Communication Technology and the Information Flow in Organizations

Although today’s workplaces are still far from paperless, increasingly, information is exchanged electronically and on the go. The Web has evolved from mere storage of passively consumed information to Web 2.0—a dynamic, interactive environment. Users are empowered, active participants who create content, review products, and edit and share information.

Ever more data are stored on and accessed from remote networks, not just individual computers. This storing and accessing of data along with software applications in remote network clusters, or “clouds,” is called cloud computing. Mobile communication and cloud computing are the two prevailing technological trends today. In many businesses, desktop computers are fast becoming obsolete with the advent of ever-smaller laptops, netbooks, smartphones, tablets, and other compact mobile devices. Furthermore, virtual private networks (VPN) offer secure access to company information from any location in the world that provides an Internet connection.

Today’s workforce must stay connected at all times. Knowledge and information workers are expected to remain tethered to their jobs wherever they are, even on the weekends or on vacation. The technological revolution of the last 25 years has resulted in amazing productivity gains. However, technological advances have

OBJECTIVES
After studying this chapter, you should be able to

• Understand how organizations exchange electronic and paper-based messages.
• Know when to send and how to organize e-mails and memos.
• Describe appropriate formats for e-mails and memos.
• Identify best practices for writing professional e-mails.
• Explain the business applications of instant messaging and texting.
• Discuss social networking sites, assess their advantages and their risks, and appreciate the potential of professional networking sites.
• Recognize the business uses of podcasts, blogs, and wikis; understand the distribution of Web content by real simple syndication (RSS) feeds; and describe the purpose of social bookmarking.
also made 50-hour workweeks without overtime pay a reality for those “i-workers” lucky enough to snag or keep a promising position in a tough economy. Also, more employees than ever before are telecommuting.

You may already be sharing digitally with your friends and family, but chances are that you need to understand how businesses transmit information electronically and how they use new technology. This chapter explores professional electronic communication, specifically e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, and corporate blogs. Moreover, you will learn about business uses of podcasts, wikis, and social networking sites. You will read about best practices in composing e-mails and interacting through other electronic media. Knowing how to prepare an effective message and understanding business technology can save you time, reduce stress, and build your image as a professional.

Organizing E-Mails and Memos

E-mail has replaced paper memos for many messages inside organizations and some letters to external audiences. However, paper-based documents still have their proper functions. Because they are committed to paper, hard-copy messages tend to carry more weight and are taken more seriously in certain situations. They are considered more formal than electronic communication. Moreover, even if e-mail writers have access to sophisticated HTML mail, the recipient may receive only plain-text messages. Poor layout and little eye appeal may result when elaborate formatting disappears on the receiver’s end. The e-mail may also be difficult to print. This is why business communicators often deliver electronic copies of memos or letters as attachments accompanied by a brief e-mail cover message. PDF documents in particular guarantee that the reader receives a message that looks exactly as the writer intended it.

Today it is estimated that on average more than 294 billion e-mails are sent each day worldwide. E-mail growth has slowed recently, and rival services are booming. Twitter and Facebook, for example, offer faster, always-on connectedness. However, e-mail in the workplace is here to stay. Because e-mail is a standard form of communication within organizations, it will likely be your most common business communication channel. E-mails perform critical tasks such as informing employees, giving directions, outlining procedures, requesting data, supplying responses, and confirming decisions.

Knowing When to Send E-Mails and Memos

Before sending any message, you must choose a communication channel, as discussed in Chapter 2. E-mail is appropriate for short, informal messages that request information and respond to inquiries. It is especially effective for messages to multiple receivers and messages that must be archived (saved). An e-mail is also appropriate as a cover document when sending longer attachments.

E-mail, however, is not a substitute for face-to-face conversations, telephone calls, or business letters. Face-to-face conversations or telephone calls are better channel choices if your goal is to convey enthusiasm or warmth, explain a complex situation, present a persuasive argument, or smooth over disagreements. A recent research study revealed that managers and employees were adamant about using face-to-face contact, rather than e-mail, for critical work situations such as human resources annual reviews, discipline, and promotions.

Although e-mail is more often used today, memos are still useful for important internal messages that require a permanent record or formality. For example, organizations use memos to deliver changes in procedures, official instructions, reports, and long internal documents. Whatever channel you choose, be sure it is comfortable to the receiver and appropriate for the organization.
Writing Informational E-Mails and Memos

In today’s workplace you will probably write numerous informational e-mails and some hard-copy memos. Both kinds of messages usually carry nonsensitive information that is unlikely to upset readers. Therefore, these messages should be organized directly with the main idea first. The following writing plan will help you create information messages quickly:

Writing Plan for Informational E-Mails and Memos

- **Subject line**: Summarize the main idea in condensed form.
- **Opening**: Reveal the main idea immediately but in expanded form.
- **Body**: Explain and justify the main idea using headings, bulleted lists, and other high-skim techniques when appropriate.
- **Closing**: Include (a) action information, dates, or deadlines; (b) a summary of the message; or (c) a closing thought.

**Subject Line.** In e-mails and memos, an informative subject line is essential. It summarizes the central idea, thus providing quick identification for reading and for filing. Busy readers glance at a subject line and decide when and whether to read the message. E-mails without subject lines are often automatically deleted.

What does it take to get your message read? For one thing, stay away from meaningless or dangerous words. A sure way to have your message deleted or ignored is to use a one-word heading such as *Issue, Problem, Important,* or *Help.* Including a word such as *Free* is dangerous because it may trigger spam filters. Try to make your subject line “talk” by including a verb. Explain the purpose of the message and how it relates to the reader. Remember that a subject line is usually written in an abbreviated style, often without articles (*a, an, the*). It need not be a complete sentence, and it does not end with a period. Subject lines should appear as a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters—never in all lowercase letters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor Subject Lines</th>
<th>Improved Subject Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trade Show</td>
<td>Need You to Showcase Two Items at Our Next Trade Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Meeting</td>
<td>Staff Meeting Rescheduled for May 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important!</td>
<td>Please Respond to Job Satisfaction Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Permits</td>
<td>New Employee Parking Permits Available From HR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Opening.** Because most e-mails and memos cover nonsensitive information, it can be handled in a straightforward manner. Begin by frontloading; that is, reveal the main idea immediately. Even though the purpose of the e-mail or memo is summarized in the subject line, that purpose should be restated—and amplified—in the first sentence. Busy readers want to know immediately why they are reading a message. Notice how the following indirect opening can be improved by frontloading.

**Indirect Opening**

For the past six months the Human Resources Development Department has been considering changes in our employees’ benefit plan. If you approve these changes, let me know by May 20.

**Direct Opening**

Please review the following proposal regarding employees’ benefits, and let me know by May 20 if you approve these changes.

**Body.** The body provides more information about the reason for writing. It explains and discusses the subject logically. Effective e-mails and memos generally
discuss only one topic. Limiting the topic helps the receiver act on the subject and file it appropriately. A writer who, for example, describes a computer printer problem and also requests permission to attend a conference runs a 50 percent failure risk. The reader may respond to the printer problem but delay responding to or forget about the conference request.

The body of e-mails and memos should have high “skim value.” This means that information should be easy to read and comprehend. As covered in the section on document design in Chapter 4, many techniques improve readability. You can use white space, bulleted lists, enumerated lists, appropriate typefaces and fonts, and headings. In the revision stage, you will see many ways to improve the readability of the body of your message.

**Closing.** Generally end an e-mail or a memo with (a) action information, dates, or deadlines; (b) a summary of the message; or (c) a closing thought. Here again, the value of thinking through the message before actually writing it becomes apparent. The closing is where readers look for deadlines and action language. An effective memo or e-mail closing might be, *Please submit your written report to me by June 15 so that we can have your data before our July planning session.*

In more detailed messages, a summary of main points may be an appropriate closing. If no action request is made and a closing summary is unnecessary, you might end with a simple concluding thought (*I'm glad to answer your questions or This sounds like a useful project*). You need not close messages to coworkers with goodwill statements such as those found in letters to customers or clients. However, some closing thought is often necessary to prevent sounding abrupt. Closings can show gratitude or encourage feedback with remarks such as *I sincerely appreciate your help* or *What are your ideas on this proposal?* Other closings look forward to what’s next, such as *How would you like to proceed?* Avoid closing with overused expressions such as *Please let me know if I may be of further assistance.* This ending sounds mechanical and insincere.

### Applying E-Mail and Memo Formats

E-mails and hard-copy memos are similar in content and development, but their formats are slightly different. In this section you will learn how to format e-mails and memos, and you will learn how e-mails can serve as transmittal documents.

### Formatting E-Mail Messages

Because e-mail is now a standard form of business communication, people are beginning to agree on specific formatting and usage conventions. The following suggestions identify current formatting standards. Always check with your organization, however, to observe its practices.

**Guide Words.** Following the guide word *To*, some writers insert just the recipient’s electronic address, such as *michael.harding@schilling-voigt.com*. Other writers prefer to include the receiver’s full name plus the electronic address, as shown in Figure 5.1. By including full names in the *To* and *From* slots, both receivers and senders are better able to identify the message. By the way, the order of *Date*, *To*, *From*, *Subject*, and other guide words varies depending on your e-mail program and whether you are sending or receiving the message.

Most e-mail programs automatically add the current date after *Date*. On the *Cc* line (which stands for *carbon copy* or *courtesy copy*), you can type the address of anyone who is to receive a copy of the message. Remember, though, to send copies only to those people directly involved with the message. Most e-mail programs also include a line for *Bcc* (*blind carbon copy*). This sends a copy without the addressee’s knowledge. Savvy writers today use *Bcc* for the names and addresses of people not directly involved with the message.
Chapter 5  
Electronic Messages and Digital Media

**FIGURE 5.1** Formatting an E-Mail Message

An e-mail greeting shows friendliness and indicates the beginning of the message.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To:</th>
<th>From:</th>
<th>Subject:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Harding <a href="mailto:Michael.Harding@schilling-voigt.com">Michael.Harding@schilling-voigt.com</a></td>
<td>William Laughton <a href="mailto:william.laughton@schilling-voigt.com">william.laughton@schilling-voigt.com</a></td>
<td>REQ: Your Reactions to Our Casual-Dress Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tips for Formatting E-Mail Messages**
- After To, insert the receiver’s electronic address. If you include the receiver’s name, enclose the address in angle brackets. In most e-mail programs, this task is automated.
- After Subject, present a clear description of the message. Use uppercase for initial letters of main words.
- Insert the addresses of people receiving courtesy or blind copies.
- Include a greeting such as Mike; Dear Mike; Hi, Mike or an honorific and last name (Dear Mr. Harding), especially in messages to outsiders.
- Double-space (skip a line) between paragraphs.
- Do not type the message body in all caps or in all lowercase letters.
- Decide whether to include a complimentary close such as Best wishes.
- Insert your name and full contact information for most messages.

Addresses of a list of receivers, a technique that avoids revealing the addresses to the entire group. On the subject line, identify the subject of the e-mail. Be sure to include enough information to be clear and compelling.

**Greeting.** Begin your message with a greeting such as the following:

Hi, Kevin,  
Thank you, Haley,

Greetings, Amy,  
Dear Mr. Cotter,

Leslie,  
Dear Leslie:

In addition to being friendly, a greeting provides a visual cue marking the beginning of the message. Many messages are transmitted or forwarded with such long headers that finding the beginning of the message can be difficult. A greeting helps, even if it is just the receiver’s name, as shown in Figure 5.1.
Body. When preparing the body of an e-mail, use standard caps and lowercase characters—never all uppercase or all lowercase characters. Cover just one topic, and try to keep the total message under three screens in length. Remember to double-space between paragraphs. For longer messages prepare a separate file to be attached. Use the e-mail message only as a cover document.

Closing Lines and Signature Block. Some people sign off their e-mails with a cordial expression such as Cheers, All the best, or Warm regards. Regardless of the closing, be sure to sign your name. Messages without names become very confusing when forwarded or when they are part of a thread (string) of responses. It is also smart to include full contact information as part of your signature block. Some writers prepare a number of “signatures” in their e-mail programs, depending on what information they want to reveal. They can choose a complete signature with all their contact information, or they can use a brief version. See Figure 5.1 for an example of a complete signature.

Formatting Office Memos

In the past interoffice memorandums were the primary communication channel for delivering information within organizations. They are still useful for internal messages that require a permanent record or formality.

Memo Forms and Margins. Memos include the basic elements of Date, To, From, and Subject. Large organizations may include other identifying headings, such as File Number, Floor, Extension, Location, and Distribution.

In preparing a memo on plain paper, set 1-inch top and bottom margins and left and right margins of 1.25 inches. Provide a heading that includes the name of the company plus “Memo” or “Memorandum.” Begin the guide words a triple space (two blank lines) below the last line of the heading. Insert in bold the guide words: Date, To, From, and Subject: at the left margin. The guide words may appear in all caps or with only the initial letter capitalized. Triple-space (set two blank lines) after the last line of the heading. Do not justify the right margins. As discussed in the document design section of Chapter 4, ragged-right margins make printed messages easier to read than right-justified margins do. Single-space the message, and double-space between paragraphs, as shown in Figure 5.2.

Preparing Memos as E-Mail Attachments. E-mail has become increasingly important for exchanging internal messages. However, it is inappropriate for long documents or for items that require formality or permanence. For such messages, writers may prepare the information in standard memo format and send it as an attachment to a cover e-mail.

In preparing e-mail attachments, be sure to include identifying information. Because the cover e-mail message may become separated from the attachment, the attachment must be fully identified. Preparing the e-mail attachment as a memo provides a handy format that identifies the date, sender, receiver, and subject.

Adopting Best Practices for Professional E-Mails

Wise e-mail business communicators are aware of the importance as well as the dangers of e-mail as a communication channel. They know that their messages can travel, intentionally or unintentionally, long distances. A hasty e-mail may end up in the boss’s mailbox or be forwarded to an enemy. Making matters worse, computers—like elephants and spurned lovers—never forget. Even erased messages can remain on multiple servers that are backed up by companies or Internet...
Before the Golden Globe Awards, more than 118 million people tuned in to watch. In addition, many users complain of poorly written messages and “e-mail ping-pong.” Inboxes overflow with unnecessary back-and-forth exchanges seeking to clarify previous messages.

service providers. Increasingly, e-mail has turned into the “smoking gun” uncovered by prosecutors to prove indelicate or even illegal intentions.

In addition, many users complain of poorly written messages and “e-mail ping-pong.” Inboxes overflow with unnecessary back-and-forth exchanges seeking to clarify previous messages.
E-Mail Best Practices: Getting Started

Despite its dangers and limitations, e-mail is the No. 1 channel of communication. To make your messages effective and to avoid e-mail ping-pong, take the time to organize your thoughts, compose carefully, and consider the receiver. The following best practices will help you get off to a good start in using e-mail smartly, safely, and professionally.

• **Try composing offline.** Especially for important messages, use your word processing program to write offline. Then upload your message to your e-mail or copy and paste the text into the frame of your e-mail. This prevents “self-destructing” (losing all your writing through some glitch or pressing the wrong key) when working online.

• **Get the address right.** If you omit one character or misread the letter l for the number 1, your message bounces. Solution: Use your electronic address book for people you write to frequently. Double-check every address that you key in manually. Don’t accidentally reply to a group of receivers when you intend to answer only one.

• **Avoid misleading subject lines.** Make sure your subject line is relevant and helpful. Generic tags such as Hi! and Important! may cause your message to be deleted before it is opened.

• **Apply the top-of-screen test.** When readers open your message and look at the first screen, will they see what is most significant? Your subject line and first paragraph should convey your purpose.

Content, Tone, and Correctness

Although e-mail seems as casual as a telephone call, it definitely is not. Because it produces a permanent record, think carefully about what you say and how you say it.

• **Be concise.** Omit unnecessary information. Remember that monitors are small and typefaces are often difficult to read. Organize your ideas tightly. If you must send a long message, prepare an attachment and use the e-mail as a cover message.

• **Don’t send anything you wouldn’t want published.** E-mail creates a permanent record that does not go away even when deleted. Every message is a corporate communication that can be used against you or your employer. Don’t write anything that you wouldn’t want your boss, your family, or a judge to read.

• **Don’t use e-mail to avoid contact.** E-mail is inappropriate for breaking bad news or for resolving arguments. For example, it is improper to fire a person by e-mail. It is also a poor channel for clashing with supervisors, subordinates, or others. Before risking hurt feelings, call or pay the person a visit.

• **Care about correctness.** People are still judged by their writing, whether electronic or paper based. Sloppy e-mail messages (with missing apostrophes, haphazard spelling, and jumbled writing) make readers work too hard. They resent not only the information but also the writer.

• **Care about tone.** Your words and writing style affect the reader. Avoid sounding curt, negative, or domineering.

• **Resist humor and sarcasm.** Without the nonverbal cues conveyed by your face and your voice, humor can easily be misunderstood.

Netiquette

Although e-mail is a relatively new communication channel, a number of rules of polite online interaction are emerging.
• **Never send blanket copies and “spam.”** Sending unsolicited advertisements ("spam") either by fax or e-mail is illegal in the United States. Address copies only to people who really need to see a message. It is unnecessary to document every business decision with an electronic paper trail.

• **Use capital letters only for emphasis or for titles.** Avoid writing entire messages in all caps, which is like SHOUTING.

• **Don’t forward without permission, and beware of long threads.** Obtain approval before forwarding a message. Also beware of forwarding e-mail consisting of a long thread (string) of messages. Some content in bottom screens may be inappropriate for the third receiver. Aside from the issue of clutter, leaving sensitive information in the thread can lead to serious trouble.

**Reading and Replying to E-Mail**

The following tips can save you time and frustration when reading and answering messages:

• **Scan all messages in your inbox before replying to each individually.** Because subsequent messages often affect the way you respond, scan all messages first (especially all those from the same individual).

• **Print only when necessary.** Generally, read and answer most messages online without saving or printing. Use folders to archive messages on special topics. Print only those messages that are complex, controversial, or involve significant decisions and follow-up.

• **Acknowledge receipt.** If you can’t reply immediately, tell when you can (Will respond Friday).

• **Don’t automatically return the sender’s message.** When replying, cut and paste the relevant parts. Avoid irritating your recipients by returning the entire thread (sequence of messages) on a topic.

• **Revise the subject line if the topic changes.** When replying or continuing an e-mail exchange, revise the subject line as the topic changes.

• **Provide a clear, complete first sentence.** Avoid fuzzy replies such as That’s fine with me or Sounds good! Busy respondents forget what was said in earlier messages, so be sure to fill in the context and your perspective when responding.

• **Never respond when you are angry.** Calm down before shooting off a response to an upsetting message. You will come up with different and better options after thinking about what was said. If possible, iron out differences in person.

**Personal Use**

Remember that office computers are meant for work-related communication.

• **Don’t use company computers for personal matters.** Unless your company specifically allows it, never use your employer’s computers for personal messages, personal shopping, or entertainment.
• Assume that all e-mail is monitored. Employers legally have the right to monitor e-mail, and about 75 percent of them do.

Other Smart E-Mail Practices
Depending on your messages and audience, the following tips promote effective electronic communication.

• Design your messages effectively. When a message requires several screens, help the reader with headings, bulleted lists, side headings, and perhaps an introductory summary that describes what will follow. Although these techniques lengthen a message, they shorten reading time.

• Consider cultural differences. Be clear and precise in your language. Remember that figurative clichés (pull up stakes, play second fiddle,) sports references (hit a home run, play by the rules), and slang (cool, stoked) may confuse nonnative speakers of English.

• Double-check before hitting the Send button. Avoid the necessity of sending a second message, which makes you look careless. Use your spell-checker, and reread for fluency before sending. Verify important facts and the spelling of names.

Using Instant Messaging and Texting Professionally and Safely
Making their way from teen bedrooms to office boardrooms, instant messaging (IM) and text messaging have become permanent and powerful communication tools. IM enables you to use the Internet to communicate in real time in private chat rooms with one or more individuals. It is like live e-mail or a text telephone call. More and more workers are using it as a speedy communication channel to exchange short messages.

Text messaging, or texting, is another popular means for exchanging brief messages in real time. Usually delivered by smartphone, texting requires a short message service (SMS) supplied by a cell phone service provider.

How Instant Messaging and Texting Work
To send an instant message, you might use a client such as such as Microsoft’s Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger, and AOL’s Instant Messenger, or newer services such as Google Talk, Digsby, and Trillian Astra that integrate social network updates. Once the client is installed, you enter your name and password to log on. The software checks to see if any of the users in your contact list are currently logged in. If the server finds any of your contacts, it sends a message back to your computer. If the person you wish to contact is online, you can click that person’s name and a window opens that you can enter text into. You enter a message, such as that shown in Figure 5.3, and click Send. Unlike e-mail, IM and texting provide no elaborate page layout options. The text box is small, and pressing the Enter key sends the message. Obviously, it is designed for brief but fast text interaction.

New applications allow people to use IM not only on their computers but also on their handheld devices such as the popular iPhone shown in Figure 5.4. Many smartphones work on a 3G or 4G cell phone network where they consume minutes, but they may also allow generally free Wi-Fi access where available.

Texting, on the other hand, usually requires a smartphone or PDA, and users are charged for the service, often by choosing a flat rate for a certain number of text or media messages per month. Lately, voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) providers such as Skype offer texting. For a small fee, Skype subscribers can send text messages to SMS-enabled cell phones in the United States and IM messages both domestically and internationally. Skype and other formerly computer-based applications are simultaneously available on mobile devices and are making communication on the go more convenient than ever before.
Pros and Cons of Instant Messaging and Texting

In today’s fast-paced world, instant messaging (IM) offers numerous benefits. Its major attraction is real-time communication with colleagues anywhere in the world—so long as a cell phone signal or a Wi-Fi connection is available. IM is a convenient alternative to the telephone and may eventually even replace e-mail.
Because IM allows people to share information immediately and make decisions quickly, its impact on business communication has been dramatic.

Like IM, texting can be a low-cost substitute for voice calls, delivering a message between private mobile phone users quietly and discreetly. SMS is particularly popular in Europe, New Zealand, Australia, and Asia. In bulk text messages, companies around the world provide news alerts, financial information, and advertising to customers. Texts have been used in game shows for TV voting, in the United States most notably to select contestants on *American Idol*.

The immediacy of instant and text messaging has created many fans. A user knows right away whether a message was delivered. Messaging avoids phone tag and eliminates the downtime associated with personal telephone conversations. Another benefit includes “presence functionality.” Coworkers can locate each other online, thus avoiding having to hunt down someone who is out of the office. Many people consider instant messaging and texting productivity boosters because they enable them to get answers quickly and allow multitasking.

Despite its popularity among workers, some organizations forbid employees to use instant messaging for a number of reasons. Employers consider instant messaging yet another distraction in addition to the interruptions caused by the telephone, e-mail, and the Web. Organizations also fear that privileged information and company records will be revealed through public instant messaging systems, which hackers can easily penetrate. Organizations worry about *phishing* (fraudulent) schemes, viruses, malware, and *spim* (IM spam).

Like e-mail, instant and text messages are subject to discovery (disclosure); that is, they can become evidence in lawsuits. Moreover, companies fear instant messaging and texting because businesses are required to track and store messaging conversations to comply with legal requirements. This task may be overwhelming. Finally, IM and texting have been implicated in traffic accidents and inappropriate uses such as the notorious *sexting*.

**Best Practices for Instant Messaging and Texting**

Instant messaging can definitely save time and simplify communications with coworkers and customers. Before using IM or text messaging on the job, however, be sure you have permission. Do not use public systems without checking with your supervisor. If your organization does allow IM and texting, you can use it efficiently and professionally by following these best practices:

- Learn about your organization’s IM policies. Are you allowed to use instant messaging? With whom may you exchange messages?
- Don’t text or IM while driving a car. Pull over if you must read or send a message.
- Make yourself unavailable when you need to complete a project or meet a deadline.

Organizations may ban instant messaging because of productivity, security, litigation, and compliance fears.

"[B]ear in mind that messaging sessions can be stored, then copied and pasted elsewhere. . . . The term ‘confidential’ is somewhat rubbery these days, so . . . think before you hit that enter key.”

—Michael Bloch, *Taming the Beast*, E-commerce development & Web marketing consultancy services
• Organize your contact lists to separate business contacts from family and friends.
• Keep your messages simple and to the point. Avoid unnecessary chitchat, and know when to say goodbye.
• Don’t use IM to send confidential or sensitive information.
• Be aware that instant messages can be saved. As with e-mail, don’t say anything that would damage your reputation or that of your organization.
• If personal messaging is allowed, keep it to a minimum. Your organization may prefer that personal chats be done during breaks or the lunch hour.
• Show patience by not blasting multiple messages to coworkers if a response is not immediate.
• Keep your presence status up-to-date so that people trying to reach you don’t waste their time.
• Beware of jargon, slang, and abbreviations, which, although they may reduce keystrokes, may be confusing and appear unprofessional.
• Respect your receivers by employing proper grammar, spelling, and proofreading.

Using Podcasts, Blogs, and Wikis for Business

Podcasts, blogs, and wikis are part of the new user-centered virtual environment called Web 2.0. Far from being passive consumers, today’s Internet users have the power to create Web content; interact with businesses and each other; review products, self-publish, or blog; contribute to wikis; or tag and share images and other files. Individuals wield enormous power because they can potentially reach huge audiences. For this reason, businesses often rightly fear the wrath of disgruntled employees and customers. On the other hand, this connectedness also allows them to curry favor with influential plugged-in opinion leaders.

The democratization of the Web means that in the online world, Internet users can bypass gatekeepers who filter content in the traditional print and visual media. Hence, even extreme views often reach audiences of thousands or even millions. The dangers are obvious. Fact checking often falls by the wayside, buzz may become more important than truth, and a single keystroke can make or destroy a reputation. This section addresses prudent business uses of podcasts, blogs, and wikis because you are likely to encounter these and other electronic communication tools on the job.

Business Podcasts

The words broadcast and iPod combined to create the word podcast; however, audio and video files can be played on any number of devices, not just Apple’s iPod. Podcasts can extend from short clips of a few minutes to 30-minute or longer digital files. Naturally, large video files gobble up a lot of memory, so they tend to be streamed on a Web site rather than downloaded.

How Organizations Use Podcasts. Like blogging, podcasting has experienced large growth and has spread among various user groups online. Major news organizations and media outlets podcast radio shows (e.g., National Public Radio) and TV shows, from ABC to Fox. Podcasts are also used in education. Students can access instructors’ lectures, listen to interviews, watch sporting events, and access other content. Apple’s iTunes U is perhaps the best-known example of free educational podcasts from Berkeley, Stanford, and other universities. Unlike streaming video that users can view only with an active Internet connection, podcasts encoded as MP3 files can be downloaded to a computer, a smartphone, or an MP3 player to be enjoyed on the go, often without subsequent Web access.

Delivering and Accessing Podcasts. Businesses have embraced podcasting for sending audio and video messages that do not require a live presence yet offer
a friendly human face. Because they can broadcast repetitive information that does not require interaction, podcasts can replace costlier live teleconferences. IBM is training its sales force with podcasts that are available anytime. Real estate agents create podcasts to enable buyers to take virtual walking tours of available properties at their leisure. HR policies can also be presented in the form of podcasts for unlimited viewing on demand or as convenient. Marketing pitches also lend themselves to podcasting.

Podcasts are featured on media Web sites and company portals or shared on social networking sites and blogs. They can usually be streamed or downloaded as media files. Really simple syndication (RSS) allows the distribution of current information published in podcasts, blogs, video files, and news items. Users can select RSS feeds from various sources and personalize the information they wish to receive.

Creating a Podcast. Producing a simple podcast does not require sophisticated equipment. With inexpensive recording, editing, and publishing software such as the popular Propaganda, ePodcast Creator, Audacity, or Gabcast, users can inform customers, mix their own music, or host interviews. In fact, any digital recorder can be used to create a high-quality simple podcast, especially if the material is scripted and well rehearsed. If you are considering creating your own podcast, here are a few tips:

• **Decide whether to record one podcast or a series.** You can create a one-time podcast for a specific purpose or a series of podcasts on a related subject. Make sure you have enough material to sustain a steady flow of information.

• **Download software.** The program Audacity is available for free; other popular recording and editing software programs are relatively inexpensive.

• **Obtain hardware.** Depending on the sound quality you desire, you may need a sophisticated microphone and other audio equipment. The recording room must be properly shielded against noise, echo, and other interference. Many universities and some libraries provide language labs that feature recording booths.

• **Organize the message.** Make sure your broadcast has a beginning, middle, and end. Build in some redundancy. Tell the listeners what you will tell them, then tell them, and finally, tell them what you have told them. This principle, known to effective PowerPoint users, also applies to podcasting. Previews, summaries, and transitions are important to help your audience follow the message.

• **Choose an extemporaneous or scripted delivery.** Think about how you will deliver the information, whether speaking freely or using a manuscript. Extemporaneous delivery means that you prepare, but you use only brief notes. It usually sounds more spontaneous and natural than reading from a script, but it can also lead to redundancy, repetition, and flubbed lines. Reading from a script, if done skillfully, can sound natural and warm. However, in the wrong hands, reading can come across as mechanical and amateurish.

• **Prepare and practice.** Before recording, do a few practice runs. Editing audio or video is difficult and time-consuming. Try to get your recording right, so that you won’t have to edit much.

• **Publish and distribute your message.** If you post the podcast to a blog, you can introduce it and solicit your audience’s feedback. Consider distributing your podcast by an RSS feed.

Professional Blogs and Twitter

A blog is a Web site with journal entries on any imaginable topic usually written by one person, although some blogs feature multiple commentators. Typically, readers leave feedback. Businesses use blogs to keep customers and employees informed and to interact with them. The biggest advantage of business blogs is that they potentially reach a far-flung, vast audience.
Marketing firms and their clients are looking closely at blogs because blogs can produce unbiased consumer feedback faster and more cheaply than such staples of consumer research as focus groups and surveys. Employees and executives at companies such as Google, IBM, and Hewlett-Packard maintain blogs. They use blogs to communicate internally with employees and externally with clients. Currently, 78 (15.6 percent) of Fortune 500 companies are blogging. As an online diary or journal, a blog allows visitors to leave public comments. At this time, writers have posted 163 million blogs, and this number is growing by about 76,000 blogs per day.

Twitter falls between the blog and social media categories. It is often referred to as a microblogging service, but it also invites social networking. It allows users to share brief status updates called tweets about their lives and their whereabouts online. Twitter users can access the service by computer or with their smartphones.

In some industries, companies are using Twitter and other social media to monitor what is being said about them, to engage with customers, and to market to other businesses. In tweets of 140 characters or fewer, JetBlue and United offer special deals on flights. Social media veteran Southwest Airlines has a particularly impressive online presence, boasting 12 million monthly visits to its Web site, 1.3 million Facebook fans, and 1 million Twitter followers. An early adopter of Facebook and Twitter, the quirky carrier appointed “tweet watchers” who troubleshoot air traveler’s problems. JetBlue followed suit in responding to customer queries. Other airlines also tweet actively.

To view examples of typical customer-service tweets, see Figure 5.5.

How Companies Use Blogs

The potential applications of blogs in business are vast. Like other Web 2.0 phenomena, corporate blogs usually invite feedback and help build communities. Specifically, companies use blogs for public relations, customer relations, crisis communication, market research, viral marketing, internal communication, and recruiting.

Public Relations, Customer Relations, and Crisis Communication. One of the prominent uses of blogs is to provide up-to-date company information to the press and the public. Blogs can be written by executives or by rank-and-file employees.

Companies such as the airlines below use Twitter to the broadcast to their “followers” up-to-the-minute information, announce special offers, and address customer-service mix-ups. If a request or complaint is unique, the representative may request that the customer send a “direct message” (DM) to handle the inquiry out of the tweeting public’s eye, not least to contain potential PR damage.

Whether bad weather or civil unrest, in a crisis Twitter allows fast updates to inform and reassure customers. Here a Delta example:

Most corporate tweets are professional, but the 140-character posts may show a greater laxness in punctuation, spelling, and other conventions than other business messages. Sometimes, company reps employ humor:

Southwest Airlines has a stellar reputation for listening to the public. Five “tweet watchers” manage the carrier’s huge online presence.
employees. General Electric’s Global Research blog addresses industry insiders and the interested public. Similarly, after experimenting with in-house blogs and proprietary social networks, Best Buy introduced BBY, Best Buy Community, a blog and social networking site for employees and managers. The company’s chief marketing officer, Barry Judge, runs a corporate blog on a Web site bearing his name.

A company blog is a natural forum for late-breaking news, especially when disaster strikes. Business bloggers can address rumors and combat misinformation. Although a blog cannot replace other communication channels in an emergency, it should be part of the overall effort to soothe the public’s emotional reaction with a human voice of reason.

Market Research. Because most blogs invite feedback, they can be invaluable sources of opinion from customers and industry experts. In addition to monitoring visitor comments on their corporate blogs, many companies now have appointed employees who scrutinize the blogosphere for buzz and positive and negative postings about their organization and products.

Online Communities. Like Twitter, which has a loyal core following, company blogs can attract a devoted community of participants who want to keep informed about company events, product updates, and other news. In turn, those enthusiasts can contribute new ideas. Similar to Dell’s IdeaStorm, Starbucks’ blog Ideas In Action solicits product and service ideas from customers.

Internal Communication and Recruiting. Blogs can be used to keep virtual teams on track and share updates on the road. Members in remote locations can stay in touch by smartphone and other devices, exchanging text, images, sound, and video clips. In many companies, blogs have replaced hard-copy publications in offering late-breaking news or tidbits of interest to employees. They feature profiles of high-performing workers, information about benefits, and so forth.

Blogs mirror the company culture and present an invaluable opportunity for job candidates to size up a potential employer and the people working there.

Tips for Creating a Professional Blog

Blogging has grown up as a commercial activity and now offers sound business opportunities. Some bloggers make a living, although most remain unknowns in the boundless thickets of information on the Internet. To even have a shot at competing with established blog sites, consider the following guidelines for starting a successful business blog:

• **Identify your audience.** As with any type of communication, you must know your audience to decide what to write to get people to read your blog. Does your blog stand out? What makes you interesting and unique?

• **Find a home for your blog.** You can use software that will let you attach a blog function to your Web site. Alternatively, you can join a blog hosting site that will provide a link on your Web site to attract visitors. You can usually find templates and other options to help build traffic to your site, especially if you use trackers that identify recent posts and popular message threads. According to Blogtap, currently the top three blog hosting sites are WordPress, Google Blogger, and TypePad.¹⁰

• **Craft your message.** Blog about topics that showcase your expertise and insights. Offer a fresh, unique perspective on subjects your audience cares about. Your writing should be intriguing and sincere. Experts suggest that authors get to know the blogosphere in their industry and comment on what other bloggers are writing about. Stick with what you know.

• **Make “blogrolling” work for you.** Your goal is to attract repeat visitors to your blog. One way to achieve this objective is to increase traffic between blogs. “Blogrolling” means that you provide links to other sites or blogs on the Web.
that you find valuable and that are related to your business or industry. Respond to other bloggers’ postings and link to them.

- **Attract search engines by choosing the right keywords.** In headlines and text, emphasize potential search terms that may draw traffic to your site. Focus on one topic and use a variety of synonyms to propel your blog to the top of search engine listings. An import company doing business with China would want to stress the keywords import and China as well as trade, Asia, and so forth, in addition to more industry-specific terms, such as toys.

- **Blog often.** Provide fresh content regularly. Stay current. Stale information puts off visitors. Post short, concise messages, but do so often.

- **Monitor the traffic to your site.** If necessary, vary your subjects to attract interest. If traffic slows down, experiment with new themes while staying with your core business and expertise. Also, evaluate the effectiveness of your publishing platform. Some blog publishing sites are more valuable than others in increasing your blog’s visibility to search engines.

- **Seek permission.** If you are employed, explore your company’s blogging policy. Even if neither a policy nor a prohibition against blogging exists, avoid writing about your employer, coworkers, customers, and events at the office, however veiled your references may be. The Internet is abuzz with stories about bloggers who got fired for online indiscretions.

- **Stay away from inappropriate topics.** Whether you are a rank-and-file employee or a freelance blogger, remember not to write anything you wouldn’t want your family, friends, and the public at large to read. Blogs are not private journal entries; therefore, don’t entrust to them any risqué, politically extreme, or private information.

### Wikis and Collaboration

At least as important to business as blogs are wikis. A wiki is a Web site that employs easy-to-use collaborative software to allow users to create documents that can be edited by tapping into the same technology that runs the well-known online encyclopedia Wikipedia. Large companies, such as BT Group (previously British Telecom), use wikis to connect company representatives with developers and create a community that will contribute to the knowledge base of a product or service.\footnote{With its Forum Nokia, the Finnish cell phone maker is one of many companies—for example, IBM, Microsoft, and Disney—that maintain wikis. Most corporate projects are facilitated with the help of wikis, a tool that is especially valuable across vast geographic distances and multiple time zones.}

#### How Businesses Use Wikis.

Far from being just a tool for geeks, wikis are used beyond information technology departments. The five main uses range from providing a shared internal knowledge base to storing templates for business documents.

- **The global wiki.** For companies with a global reach, a wiki is an ideal tool for information sharing between headquarters and satellite offices. Team members can easily edit their work and provide input to the home office and each other.

- **The wiki knowledge base.** Teams or departments use wikis to collect and disseminate information to large audiences creating a database for knowledge management. For example, an IT department may compile frequently asked questions that help users resolve the most common problems themselves. Human resources managers may update employee policies, make announcements, and convey information about benefits.

- **Wikis for meetings.** Wikis can facilitate feedback before and after meetings or serve as repositories of meeting minutes. In fact, wikis may replace some meetings, yet still keep a project on track. An often-cited example of a huge global wiki meeting is IBM’s famous massive online discussion and brainstorming session that involved more than 100,000 participants from more than 160 countries.
• **Project management with wikis.** Wikis offer a highly interactive environment ideal for projects by enabling information to be centralized for easy access and user input. All participants have the same information available and can share ideas freely, more freely than in traditional face-to-face meetings. Instead of a top-down information flow, wikis empower employees and foster a team environment in which ideas can thrive.

• **Documentation and wikis.** Wikis can help to document projects large and small as well as technical and nontechnical. Wikis may also provide templates for reports.

**How to Be a Valuable Wiki Contributor.** Whether you wish to contribute to a wiki on the Web or at work, try to be an effective participant. As with most electronic communication, abide by the conventions of polite society, and follow commonsense rules. Show respect and watch out for improper or ambiguous language. Don’t attack or otherwise severely criticize another contributor.

Pay attention to correct grammar and spelling, and verify your facts. Every comment you contribute is essentially published on the Web and available to any reader. If the content appears on the company intranet, it is for the whole company to see. Wikipedia, a wiki that is trying to marry credibility with its desire for openness, recently tightened the rules for its editors after Internet vandals prematurely announced Senator Edward Kennedy’s death and pronounced his colleague, Senator Robert Byrd, dead as well.

Follow the guidelines for contributors, and give credit where credit is due. Contributors to a wiki are part of a team, not individual authors who can reasonably expect recognition or maintain control over their writing. When borrowing, be sure to cite your sources to avoid plagiarism.

**Negotiating Social and Professional Networking Sites**

Far from being only entertaining leisure sites, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are used by businesses for similar reasons and in much the same way as podcasts, blogs, and wikis. Social networking sites enable businesses to connect with customers and employees, share company news, and exchange ideas. Social online communities for professional audiences (e.g., LinkedIn) help recruiters find talent and encounter potential employees before hiring them.

**How Businesses Use Social Networks**

Some firms use social online communities for brainstorming and teamwork. They provide the collaboration tools and watch what happens. British Telecom (BT) has about 11,000 employees on Facebook in addition to offering its own internal social network. A British Telecom IT executive says that his company can observe online relationships to see how information travels and decision making occurs. The company is able to identify teams that form spontaneously and naturally and then assigns targeted projects to them. Idea generators are easy to spot. The BT executive considers these contributors invaluable, suggesting that “a new class of supercommunicators has emerged.”

Other companies harness the power of online communities to boost their brand image or to provide a forum for collaboration. McDonald’s has a strong presence on Facebook boasting nearly 1.5 million “fans.” The fast-food chain also maintains a private networking site, StationM, for its 650,000 hourly employees in 15,000 locations across the United States and Canada.

McDonald’s and BT Group (formerly British Telecom) are not the only companies running their own social networks. Insurer MetLife has launched connect. MetLife, an online social network collaboration tool. Resembling Facebook, this internal networking tool sits safely behind the corporate firewall. Best Buy
has created its own social network, Blue Shirt Nation, with currently more than 20,000 participants, most of them sales associates. IBM’s in-house social network, Beehive, has 30,000 employees on it. Managers notice avid networkers who create buzz and promote the brand. The drawback is that quieter employees may be overlooked.¹⁵

**Potential Risks of Social Networks for Businesses**

Online social networks hold great promise for businesses while also presenting some risk. Most managers want plugged-in employees with strong tech skills. They like to imagine their workers as brand ambassadors. They fantasize about their products becoming overnight sensations thanks to viral marketing. However, they also fret about incurring productivity losses, compromising trade secrets, attracting the wrath of huge Internet audiences, and facing embarrassment over inappropriate and damaging employee posts.¹⁶

Businesses take different approaches to the “dark side” of social networking. Some, such as Zappos.com, take a hands-off approach to employee online activity. Others, such as IBM, have drafted detailed policies to cover all forms of self-expression online. Some of IBM’s guidelines include being honest about one’s identity, accepting personal responsibility for published posts, and hitting *Send* only after careful thought. The technology giant asks its workers to avoid any controversies outside their professional role. The company wants workers to “add value” as they are building their social reputations, not dwell on trivia.¹⁷ Finally, Enterprise Rent-A-Car and other organizations block some or all social sites.

Younger workers in particular are often stunned when their employers block access to Facebook, Gmail, and other popular Web destinations. One 27-year-old Chicago resident complained about his former employer: “It was a constant battle between the people that saw technology as an advantage, and those that saw it as a hindrance.”¹⁸ The key is to strike a balance between allowing employees access to the Web and protecting security and ensuring productivity.

**Tips for Using Social Networking Sites and Keeping Your Job**

Experts agree that, as with any public online activity, users of social networking sites would do well to exercise caution. Privacy is a myth, and sensitive information should not be shared lightly, least of all risqué photographs. Furthermore, refusing “friend” requests or “unfriending” individuals could jeopardize professional relationships. Consider the following tip by career counselor Julie Powell¹⁹ if you like to visit social networking sites and want to keep your job: Establish boundaries. Don’t share information online that you would not be comfortable sharing openly in the office.

The advice to think twice before posting online applies to most communication channels used on the job. Facebook expert and blogger Nick O’Neill cautions account holders never to assume that the content they post on a social networking site is protected unless they have activated the privacy option. Many users leave their pages open and risk trouble with their employers by assuming that online

**Companies struggle with finding the right balance between permitting access to the Web and protecting security as well as ensuring productivity.**

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*The Aflac Duck lost his voice recently when long-time voice actor Gilbert Gottfried was fired for posting tasteless jokes on Twitter. With the commercial quacker quieted, Aflac advertised tryouts for a new spokesduck, including one ad that featured the iconic mascot in a black and white silent movie. During the spot, shouts of “Aflac!” appear on silent movie title cards as the flustered fowl rescues a damsel tied to a railroad track. How should professionals exercise caution when using digital media?*
comments are hidden from view. Even privacy settings, however, do not guarantee complete protection from prying eyes.

Among the many risks in the cyber world are inappropriate photographs and making “friends” online. Tags make pictures searchable so that an embarrassing college incident may resurface years later. Another potential minefield, says consultant Rachel Weingarten, is rejecting friend requests from some colleagues while accepting such offers from others. The snubbed coworker may harbor ill feelings as a result. Blocking a user for no apparent reason could also be interpreted as a rude rejection.

Harnessing the Potential of Professional Networking Sites

Experts agree that connecting online offers professional opportunities by expanding the traditional Rolodex. They see social networking online as a natural extension of work. Small businesses may view such sites as forums for sharing slideshow presentations and other office documents. Artists may feature their work. Medical doctors can discuss surgical techniques with peers.

As we have seen, the lines between social and professional networking are increasingly blurry. However, among business-oriented Web sites where users can post job openings, résumés, and career profiles, LinkedIn is the most popular networking tool in the United States. A great value of such business networking sites is that they can serve as a source for referrals and recommendations. Job seekers can also browse jobs posted by a company with a LinkedIn presence.
Hiring experts agree that about three quarters of U.S. companies view social media—mostly LinkedIn—as indispensable outlets for recruiting. They recommend that job seekers keep their profiles “clean”—that is, free of risqué photos, profanity, and negative comments. Instead, job candidates are encouraged to highlight awards, professional goals, and accomplishments. Although professional networking sites cannot replace face-to-face interviews, they allow hiring managers to form first impressions before inviting job hunters, or to vet interviewees being considered for an open position.

The advantages that social and professional networking sites offer recruiters and applicants are plain. In the right hands, the sites are inexpensive, simple, and fast ways to advertise current business opportunities and to connect. However, as innovative as this new type of job search seems to be, the basics remain the same. Candidates need to craft their profiles with the same care they use when putting together their traditional résumés and cover letters. The job hunter’s public appearance online must always be professional, and the profile should be up-to-date. You will learn more about job searching online in Chapter 13.

Sharing Information Through RSS Feeds and Social Bookmarking

You may wonder how businesspeople navigate the vast resources available on the Internet. Seeking information on the Web that is relevant to you and your business can be time-consuming. Really simple syndication (RSS for short) is a time-saver, allowing users to monitor many news sources in one convenient spot. Likewise, social bookmarking helps busy professionals stay informed about topics of interest and negotiate the vast information jungle of the Web.

Really Simple Syndication. RSS, a fast and easy way to search and manage information, is a data file format capable of transmitting changing Web content. News organizations, bloggers, and other online information providers syndicate (i.e., publish and distribute) their content to subscribers. RSS documents are called feeds or channels, and they can be read most efficiently with a Web-based feed reader (also known as an aggregator), an easy-to-use software application. Feeds help alert subscribers to up-to-the-minute blog entries, news items, videos, and podcasts from various sources.

How does RSS work? Each time a syndicated Web site is updated, a summary of the new information travels by RSS feed to the site’s subscribers. Users can read RSS feeds within their Internet browsers and in e-mail programs such as MS Outlook.
or use popular news aggregators such as Google Reader, Bloglines, SharpReader, NetNewsWire, and Straw. Web-based feed readers also work well with mobile devices, helping busy executives keep up with customized news feeds on the go.

Forward-looking companies such as retailer Target, online travel sites such as Travelocity, and many airlines have been using RSS feeds to alert customers to weekly sales and special offers.

**Social Bookmarking.** In the battle for “eyeballs” on the Internet, social bookmarking is another critical component. Business Web sites, blogs, and other online content gain an edge if readers link to them and, thus, share content with other online users. Digg, delicious, reddit, StumbleUpon, and squidoo are just a few of the many fast-growing social bookmarking and content aggregator (collector) Web sites. Social bookmarking helps users search, organize, manage, and store bookmarks on the Web with the help of metadata—that is, information tags or keywords.

Many Web sites, blogs, and other content providers on the Internet offer various widgets or icons of social bookmarking sites to enable content sharing. Web publishers hope readers will link their information to social bookmarking sites and alert others to the information.

Perhaps you can see now how RSS feeds and social bookmarking sites could help you stay abreast of breaking news from many sources and save you valuable time. Whether you wish to grab a broadcast from CNN.com or check the most recent sports scores, look for the square orange RSS feed icon on your favorite Web sites or a rectangular button with the letters RSS or XML. On most high-traffic Web sites, you will also see Share links, or widgets, that will take you to social bookmarking sites.

In what ways is social bookmarking helpful to business users?

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The information flow in business today is increasingly digital and mobile as the Web has evolved into an interactive medium inviting participation and interaction with large groups of people over large distances. Within organizations, internal messages in today’s workplace usually take the form of e-mails, memos, and, to a lesser extent, instant messages and texts. E-mails and memos use a standardized format to request and deliver information.

Because most messages are exchanged electronically, this chapter presented many techniques for sending and receiving safe and effective e-mails, instant messages, and text messages. However, businesspeople are still using interoffice memos to convey confidential information, emphasize ideas, deliver lengthy documents, or lend importance to a message.

On the other hand, businesses are embracing modern communication technology such as podcasts, blogs, and wikis. You learned how to be safe and professional when recording a podcast, posting to a blog, and contributing to a wiki when collaborating with others. Companies also use social media sites to communicate with employees, customers, and job candidates, and you were introduced to tips that will keep you safe when using social and professional networking sites. The chapter also discussed how to select and organize information using RSS feeds and social bookmarking.

In Chapter 6 you will apply the direct strategy in composing e-mails, memos, and letters.

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**Critical Thinking**

1. How does your use of e-mail, IM, texting, blogs, social media, and other current communication technologies with your friends and family compare with the business uses of these technologies that you learned about in this chapter?

2. Google CEO Eric Schmidt upset some by sketching his vision of a future in which targeted advertising will become so sophisticated that the search software will know exactly users’ preferences and literally tell them what to do.
Google is already under fire for its Streetview software in Google Maps for breaching privacy, and this notion of artificial intelligence anticipating our needs makes many uncomfortable. How do you view this expanded role of search software? What are the potential advantages and disadvantages?

3. A recent study suggests that American teenagers text away to the tune of about 80 messages a day, almost 2,300 a month. The dangers of texting while driving are well established, but what about texting while walking? A 15-year-old in New York state fell into an unsecured manhole while she was texting. Another texting teen was killed on a crosswalk. Who is at fault in these incidents, and do we need legal restrictions for distracted walkers who text?

4. Media company ESPN recently created an official policy for social networking that affects all its prominent talent. The core message: “Assume at all times you are representing ESPN.” Some sports bloggers have criticized the rules as too strict. Discuss the ramifications of the core statement.

5. **Ethical Issue:** Playboy recently launched a new “office-safe” Web site, TheSmokingJacket.com, designed to entertain the magazine’s core readership, males between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four, as they goof off on the job. Hiding its true origin, the new Web site expressly wishes to reach bored men at work. Instead of nudity, it offers humor and related “cool” content. The lead producer of the stealth Playboy clone, Matt Gibbs, seems to have no qualms about tricking company firewalls: “The ideal is to be . . . the go-to site for those who are bored at work.” Analyze the ethics of (a) launching a Web site that deliberately targets office workers while they are on the job and (b) Web surfing while being paid to work. Could an argument be made for limited surfing that most would consider harmless? Under what circumstances and rules? What are the dangers of engaging in such behavior at work?

**Chapter Review**

6. List the typical components of direct e-mails and memos.

7. Why do writers of most e-mails and memos frontload—that is, reveal the main idea immediately in the opening?

8. Specify some of the key formatting and usage conventions for e-mails.

9. What are some of the dangers of e-mail?

10. Briefly describe the pros and cons of instant messaging and texting.
11. Suggest at least ten best practices for using IM and texting responsibly and professionally.

12. Describe the steps to creating a simple podcast.

13. What are blogs, and how do businesses use them?

14. In what ways have businesses embraced social networking?

15. What are RSS feeds and social bookmarking, and how do they help businesspeople navigate information on the Internet?
Message Openers and Subject Lines

Your Task. Compare the following sets of message openers. Circle the letter of the opener that illustrates a direct opening. Write an appropriate subject line for each opening paragraph.

16. An e-mail requesting information about creating a Facebook presence:
   a. We want to start our business fan page on Facebook, but we are not sure how to ensure visibility and participation, and we worry about the privacy risks and data safety. We have many questions and would like information about Facebook and social media in general.
   b. Please answer the following questions about creating a business fan page on Facebook and protecting our network from intrusions and malicious attacks.

17. An e-mail announcing a new day-care program:
   a. Employees interested in enrolling their children in our new low-cost day-care program are invited to an HR orientation on September 15.
   b. For several years we have studied the possibility of offering a day-care option for those employees who are parents. Until recently, our management team was unable to agree on the exact parameters of this benefit, but now some of you will be able to take advantage of this option.

18. An e-mail message announcing an employee satisfaction survey:
   a. We have noticed recently an increased turnover among our sales staff. We are concerned about this troubling development and would like to study its causes. We have hired an outside consulting firm to gauge the attitudes of our salespeople in confidential qualitative interviews.
   b. The consulting firm Strelitz & Kaus Research Associates will soon conduct in-depth qualitative interviews to explore the satisfaction among our sales staff and recommend strategies to stem the tide of recent departures.

19. A memo announcing a new procedure:
   a. It has come to our attention that some staff members write blogs, sometimes publicly addressing sensitive company information. We respect the desire of employees to express themselves and would like to continue allowing the practice, but we decided to provide binding rules to ensure the company’s and the bloggers’ safety.
   b. The following new policy for blog authors will help staff members to create posts that will maintain the integrity of the company’s sensitive information and keep the writers safe.

Opening Paragraphs and Subject Lines

Your Task. The following opening paragraphs to memos are wordy and indirect. After reading each paragraph, identify the main idea. Then, write an opening sentence that illustrates a more direct opening and include a subject line.

20. Several staff members came to me and announced their interest in learning more about telecommuting and government telework policies. As most of you know, these areas of concern are increasingly important for most government workers here in Washington, D.C. A seminar titled “Telecommuting and Telework Policies” is being conducted March 22. I am allowing the following employees to attend the seminar: Darrell Walters, Akil Jackson, and Amy Woods.

21. Your MegaCorp Employees Association has secured for you discounts on auto repair, carpet purchases, travel arrangements, and many other services. These services are available to you if you have a Buying Power Card. All MegaCorp employees are eligible for their own private Buying Power Cards.

Bulleted and Numbered Lists

22. E-mails and memos frequently contain bulleted or numbered lists, which you learned about in Chapter 4.

Your Task. Revise the following wordy paragraph into an introductory statement and a short list with category headings (see p. 93 in Chapter 4). Should the list be numbered or bulleted?
Our office could implement better environmental practices such as improving energy efficiency and reducing our carbon footprint. Here are three simple things we can do to make our daily work practices greener. For one thing, we can power down. At night we should turn off monitors, not just log off our computers. In addition, we could “Light Right.” This means installing energy-efficient lighting throughout the office. A final suggestion has to do with recycling. We could be recycling instantly if we placed small recycling bins at all workstations and common-use areas.

23. **Your Task.** Revise the following wordy paragraph into an introductory statement with a concise list that has three bullet points. Could you use category headings for your bullet points?

   If you are a job candidate interviewing for a job, you should follow a few guidelines that most people consider basic. You will be more successful if you do these things. One of the first things to do is get ready. Before the interview, successful candidates research the target company. That is, they find out about it. If you really want to be successful, you will prepare success stories. Wise candidates also clean up any digital dirt that may be floating around the Internet. Those are a few of the things to do before the interview. During the interview, the best candidates try to sound enthusiastic. They answer questions clearly but with short, concise responses. They also are prepared to ask their own questions. After the interview, when you can relax a bit, you should remember to send a thank-you note to the interviewer. Another thing to do after the interview is contact references. One last thing to do, if you don’t hear from the interviewer within five days, is follow up with an inquiry.

**Note:** All Writing Improvement Cases are provided at [www.meguffey.com](http://www.meguffey.com) for you to revise online.

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### Writing Improvement Cases

#### E-MAIL

**5.1 Information E-Mail: Confusion Over Fall Training Conference**

Jim Morales’ e-mail request is confusing to say the least. It would benefit from a better organization and visual presentation.

**Your Task.** Analyze the e-mail message. List its weaknesses. If your instructor directs, revise it.

**To:** Greta Targa <greta.targa@gamma.com>

**From:** Jim Morales <jim.morales@gamma.com>

**Subject:** HELP!

**Cc:**

As you already know, we have been working hard to plan the Gamma Fall Training Conference. It will be held in Miami. Here are the speakers I have lined up for training sessions. I’m thinking that on Tuesday, November 12, we will have Nicole Gold. Her scheduled topic is “Using E-Mail and IM Effectively.” Anthony Mills said he could speak to our group on November 13 (Wednesday). “Leading Groups and Teams” is the topic for Mills. Here are their e-mail addresses: tony.mills@sunbelt.net and n.gold@etc.com.

You can help us make this one of the best training sessions ever. I need you to send each of these people an e-mail and confirm the dates and topics. Due to the fact that we must print the program soon (by September 1), I will need this done as soon as possible. Don’t hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Jim

1. List at least five weaknesses of this message.
2. Outline a writing plan (not the actual message) for this message.

   **Subject line:**
   **Opening:**
   **Body:**
   **Closing:**

E-MAIL

5.2 Information E-Mail: Disorganized Workshop Description

In her e-mail Eleanor Hutchinson is reporting about a recent workshop on workplace violence she attended. However, Eleanor presents the information in a rather haphazard fashion.

**Your Task.** Analyze the e-mail. List its weaknesses and then outline an appropriate writing plan. Can you think of a way to improve readability? If your instructor directs, revise it.

To: Mitchell Moraga <mitchell.moraga@media.com>
From: Eleanor Hutchinson <ehutchinson@media.com>
Subject: My Report
Cc: Mitchell,

This is in response to your request that I attend the Workplace Issues conference on November 3, as you suggested. The topic was how to prevent workplace violence, and I found it very fascinating. Although we have been fortunate to avoid serious incidents at our company, it’s better to be safe than sorry. Because I was the representative from our company and you asked for a report, here it is. Kit Adkins was the presenter, and she made suggestions in three categories, which I will summarize here.

Ms. Atkins cautioned organizations to prescreen job applicants. As a matter of fact, wise companies do not offer employment until after a candidate's background has been checked. Just the mention of a background check is enough to make some candidates withdraw. These candidates, of course, are the ones with something to hide.

A second suggestion was that companies should prepare a good employee handbook that outlines what employees should do when they suspect potential workplace violence. This handbook should include a way for informers to be anonymous.

A third recommendation had to do with recognizing red-flag behavior. This involves having companies train managers to recognize signs of potential workplace violence. What are some of the red flags? One sign is an increasing number of arguments (most of them petty) with coworkers. Another sign is extreme changes in behavior or statements indicating depression over family or financial problems. Another sign is bullying or harassing behavior. Bringing a firearm to work or displaying an extreme fascination with firearms is another sign.

I think that the best recommendation is prescreening job candidates. This is because it is most feasible. If you want me to do more research on prescreening techniques, do not hesitate to let me know. Let me know by November 18 if you want me to make a report at our management meeting, which is scheduled for December 3.

Ellie

1. List at least five weaknesses of this e-mail message.

2. Outline a writing plan (not the actual message) for this message.

   **Subject line:**
   **Opening:**
   **Body:**
   **Closing:**

5.3 Information Memo: Facts About Corporate Instant Messaging

The following memo reports information from a symposium, but it is poorly written.

**Your Task.** Analyze the message. List its weaknesses and then outline a writing plan. If your instructor directs, revise the message.
Date: March 4, 201x  
To: Trevor Kurtz, CEO  
From: Emily Lopez-Rush  
Subject: Instant Messaging

Thanks for asking me to attend the Instant Messaging Symposium. It was sponsored by Pixel Link and took place March 2. Do you think you will want me to expand on what I learned at the next management council meeting? I believe that meeting is March 25.

Anyway, here’s my report. Jason Howard, the symposium leader told us that over 80 million workers are already using instant messaging and that it was definitely here to stay. But do the risks outweigh the advantages? He talked about benefits, providers, costs involved, and risks. The top advantages of IM are speed, documentation, and it saves costs. The major problems are spam, security, control, and disruptive. He said that the principal IM providers for consumers were Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, and AOL Instant Messenger. Misuse of IM can result in reductions in productivity. However, positive results can be achieved with appropriate use. Although some employees are using consumer IM services, for maximum security many organizations are investing in enterprise-level IM systems, and they are adopting guidelines for employees. These enterprise-level IM systems range in cost from $30 to $100 per user license. The cost depends on the amount of functionality.

This is just a summary of what I learned. If you want to hear more, please do not hesitate to call.

1. List at least five weaknesses of this e-mail message.

2. Outline a writing plan (not the actual message) for this message.

   Subject line:  
   Opening:  
   Body:  
   Closing:

### E-MAIL

#### 5.4 Information E-Mail: Poorly Organized Message About Interns

The following message from the human resources director to project director Joshua Turck suffers from poor organization and murky focus.

**Your Task.** Determine what the main idea is and organize the message to develop that idea. Don’t just rearrange the sentences.

**To:** Joshua Turck <joshua.turck@bayside.com>  
**From:** Sable Johnson <sable.johnson@bayside.com>  
**Subject:** Interns  
**Cc:**

We do want a strong internship program that can provide us with superior, well-trained personnel; however, the program must meet government regulations.

Your inquiry about the status of our interns caused my staff and me to look into this matter more carefully. Our attorneys told us that all interns must be considered employees and paid at least the minimum wage. We learned that college students are legitimate only if they are receiving real training. Interns are not legitimate if they do any of the following: 1. If they displace a regular employee. 2. If they complete a client’s work for which we bill. 3. If they are promised full-time jobs at the end of training.

I appreciate your bringing this to my attention. I would like to arrange for you to meet with the vice president and me to analyze this fall’s internship program and consider changes.

Having every single intern sign a contract saying that they are willing to accept college credit in place of wages does not provide legal protection. An intern must do more than busy work.

After reviewing our complete program, changes must be made. We believe that future interns must have a structured training program. Let’s meet to discuss!

Sable Johnson, Director  
Human Resources
5.5 Instant Messaging at Local Auto Dealer

Read the following log of a live IM chat between a customer-service representative and a visitor to a Glendora car dealership’s Web site.

**Your Task.** In class discuss how Alex could have made this interaction with a customer more effective. Is his IM chat with Mr. Rhee professional, polite, and respectful? If your instructor directs, rewrite Alex’s responses to Mr. Rhee’s queries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hey, I’m Alex. How’s it goin? Welcome to Harkin BMW of Glendora!</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>I’m supposed to provide live assistance. What can I do for you?</td>
<td>I want buy car.</td>
<td>May I have your name first?</td>
<td>Jin Bae Rhee</td>
<td>Whoa! Is that a dude’s name? Okay. What kind? New inventory or preowned?</td>
<td>BMW 2011 model. For family, for business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want green car, low mileage, less gasoline burn.</td>
<td>I want buy car.</td>
<td>I’m supposed to provide live assistance. What can I do for you?</td>
<td>May I have your name first?</td>
<td>Whoa! Is that a dude’s name? Okay. What kind? New inventory or preowned?</td>
<td>BMW 2011 model. For family, for business.</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My man, if you can’t afford the gas on these puppies, you shouldn’t buy a Beemer, you know what I mean? Or ya want green color?</td>
<td>I’m supposed to provide live assistance. What can I do for you?</td>
<td>May I have your name first?</td>
<td>Whoa! Is that a dude’s name? Okay. What kind? New inventory or preowned?</td>
<td>BMW 2011 model. For family, for business.</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
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<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
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<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okeydoke, we got a full lineup. Which series, 3, 5, 6, or ?? Or an X3 or X5? A Z4 convertible?</td>
<td>I want buy car.</td>
<td>I’m supposed to provide live assistance. What can I do for you?</td>
<td>May I have your name first?</td>
<td>Whoa! Is that a dude’s name? Okay. What kind? New inventory or preowned?</td>
<td>BMW 2011 model. For family, for business.</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>760 sedan</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. We got just two 550i, one for $68,695 and one for 71,020</td>
<td>I want buy car.</td>
<td>I’m supposed to provide live assistance. What can I do for you?</td>
<td>May I have your name first?</td>
<td>Whoa! Is that a dude’s name? Okay. What kind? New inventory or preowned?</td>
<td>BMW 2011 model. For family, for business.</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European delivery?</td>
<td>I want buy car.</td>
<td>I’m supposed to provide live assistance. What can I do for you?</td>
<td>May I have your name first?</td>
<td>Whoa! Is that a dude’s name? Okay. What kind? New inventory or preowned?</td>
<td>BMW 2011 model. For family, for business.</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>??</td>
<td>I prefer not get a phone call yet... but 299-484-9807 is phone number and <a href="mailto:jrhee@techtrade.com">jrhee@techtrade.com</a> email</td>
<td>I want buy car.</td>
<td>I’m supposed to provide live assistance. What can I do for you?</td>
<td>May I have your name first?</td>
<td>Whoa! Is that a dude’s name? Okay. What kind? New inventory or preowned?</td>
<td>BMW 2011 model. For family, for business.</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome. Well give you a jingle back or shoot you an email pronto! Bye.</td>
<td>I want buy car.</td>
<td>I’m supposed to provide live assistance. What can I do for you?</td>
<td>May I have your name first?</td>
<td>Whoa! Is that a dude’s name? Okay. What kind? New inventory or preowned?</td>
<td>BMW 2011 model. For family, for business.</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
<td>New, then, huh? Where are you from?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6 Information E-Mail: Choosing a Holiday Plan

In the past your company offered all employees 11 holidays, starting with New Year’s Day in January and proceeding through Christmas Day the following December. Other companies offer similar holiday schedules. In addition, your company has given all employees one floating holiday. That day was determined by a company-wide vote. As a result, all employees had the same day off. Now, management is considering a new plan that involves a floating holiday that each employee may choose. Selections, however, would be subject to staffing needs within individual departments. If two people wanted the same day, the employee with the most seniority would have the day off.

**Your Task.** As a member of the human resources staff, write an e-mail to employees. This message should provide information as well as ask employees to choose between continuing the current company-wide uniform floating holiday and instituting a new plan for an individual floating holiday. Be sure to establish an end date.

5.7 Information E-Mail: Reaching Consensus About Business Attire

Casual dress in professional offices has been coming under attack. Your boss, Michael Harding, received the e-mail shown in Figure 5.1. He thinks it would be a good assignment for his group of management trainees to help him respond to that message. He asks your team to research answers to the first five questions in CEO William Laughton’s message. He doesn’t expect you to answer the final question, but any information you can supply to the first questions would help him shape a response.

Schilling & Voigt is a public CPA firm with a staff of 120 CPAs, bookkeepers, managers, and support personnel. Located in downtown Bridgeport, Connecticut, the plush offices on Water Street overlook Waterfront Park and the Long Island Sound. The firm performs general accounting and audit services as well as tax planning and preparation. Accountants visit clients in the field and also entertain them in the downtown office.

**Your Task.** Decide whether the entire team will research each question in Figure 5.1 or whether team members will be assigned certain questions. Collect information, discuss it, and reach consensus on what you will report to Mr. Harding. As a team write a concise one-page response. Your goal is to inform, not persuade. Remember that you represent management, not students or employees.

5.8 Instant Messaging: Practicing Your Professional IM Skills

Your instructor will direct this role-playing group activity. Using instant messaging, you will simulate one of several typical business scenarios—for example, responding to a product inquiry, training a new hire, troubleshooting with a customer, or making an appointment—using the rules of professional IM etiquette.
appointment. For each scenario, two or more students will chat professionally with only a minimal script to practice on-the-spot yet courteous professional interaction by IM. Your instructor will determine which software you will need and provide brief instructions to prepare you for your role in this exercise.

If you don’t have instant messaging software on your computer or smart device yet, download the application first—for example, AOL’s Instant Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, Microsoft’s Windows Live Messenger, or Skype. Yahoo Messenger, for instance, allows you to IM your friends on Yahoo Messenger but also on Windows Live Messenger. You control who sees you online; if you don’t wish to be interrupted, you can use stealth settings. All IM software enables users to share photos and large media files (up to 2 gigabytes on Yahoo). You can make voice calls and use webcam video as well. These advanced features turn IM software into a simple conferencing tool and video phone. You can connect with users who have the same software all around the world. Contrary to calling landlines or cell phones, peer-to-peer voice calls are free. Most IM clients also have mobile applications for your smartphone, so that you can IM or call other users while you are away from a computer.

**Your Task.** Log on to the IM program your instructor chooses. Follow your instructor’s directions closely as you role-play the business situation you were assigned with your partner or team. The scenario will involve two or more people who will communicate by instant messaging in real time.

5.9 Podcast, Twitter, Texting: Analyzing a Podcast

Browsing the podcasts at iTunes, you stumble across the Quick and Dirty Tips series, specifically Money Girl, who dispenses financial advice. You sign up for the free podcasts that cover a variety of business topics. You also visit the Web site at [http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/](http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/).

**Your Task.** Pick a QDNow.com podcast that interests you. Listen to it or obtain a transcript on the Web site and study it for its structure. Is it direct or indirect? Informative or persuasive? At your instructor’s request, write an e-mail that discusses the podcast you analyzed. Alternatively, if your instructor allows, you could also send a very concise summary of the podcast by text message from your cell phone or an ultrashort tweet (140 characters or fewer) to your instructor.

5.10 Blog: Analyzing the Nuts About Southwest Blog

When you browse the Southwest Airlines blog, you will find the following terms of use:

> We want to build a personal relationship between our Team and you, and we need your participation. Everyone is encouraged to join in, and you don’t need to register to read, watch, or comment. However, if you would like to share photos or videos or rate a post, among other things, you will need to complete a profile. . . .

> This is the point where we insert the “fine print” and discuss the guidelines for posting. Nuts About Southwest is a moderated site because we want to ensure that everyone stays on topic—or at least pretty close to it. We would LUV for you to post your thoughts, comments, suggestions, and questions, but when you post, make sure that they are of general interest to most readers. Of course, profanity, racial and ethnic slurs, and rude behavior like disparaging personal remarks won’t be tolerated nor published.

> Even though Nuts About Southwest is moderated, we pledge to present opposing viewpoints as we have done since our blog first went “live” several years ago, and we will strive to keep posts interesting, diverse, and multi-sided. Our Team wants to engage in a conversation with you, but not every post will receive a response from us. . . .

**Your Task.** Visit the Southwest.com blog at [http://www.blogsouthwest.com/about](http://www.blogsouthwest.com/about). Click About and read the entire User Guide. In class, discuss the tone of the guidelines. How are they presented? Who is authoring the blog, and what is its purpose? What assumptions can you make about the company culture when you read the guidelines and the blog entries? If your instructor directs, write a clear, direct memo or an e-mail reporting your observations.

5.11 Blog and Wiki: Reviewing Fortune 500 Business Blogging Wiki

Here is your opportunity to view and evaluate a corporate blog. The site Socialtext.net is a wiki listing the 78 Fortune 500 companies that have a business blog at this time, defined as “active public blogs by company employees about the company and/or its products.” You will find a range of large business organizations such as Amazon.com, Disney, Motorola, Safeway, and Toys“R”Us. Socialtext.net is hosting a wiki of reviews that critique Fortune 500 business blogs. The reviews are posted on a variety of blogs authored by various writers and hyperlinked to the Socialtext.net wiki.

**Your Task.** Browse the Fortune 500 Business Blogging Wiki at [http://www.socialtext.net/bizblogs/index.cgi](http://www.socialtext.net/bizblogs/index.cgi). Follow the links provided there to view some of the corporate blogs on the site. Select a company blog you find interesting, browse the pages, and read some of the contents. Pick a corporate blog that has already been reviewed by an independent blogger. Read the blogger’s review. Consider the style and length of the review. If your instructor directs, write a brief informational memo or e-mail describing the business blog as well as its review, the style of the blogger’s critique, the review’s accuracy, and so forth.

Alternatively, your instructor may ask you to write an original review of a Fortune 500 company blog that has not yet been evaluated. You may be called on to write your own blog entry discussing an unreviewed company blog of your choice. You could compose the blog response in Microsoft Word or e-mail it to your instructor as appropriate.

Chapter 5 Electronic Messages and Digital Media
5.12 Twitter: Creating a Twitter Group

Twittgroups.com is designed to make microblogging useful for private individuals and businesses. The site is based on the premise that people like to talk with other like-minded people. Users come together in communities around specific topics (politics, sports, art, business, and so on). Twittgroups invites members to talk about the big news stories of the day, bounce ideas off other participants online, or just join the conversation—all in fewer than 140 characters. Your instructor may choose to create a public or private group for the class. Within this Twittgroup for your course, you may be asked to complete short assignments in the form of tweets. Posts in a private group are not shared with other general users, yet they should be relevant to the class content and professional.

**Your Task.** Use your Twitter username and password to log on at [http://twittgroups.com](http://twittgroups.com). Sign into and follow the group designated by your instructor. Your instructor may ask you to comment on a topic he or she assigns or may encourage you to enter into a freewheeling discussion with other members of your class online. Your instructor may act as a group moderator evaluating the frequency and quality of your contributions.

5.13 Twitter: Learning to Write Superefficient Tweets

Twitter forces its users to practice extreme conciseness. Some music reviewers have risen to the challenge and reviewed whole albums in no more than 140 characters. National Public Radio put Stephen Thompson, one of its music editors, to the test. “I approach Twitter as a science,” Thompson says.29 He sees well-designed tweets as online equivalents of haiku, a highly structured type of Japanese poetry. Thompson believes that tweets should be properly punctuated, be written in complete sentences, and of course, not exceed the 140-character limit. His rules also exclude abbreviations.

Here are two samples of Thompson’s mini reviews: “Mos Def is a hip-hop renaissance man on smart songs that look to the whole world and its conflicts. Slick Rick’s guest spot is a nice touch.” The second one reads: “The Phenomenal Handclap Band: Chugging, timeless, jammy throwback from eight shaggy Brooklyn hipsters. Starts slowly, gets hypnotically fun.”

**Your Task.** As an intern in Stephen Thompson’s office, review your favorite album in 140 characters or fewer, following your boss’s rules. After you have warmed up, your instructor may direct you to other concise writing tasks. Send a tweet to your instructor, if appropriate, or practice writing Twitter posts in Word. The best tweets could be shared with the class.

5.14 Social Networking: Building an Online Community on Facebook

Chances are you already have a Facebook profile and communicate with friends and family. You may be a fan of a celebrity or a business. Now you can also become a fan of your business communication class if your instructor decides to create a course page on Facebook. The main purpose of such a social networking site for a class is to exchange links and interesting stories relevant to the material being learned. Intriguing tidbits and business news might also be posted on the “wall” to be shared by all signed-up fans. Everybody, even students who are quiet in class, could contribute. However, before you can become a fan of your business communication class, it needs to be created online.

**Your Task.** If you posted a profile on Facebook, all you need to do is search for the title of the newly created business communication Facebook page and become a fan. If you don’t have an account yet, begin by signing up at [http://www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). On-screen prompts make it easy for you to build a profile.

5.15 Social Networking: Preparing a Professional LinkedIn Profile

Virtual networking on a professional networking site such as LinkedIn is an extension of seeking face-to-face contacts—the most effective way to find a job to date. Consider creating a credible, appealing presence on LinkedIn to make yourself attractive to potential business connections and hiring managers. Your LinkedIn site should serve purely to build your career and professional reputation.

**Your Task.** Go to [http://www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) and sign up for a free account. Follow the on-screen directions to create a profile, add a professional-looking photograph, and upload a polished résumé. You will be prompted to invite contacts from your e-mail address books. If your instructor directs, form teams and critique each other’s profiles. Link to those profiles of your peers that have been prepared most diligently and strike you as having the best eye appeal.

### Video Resources

This important chapter offers two learning videos.

**Video Library 1: Technology in the Workplace.** Illustrating proper and improper use of today’s technologies in the workplace, this video takes you to H. B. Jones, a small landscape design and supply firm. You will meet Elliott, the owner and founder; Helena, a competent office worker; James, East Coast manager; and Ian, an inept employee.

This fast-paced video gives you a glimpse of office workers using smartphones, computers, and other technologies on the job. Be watching for the attitudes of Ian, Elliott, James, and Helena toward their jobs and their use of company time. Who is
Prepositions and Conjunctions
Review Sections 1.18 and 1.19 in the Grammar Review section of the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook. Then study each of the following statements. Write a or b to indicate the sentence in which the idea is expressed more effectively. Also record the number of the G/M principle illustrated. When you finish, compare your responses with those provided at the back of the book. If your answers differ, study carefully the principles shown in parentheses. For more practice, you will find a set of Bonus Grammar/Mechanics Checkups with immediate feedback at your premium Web site, www.cengagebrain.com.

| Example  | 1. a. What type of printer do you prefer?  
|  | b. What type printer do you prefer?  
|  | 2. a. I hate when my cell rings during meetings.  
|  | b. I hate it when my cell rings during meetings.  
|  | 3. a. Bullets make this message easier to read than that one.  
|  | b. Bullets make this message easier to read than that one.  
|  | 4. a. Blogrolling is when you provide links to other blogs.  
|  | b. Blogrolling involves the provision of links to other blogs.  
|  | 5. a. It seems as if we have been working on this project forever.  
|  | b. It seems like we have been working on this project forever.  
|  | 6. a. Does anyone know where the meeting is?  
|  | b. Does anyone know where the meeting is at?  
|  | 7. a. A wiki is better than a blog for workplace updates.  
|  | b. A wiki is better than a blog for workplace updates.  
|  | 8. a. Were you transferred to the home office in Seattle or to the office of the branch in Portland?  
|  | b. Were you transferred to the Seattle home office or the Portland branch office?  
|  | 9. a. Cloud computing is where your files and programs are stored in huge Internet data centers.  
|  | b. Cloud computing involves storing files and programs at huge Internet data centers.  
|  | 10. a. Where shall we move the computer to?  
|  | b. Where shall we move the computer?  
|  | 11. a. Job seekers should keep their online profiles free of risqué photos, profanity, and negative comments.  
|  | b. Job seekers should keep their online profiles free of risqué photos, profanity, and they should avoid negative comments.  
|  | 12. a. His blog comments were informative like we hoped they would be.  
|  | b. His blog comments were informative as we hoped they would be.  
|  | 13. a. Jeremy had an interest in and an aptitude for computer researching.  
|  | b. Jeremy had an interest and aptitude for computer researching.  
|  | 14. a. She joined both of the social networking sites.  
|  | b. She joined both social networking sites.  
|  | 15. a. As soon as she graduated college, she was eligible for the job.  
|  | b. As soon as she graduated from college, she was eligible for the job.  

Grammar/Mechanics Checkup—5

Chapter 5 Electronic Messages and Digital Media
As the employee with the best communication skills, you are frequently asked to edit messages. The following e-mail has problems in proofreading, conversational tone, buried verbs, organization, list parallelism, and the subject line. You may (a) use standard proofreading marks (see Appendix B) to correct the errors here or (b) download the document from www.cengagebrain.com and revise at your computer.

Your instructor may ask you to use the Track Changes feature in Word to show your editing comments. Turn on Track Changes on the Review tab. Click Show Markup. Place your cursor at an error, click New Comment, and key your edit in the bubble box provided. Study the guidelines in the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook as well as the lists of Confusing Words and Frequently Misspelled Words to sharpen your skills.

To: Melody Menzes <melody@armorindustries.com>
From: Anthony Alvarado <anthony@armorindustries.com>
Subject: Need Your Help!
Cc:  

Melody,

This is just a note to let you know that because of your excellent researching skills, the president and the undersigned have selected you to work on a special project collecting information for next year’s annual report. You will in all probability need to visit each and every department head personal to collect department information individually from them.

The Corporate Communications division which oversee the production of the annual report is of the opinion that you should concentrate on the following items:

- specific accomplishments for the past year
- You should also find out about goals of each department for the coming year.
- in each department get names of interesting employees who have made a contribution to the department or ones who have contributed to the community.
- Be sure to ask about special events featuring outstanding employees and corporate officers.

Because of the fact that this is an assignment that is big in size, Darcy Coleman has been given the assignment of offering assistance to you. We made the decision that it was better to assign an assistant rather than have you be overwhelmed with the task.

Oh, one more thing. You should also be thinking about and collecting photos that illustrate employees and special events.

Inasmuch as the annual report must be completed by September first, you must submit this material to the undersigned by August 5th. We are grateful for your expertise and have confidence that you will do a terrific job.

Best,
Tony

Anthony Alvarado, Director
Human Resources Development
Armour Industries, Inc.
anthony@armourindustries.com
Cell: 761-662-8919
Ethics

Communication Workshop

Should Employers Restrict E-Mail, Instant Messaging, and Internet Use?

Most employees today work with computers and have Internet access. Should they be able to use their work computers for online shopping, personal messages, and personal work, as well as to listen to music and play games?

But It’s Harmless
Office workers have discovered that it is far easier to shop online than to race to malls and wait in line. To justify her Web shopping at work, one employee, a recent graduate, said, “Instead of standing at the water cooler gossiping, I shop online.” She went on to say, “I’m not sapping company resources by doing this.”

Those who use instant messaging say that what they are doing is similar to making personal phone calls. So long as they don’t abuse the practice, they see no harm. One marketing director justified his occasional game playing and online shopping by explaining that his employer benefits because he is more productive when he takes minibreaks. “When I need a break, I pull up a Web page and just browse,” he says. “Ten minutes later, I’m all refreshed, and I can go back to business-plan writing.”

Companies Cracking Down
Employers, however, see it differently. A recent survey reported that more than one fourth of employers have fired workers for misusing e-mail, and nearly one third have fired employees for misusing the Internet. UPS discovered an employee running a personal business from his office computer. Lockheed Martin fired an employee who disabled its entire company network for six hours because of an e-mail heralding a holiday event that the worker sent to 60,000 employees. Companies not only worry about lost productivity, but they fear litigation, security breaches, and other electronic disasters from accidental or intentional misuse of computer systems.

What’s Reasonable?
Some companies try to enforce a “zero tolerance” policy, prohibiting any personal use of company equipment. Ameritech Corporation specifically tells employees that computers and other company equipment are to be used only to provide service to customers and for other business purposes. Companies such as Boeing, however, allow employees to use faxes, e-mail, and the Internet for personal reasons. But Boeing sets guidelines. Use has to be of reasonable duration and frequency and can’t cause embarrassment to the company. Strictly prohibited are chain letters, obscenity, and political and religious solicitation.

Career Application. As an administrative assistant at Texas Technologies in Fort Worth, you have just received an e-mail from your boss asking for your opinion. It seems that many employees have been shopping online and more are using instant messaging. One person actually received four personal packages from UPS in one morning. Although reluctant to do so, management is considering installing monitoring software that not only tracks Internet use but also blocks messaging, porn, hate, and game sites.

Your Task
- In teams or as a class, discuss the problem of workplace abuse of e-mail, instant messaging, and the Internet. Should full personal use be allowed?
- Are computers and their links to the Internet similar to other equipment such as telephones?
- Should employees be allowed to access the Internet for personal use if they use their own private e-mail accounts?
- Should management be allowed to monitor all Internet use?
- Should employees be warned if e-mail is to be monitored?
- What reasons can you give to support an Internet crackdown by management?
- What reasons can you give to oppose a crackdown?

Decide whether you support or oppose the crackdown. Explain your views in an e-mail or a memo to your boss, Arthur W. Rose, awrose@txtech.com.
Endnotes

17 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
Acknowledgments


This page contains grammar key for this chapter only

Chapter 5
1. a (1.18a) 2. b (1.19c) 3. b (1.19d) 4. b (1.19c) 5. a. (1.19a) 6. a (1.18b) 7. b (1.19d) 8. b (1.18c) 9. b (1.19c) 10. b (1.18b) 11. a (1.19a) 12. b (1.19b) 13. a (1.18d) 14. b (1.18b) 15. b (1.18a)