad microphone, audience feelings, etc. And public speaking takes place in a context, too. Everything from the size of the room to the size of the audience to the audience’s knowledge of and attitudes about the subject affect the context and impact the communication.

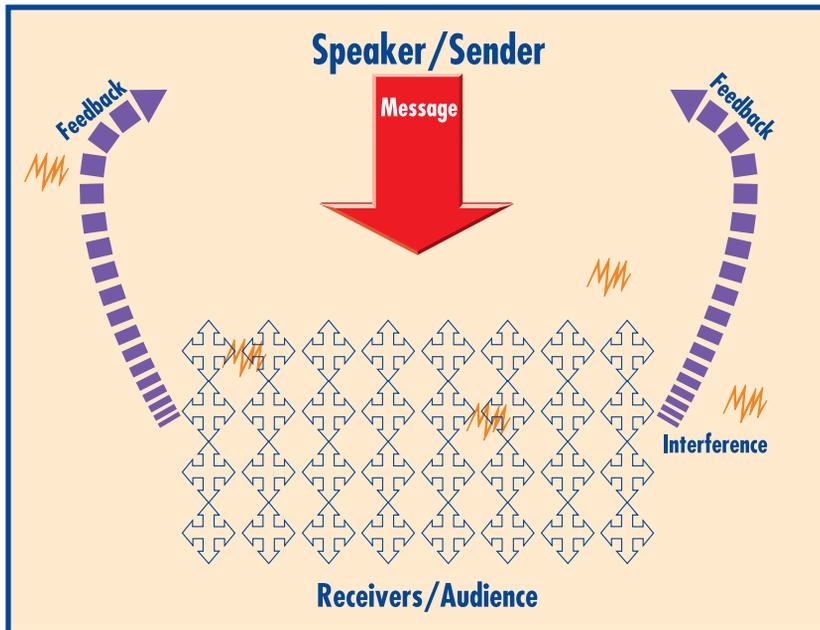


Figure 1.6

A Model of the Public Speaking Process

Defining Communication

With a model of communication developed, we can now attempt a definition. Communication happens around us all the time. We are part of it. But do we ever stop to define it? You were asked to do that at the beginning of the chapter. As you read this section, compare your definition.

Briefly stated, communication is the negotiation of a shared meaning. In other words, the presence of meaning means that communication must have taken place. If a work of art has meaning for us, then a form of communication must have taken place. The artist is a “sender” and we are “receivers.” If an object has special meaning for us, communication is taking or has taken place. Perhaps the communication is within the one person for

whom the object has meaning, but the creation of meaning, even within a single person, is a form of communication.

Why use the word “negotiation”? Because in the action of communication we are sharing our understanding, trying to understand others, asking questions, and solving problems. As we progress through an act of communication, we deal with others so we can reach agreement on what we mean.

When we consider the kind of specific, intentional communication that we engage in with others daily, we can also say that exchanging messages is communication. After all, exchanging messages is creation of meaning. When communication goes awry, we say we failed to communicate. That isn’t exactly accurate because some type of meaning was assigned to the message by the receiver. What didn’t occur was a shared meaning. Through the use of metacommunication and feedback, the chances of negotiating shared meaning are increased.

Communication Management—Negotiations and Transactions



We’re used to hearing the words “negotiation” and “transaction” in discussions about business. The terms are very useful in communication, too.

Negotiation in business is a set of messages, the purpose of which is to arrive at an agreement. In communication, we are always striving for an agreement about meaning. When we speak with others, we note when we aren’t understood. We try to make ourselves understood by explaining, defining, relating a story. We want to be sure that the person to whom we are speaking shares the meaning we intend. That doesn’t mean that they agree with everything we say, only that they agree with the meaning of what we are saying.

The word “negotiate” comes from the Latin word meaning “to transact business.” Communication scholars say that communication is transactional. That means that communication, like negotiation, is ongoing, dynamic, and variable.

- **Ongoing:** Communication is ongoing because it is a process. Even when we stop talking, we are communicating with our silence. For human beings, the process of communication never stops.
- **Dynamic:** Communication is dynamic because it is always changing. In the simplest of conversations we naturally move from one thought, idea, or topic to another.
- **Variable:** The communication model we are developing shows that there are many parts to an action of communication. Change any one of these parts and the communication act itself changes.

These terms, although drawn from the world of business, help describe communication. For this reason, we often use the word “transaction” as a sort of shorthand for an act of communication.

Characteristics of Communication

We can make several highly important and descriptive statements about communication. Each of these statements expresses an important principle that can help us communicate better about communication.

Communication is all around us: We cannot avoid being part of communication processes. Everywhere we turn, meaning is created within us, and we are creating meaning in others. We read and talk. We listen and react. Communication is as human an activity as breathing or eating. We could say that communication is a human imperative. An “imperative” is something you must do. Put another way, you cannot “not” communicate. Even if you sit in class and say nothing, you are communicating because you are creating meaning. Someone might interpret your silence as boredom. Others might think you are snobbish. Still others might conclude that you simply haven’t read the assignment. Even if you are absent from class, people find meaning in your absence.

Communication is complex: The model we’ve put together shows that even a “simple” act of communication involves many parts or pieces. We do it so often, we don’t always stop and think about how complicated creating shared meaning can be.

Communication is multilevel: There are levels of communication. We can create shared meaning within ourselves or within others. We can communicate in a small group or in a very large group. We can communicate directly, or via a mass medium such as television or the Internet.

- **Intrapersonal communication:** The meaning we create within ourselves is called intrapersonal communication. We think to ourselves in words and images. We create meaning within ourselves. Before we communicate with others, we create within ourselves the meaning that we want to transfer with our message. Intrapersonal communication takes place when we think about the messages others send us. Without intrapersonal communication, no communication would be possible.
- **Interpersonal communication:** Interpersonal communication occurs in contexts where two or more people actively participate in exchanging messages. A conversation, a small group discussion, an interview—all are examples of interpersonal communication. The largest group that allows interpersonal communication among all members is about 10-14 people.

- **Person-to-group communication:** This level of communication is usually called public speaking. In this level of communication, one person is typically labeled the “speaker” and the other people are called the “audience.” The members of the audience are typically not addressed as individuals. Instead, the speaker tends to address the audience as one “receiver.” Examples include lectures, reports, speeches, etc.
- **Mass media:** Mass media uses technology to communicate the same message to very large groups of people. Printing enabled thousands and millions of people to receive the same message. Electronic media allowed thousands and millions to receive the same message at the same time. The Internet allows an audience to interact with the developer of the message.

Mass media communicates the same message to large audiences in multiple locations.



Public Speaking Application: Metacommunication

One of the most touching and most famous speeches of the past decade was given at the funeral for Princess Diana of Great Britain.

Following her death in a car accident, many people around the world sought to blame someone for the death of the popular Diana. When her brother, Lord Spencer, gave Diana's eulogy at her funeral, the speech was immediately the subject of intense discussion. Was he too critical of the press? Was Diana's funeral the appropriate place for his comments? Was he criticizing the royal family (the Windsors)?

Following is the text of Spencer's speech. After reading the speech, consider the comments from public sources, two of which are included. Add your own comments. What was good about the speech? What should Lord Spencer have done differently? Why?

If possible, view a videotape of the speech. Does the viewing change your opinion? What kinds of comments would you make about Lord Spencer's delivery of the speech (remembering, of course, that he was speaking at the funeral of his sister)?

Text of funeral oration by 9th Earl Spencer

September 6, 1997

Associated Press

I stand before you today the representative of a family in grief, in a country in mourning before a world in shock.

We are all united not only in our desire to pay our respects to Diana but rather in our need to do so.

For such was her extraordinary appeal that the

tens of millions of people taking part in this service all over the world via television and radio who never actually met her, feel that they, too, lost someone close to them in the early hours of Sunday morning. It is a more remarkable tribute to Diana than I can ever hope to offer her today.

Diana was the very essence of compassion, of duty, of style, of beauty. All over the world she was a symbol of selfless humanity, a standard-bearer for the rights of the truly downtrodden, a truly British girl who transcended nationality, someone with a natural nobility who was classless, who proved in the last year that she needed no royal title to continue to generate her particular brand of magic.

Today is our chance to say "thank you" for the way you brightened our lives, even though God granted you but half a life. We will all feel cheated that you were taken from us so young and yet we must learn to be grateful that you came along at all.

Only now that you are gone do we truly appreciate what we are now without, and we want you to know that life without you is very, very difficult.

We have all despaired at our loss over the past week and only the strength of the message you gave us through your years of giving has afforded us the strength to move forward.

There is a temptation to rush to canonize your memory. There is no need to do so. You stand tall enough as a human being of unique qualities not to need to be seen as a saint. Indeed to sanctify your memory would be to miss out on the very core of your being, your wonderfully mischievous sense of humor with the laugh that bent you double, your joy for life

transmitted wherever you took your smile, and the sparkle in those unforgettable eyes, your boundless energy which you could barely contain.

But your greatest gift was your intuition, and it was a gift you used wisely. This is what underpinned all your wonderful attributes. And if we look to analyze what it was about you that had such a wide appeal, we find it in your instinctive feel for what was really important in all our lives.

Without your God-given sensitivity, we would be immersed in greater ignorance at the anguish of AIDS and HIV sufferers, the plight of the homeless, the isolation of lepers, the random destruction of land mines. Diana explained to me once that it was her innermost feelings of suffering that made it possible for her to connect with her constituency of the rejected.

And here we come to another truth about her. For all the status, the glamour, the applause, Diana remained throughout a very insecure person at heart, almost childlike in her desire to do good for others so she could release herself from deep feelings of unworthiness of which her eating disorders were merely a symptom.

The world sensed this part of her character and cherished her for her vulnerability, whilst admiring her for her honesty. The last time I saw Diana was on July the first, her birthday, in London, when typically she was not taking time to celebrate her special day with friends but was guest of honor at a charity fund-raising evening.

She sparkled of course, but I would rather cherish the days I spent with her in March when she came to visit me and my children in our home in South Africa. I am proud of the fact that apart from when she was

on public display meeting President Mandela, we managed to contrive to stop the ever-present paparazzi from getting a single picture of her.

That meant a lot to her.

These are days I will always treasure. It was as if we'd been transported back to our childhood, when we spent such an enormous amount of time together, the two youngest in the family.

Fundamentally she hadn't changed at all from the big sister who mothered me as a baby, fought with me at school and endured those long train journeys between our parents' homes with me at weekends. It is a tribute to her level-headedness and strength that despite the most bizarre life imaginable after her childhood, she remained intact, true to herself.

There is no doubt that she was looking for a new direction in her life at this time. She talked endlessly of getting away from England, mainly because of the treatment she received at the hands of the newspapers.

I don't think she ever understood why her genuinely good intentions were sneered at by the media, why there appeared to be a permanent quest on their behalf to bring her down. It is baffling. My own, and only, explanation is that genuine goodness is threatening to those at the opposite end of the moral spectrum.

It is a point to remember that of all the ironies about Diana, perhaps the greatest is this: that a girl given the name of the ancient goddess of hunting was, in the end, the most hunted person of the modern age.

She would want us today to pledge ourselves to protecting her beloved boys William and Harry from a similar fate.

And I do this here, Diana, on your behalf. We will not allow them to suffer the anguish that used regularly to drive you to tearful despair.

Beyond that, on behalf of your mother and sisters, I pledge that we, your blood family, will do all we can to continue the imaginative and loving way in which you were steering these two exceptional young men, so that their souls are not simply immersed by duty and tradition but can sing openly as you planned.

We fully respect the heritage into which they have both been born, and will always respect and encourage them in their royal role. But we, like you, recognize the need for them to experience as many different aspects of life as possible, to arm them spiritually and emotionally for the years ahead. I know you would have expected nothing less from us.

William and Harry, we all care desperately for you today. We are all chewed up with sadness at the loss of a woman who wasn't even our mother. How great your suffering is we cannot even imagine.

I would like to end by thanking God for the small mercies he has shown us at this dreadful time; for taking Diana at her most beautiful and radiant and when she had so much joy in her private life.

Above all, we give thanks for the life of a woman I am so proud to be able to call my sister: the unique, the complex, the extraordinary and irreplaceable Diana, whose beauty, both internal and external, will never be extinguished from our minds.

Analysis

Throughout the week, the public shifted between appreciations of the dead princess and

assignments of blame to one culprit, then another—first the paparazzi, then the driver of the car, and then the royal family itself. The questions expanded in scope (has the press no shame?), then contracted (how drunk was the driver?), and then expanded again (why does monarchy still exist?). Even in his funeral oration, Diana's brother, Earl Spencer, was openly emotional about the need to identify guilt, suggesting the English press engaged in a "permanent quest" to bring his sister down, because "genuine goodness is threatening to those at the opposite end of the moral spectrum."

Greg Easterbrook

U.S. News and World Report

9/15/97

In his oration, Spencer seemed to lay down the gauntlet to the Windsors when he not only attacked the media for hunting Diana but also pledged that the boys would be brought up as Spencers so that their souls could sing. He received an astonishing ovation.

"Rethinking Diana"

William Shawcross

The Age, August 29, 1998 Copyright© David Syme & Co 1999.

The underlining should draw your attention to Lord Spencer's comments about the media and the royal family. Many other passages also deserve our attention. Review the words with which Lord Spencer praised his sister. Discuss the implications of his description. How did it add to the sorrow and solemnity of the funeral? How did it help us form a final impression of Princess Diana?



Chapter 1 Summary

Communication is a process which has several important components. When we label and talk about those components, we can improve our own communication and better understand the communication of others. When we talk and think about communication, we are practicing meta-communication. One of the major goals of this book and this course of study is to become better communicators...and better metacommunicators. While this chapter generally defines and describes the communication process, people who are successful in professional and social situations must learn to apply the concepts as they manage their communication choices.

Although it is complex, human beings are natural communicators. We can learn to be better communicators by defining the communication process and understanding its characteristics.

Remembering

1. Define communication.
2. Define metacommunication.
3. Identify and explain each component of the communication model developed in the chapter.
4. Draw the communication model developed in the chapter.
5. Draw the model for public speaking.

Reflecting

1. The chapter points out that communication is a complex process. Usually, however, people treat communication as a very simple activity.
 - a] Why do people tend to take the complexity of communication for granted?
 - b] When are people most likely to understand the complexity of communication?
2. Sometimes we don't need to think much about our messages; we simply talk or write. At other times, we must carefully plan what we want to say.
 - a] When are you most likely to practice anticipatory metacommunication? What circumstances will be most likely to cause you to plan your speech communication activities?
 - b] When are you least likely to plan your communication. Why?
 - c] What advantages are there to planning?
 - d] What disadvantages might result from over-planning your communication?
3. Develop a narrative of one page in which you describe a conversation or a speech during which you were a "sender." In your description, explain how you knew how the receiver(s) were reacting to your message. If you changed your message, state how and why. If you did not change your message,

explain why. Did you have shared meaning?

4. Reflective metacommunication often occurs in class work, when a teacher asks you to reflect on a speech, a discussion, a debate, or a composition.
 - a] What questions are you likely to consider as you practice this type of reflection?
 - b] What are the most beneficial aspects of thinking over something you've already finished communicating?
5. As you watch television or browse the Internet, you are likely to find many authorities whose job is to practice metacommunication. Often, they spend their time speaking and writing about the communication of others. They comment on what someone has said or should say.
 - a] Select an example of one of these commentators or critics and summarize the advice they have for a person in public life.
 - b] What terms do they use? How could you rephrase their suggestions using the terminology in this chapter?

Reaching

1. Teaching is a very special and important example of communication. When teachers talk together about teaching, much of what they do is talk about how to communicate with students. They are practicing a special kind of metacommunication about teaching. Ask a teacher if he or she will share with you the evaluation process for teachers in your school.
 - a] What kinds of metacommunication will a teacher practice with his/her evaluator?

- b]** Interview one of your present or former teachers. What are the metacommunication topics that will most likely be brought up when teachers talk together? What suggestions do they hear for improving communication with students and parents?
2. By its very nature and purpose, a model is a simplification of a complex process or object. Review the model for communication that the chapter developed step-by-step. The simplification required for the model leaves out some important elements of communication. Apply the model to an act of interpersonal communication that you typically engage in. What elements of your communication does the model leave out? Could you think of a clear way of including them in the model?
 3. The models developed in the chapter are only possible communication models. Using a drawing program, a flowcharting program, a presentation program, or other software, design your own communication model. You may use the terminology of the chapters' models or invent your own. Use graphics to enhance the appeal of your model.
 4. A print model of communication is only one way to represent the communication process. Develop your own three dimensional model of the communication process. Try to include all of the components identified in Figure 1.5.

Real Life

1. If you have been part of developing a web page, think about the work that went into designing the page. What kind of metacommunication took place in the planning? How many times did the people designing the page think of the user? Interview a person who designs web pages. Ask about the things the person tries to think of in creating web pages. Explain to the class what you find out, using the vocabulary in this chapter as a model.
2. Prepare a short presentation to your class about a time when you faced an important personal communication situation. (Examples include such things as asking someone for permission to do something, explaining something you have done or a choice you made, giving directions, asking someone to attend a school event with you.) Explain the thought you put into the communication, what you thought as you were involved in the communication, and what you thought after the communication. In this activity you are focusing on metacommunication, so concentrate your explanation on the message you were delivering, the receiver of the message, how you presented the message, etc. Try to use the vocabulary developed in this chapter. Your teacher might ask you to present this activity formally to the class, in a small group discussion, or in a class discussion.