

Chapter 5: Verbal Communication— Professional Communication Applications

Overview

Conventions, meetings, and professional presentations play a vital role in business; this chapter focuses on the communication necessary before, during and after such items. Many students will have experience in these areas; be sure to use that experience in class discussion. The final topic in the chapter, diversity in the workplace, is important in all aspects of business.

Lecture Notes

A. Conferences and Conventions

Conference and convention are treated synonymously; they represent a formal meeting of a group of people for a common purpose.

1. **Types of Conferences** vary in their purpose and sponsorship.
 - a. Company-sponsored conferences are scheduled to discuss timely topics, train participants, or share advancements in the industry. The location, leadership, travel, and support services will vary.
 - b. Association-sponsored conventions are held for the benefit of the members of the association; the location, leadership, travel, and support services will vary.
2. **Planning a Convention** is time-consuming and full of details; the success of the conference is often dependent on the planning.
 - a. Before the convention, arrangements need to be made with the hotel or convention center, plans need to be coordinated and reviewed, the program for the convention must be planned, and the information packets must be prepared.
 - b. During the convention, registration for the participants must be accepted and all of the exhibitors/speakers need to be checked in.
 - c. After the convention, all of the financial reports must be completed and follow-up correspondence and publications must be prepared.

B. Meetings

Meetings are very necessary in day-to-day business; one-third of a manager's time is spent in meetings and some organizations spend up to 15% of their HR budget on meetings. *Emphasize the importance of meetings in business and discuss the details outlined in this section.*

1. **Planning and Organizing Meetings** often includes the administrative staff.
 - a. Informal meetings usually include 2-5 people that gather to discuss a particular topic. Informal meetings include committee meetings and office meetings.
 - b. Formal meetings are planned in advance so all participants know the agenda. The most common types of formal meetings include in-house meetings, out-of-town meetings, and conferences of many types (*outlined on p. 131*).

2. Arranging Meetings effectively has an impact on the outcome of the meeting.

- a. Selecting date and time that can be convenient for all participants.
- b. Notifying participants of the meeting, of the date, time, and location can be done by telephone, e-mail, or letter/memo.
- c. Notifying the executives who will be attending so they can be sure everyone who needs to be there will be.
- d. Prepare materials for a meeting, including copies of information; be sure to gather any necessary material from others for copying prior to the meeting.
- e. Prepare an agenda to share prior to the meeting. *Example order is on p. 133 and a sample agenda is in figure 5-1.*
- f. Taking notes at the meeting is the job of the secretary, who then prepares the minutes.
- g. Noting meeting dates on the executive's calendar should be done as soon as possible.
- h. Preparing the room for the next meeting should be done immediately; be sure all chairs and tables are returned to their original location. There may be a meeting scheduled in the same room right after the one you leave.
- i. Transcribing notes as soon as possible is important to be sure that no details are forgotten.
- j. Sending minutes or a meeting report promptly is important so that the meeting is still fresh in the minds of the participants. These reports should be reviewed for accuracy so that a final copy is available at the next meeting.

3. Conducting Meetings in an efficient manner is vital; everyone is busy and should feel like the meeting was worthwhile when they leave.

- a. Effective use of meeting time is accomplished by sticking to time limits set for the meeting, starting on time, sticking to the agenda, and closing the meeting promptly.
- b. Application of parliamentary procedures to conduct the meeting efficiently and orderly; be sure everyone is aware of the procedure. *Some details of the process are discussed in the text, but also introduce students to Robert's Rules of Order.*

4. Preparing Minutes of Meetings creates an official report of the meeting. *An example set of minutes is found in figure 5-2 on p. 138.*

- a. Preliminary writing should be done using notes and the agenda as a guide; this should be a detailed, complete account of the meeting.
- b. Approval of the presiding officer should be done before they are finalized, copied, and distributed.
- c. Distribution of minutes should be done before the next meeting so they can be reviewed for accuracy.

5. Preparing Resolutions and Petitions as formal expressions may follow a meeting.

- a. A resolution is a formal statement from an entire group or organization; it is used to communicate a formal expression of an entire group's appreciation, congratulations, or sympathy. *Figure 5-3 is a sample resolution.*
- b. A petition is a formal statement that asks for particular action to be taken; it is signed by those who are eligible. *Figure 5-4 is a sample petition.*

C. Professional Presentations

Presentations are often given by members of the organization, and often the administrative assistant becomes involved in the process.

1. **Preliminary Planning for the Presentation** begins with a variety of questions to help the speaker make decisions as he or she plans the presentation. *Review the list on p. 141.*

2. **Preparing the Presentation** can begin once the questions from above are answered.

- a. Develop the presentation materials including an outline, the content, and the format. *Details about these items can be reviewed on pp. 141-143.*
- b. Prepare handout materials to share with the audience; make sure that they are arranged so they are easily handed out. Decide ahead of time whether the handouts should be distributed before or after the presentation.
- c. Prepare visual aids to complement the presentation, including computer visuals or slides, document camera, overhead transparencies, and/or an electronic blackboard. *The text provides a lot of information and tips about using the various visual aids; that information is found on pp. 143-148. Also ask students for examples from their own experience.*

3. **Delivery and Follow-up** flow much better once the planning and preparing are complete; the speaker should be confident as he or she presents the information. Other tips include:

- a. Memorization of key points will help you stay on target.
- b. Thorough knowledge of the topic gives you "expert" status.
- c. Practice makes perfect; it will help to time the presentation and watch yourself in a mirror (or on video).
- d. Physical facilities for speaking should be examined ahead of time to help the speaker become more comfortable.
- e. Speaking rate: speak at a normal, moderate rate.
- f. Focus on visuals: a picture's worth 1,000 words. Do not read the visuals.
- g. Questions from the audience should be encouraged to be sure they got the message.

D. Communicating in the Diverse Workplace

Because of the increase in global trade and commerce, this has become a growing issue for everyone to be aware of. Our workforce will continue to be diverse.

1. **Cultural Differences** are prominent; dealing with them includes a variety of issues to make communication easier.

- a. Awareness of cultural differences embedded in language. Using the “you” attitude in communication demonstrates an awareness of the importance of the other person.
- b. Sensitivity to others is important; listen empathetically and pay attention to the feedback.
- c. Openness to new ideas opens the doors to new opportunities.
- d. Respect those that are different; be courteous.
- e. Collaboration in the work environment leads to good decision-making for all.

2. **Adapting to Intercultural Audiences** takes effort on everyone’s part.

- a. Nonverbal communication is interpreted differently in different cultures. Be descriptive with words, listen objectively, use nods or eye contact to show support.
- b. Oral messages are vital to intercultural business. While many languages might be used by those involved, often English is the business language. If English is your native language, you will have to be careful to speak in short sentences, avoid slang, watch for feedback, and smile.
- c. Written messages are often the follow-up documents used to maintain a good relationship. Clarity and correctness are critical for effective documents.
- d. Intercultural ethics should be examined carefully to be sure that no one is offended.

3. **Diversity in the Domestic Workplace** exists as well; it is important to be just as sensitive in this area.

- a. Diversity in personal characteristics and skills includes things like age, race, religion, national origin, and ethnicity. These issues cannot legally be used in making employment decisions.
- b. Diversity in physical ability is protected in the U.S. under the Americans with Disabilities Act since the early 1990s. Public places have had to make changes to make them accessible to all.
- c. Diversity in employment opportunities seems to exist despite laws to prevent them. Women, minorities, and older Americans sometimes feel there is a barrier to their advancement that doesn’t have anything to do with their work. This barrier is referred to as the glass ceiling.

Additional Resources for Students

Recommended readings (no texts should be more than two years old):

- Boone, Louis E. and David L. Kurtz. *Contemporary Business Communication*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.

- Bovee, Courtland L. and John V. Thill. *Business Communication Today*. McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Guffey, Mary Ellen. *Business and Administrations Communication*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Himstreet, William C. and Wayne M. Baty. *Business Communication*. Kent Publishing Co.
- Lesikar, Raymond V. *Basic Business Communication*.
- Ober, Scott. *Contemporary Business Communication*.
- Wolf, P. and S. Kuiper. *Effective Communication in Business*.

Current issues of periodicals or business publications are also an excellent resource. Some of the following periodicals have an accompanying Web site.

Current Periodical	Web Address
<i>Gregg Reference Manual</i>	
<i>IAAP Complete Office Handbook</i>	http://www.iaap-hq.org/products/handbook.htm
<i>Modern Office Technology</i>	
<i>OfficePro</i>	http://www.iaap-hq.org/officepro/toc.htm
<i>The Office</i>	