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CAREER SKILLS LIBRARY

Communication Skills

THIRD EDITION

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is a vital part of our daily routines. We sit in school and listen to teachers. We read books and magazines. We talk to friends, watch television, and communicate over the Internet.

The workplace is no different. Experts tell us that 70–80 percent of our working time is spent in some kind of communication. We're reading and writing memos, sending and responding to emails, listening to our coworkers, or having one-to-one conversations with our supervisors.

Communication involves at least two people: the sender and the receiver. In this book, we'll look at four types of communication between senders and receivers: writing, speaking, listening, and conducting meetings. Each one is important to your success in the workplace.

For example, a poorly written cover letter can prevent you from being hired for a job. On the other hand, the ability to write effectively and make clear presentations can make the difference between your being promoted or being left behind. As Ken Matejka

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DID YOU KNOW?

Employers surveyed in 2007 by the National Association of Colleges and Employers rated communication skills (verbal and written) as very-to-extremely important for job candidates.

and Diane Ramos explain in their book *Hook 'Em: Speaking and Writing to Catch and Keep a Business Audience*, “You need effective, persuasive communication skills for career advancement.”

A communication skill that’s often overlooked is listening. Yet recent surveys tell us that we spend 45 percent of our time listening. Do we listen carefully to what people are telling us? According to one study, we hear only one quarter of what’s being said. The rest of the time we’re daydreaming or just tuned out completely.

One sales manager in a printing company tells the story of needing a job rushed through in 24 hours so his best customer could have it on time. He gave careful instructions about the project to the production supervisor. But before he could finish, the supervisor had already stopped listening. He assumed that the customer wanted the job three days later, which was the usual deadline for most of these projects. When the sales manager went to pick up the job the next day, it wasn’t ready. As a result, he almost lost the customer. Unfortunately, stories like these are common in many organizations.

HOW WE SPEND OUR COMMUNICATION TIME

Writing	9%
Reading	16%
Talking	30%
Listening	45%

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Listening, writing, and speaking are all skills we use in meetings.
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Listening, writing, and speaking are all skills we use in meetings. Today, meetings are a common method for making decisions. More and more work is done by teams of people who come from different areas of a company. They accomplish many of their tasks in team meetings. In these situations, we must be able to speak and write clearly so others can understand us and listen carefully to what they say. Sadly, we waste many hours in meetings because of poor communication. A study by one university estimated that \$37 billion is lost annually through unproductive meetings.

Strong communication skills are vital in the field of photo-styling. This profession involves the envisioning and creative assimilation of many ideas from different

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people and sources. Concepts can be very vague and subjective, hence there is a large margin for error and misinterpretation. The process works best when discussions are clear and there is plenty of information.

—Carey Cornelius, photo stylist

Whether you're writing, listening, speaking, or attending meetings, communication skills are critical to your success in the workplace. In this book, we'll look at some of the skills that will enable your communications to be more successful. These include:

- Understanding the purpose of a communication
- Analyzing the audience
- Communicating with words as well as with body language
- Giving each communication greater impact