

Business Communication Instructor Guide

Module 1: Communicating in Business

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Learning Outcomes	3
Module Resources	3
Cheat Sheet	3
Instructional Support	4
Summary of Module	4
Apply It Warm-Up	4
Activity One: Professional vs. Personal Communication	6
Evidence-Based Teaching Practices	6
Higher Order Thinking	6
Reflecting Student Experiences	6
Background	6
Learning Outcome Alignment	6
Instructions	7
Time Estimate: 30-45 minutes	7
Debrief	7
Large Class Variation	7
Online Variation	8
Activity Two: Speed Networking	9
Evidence-Based Teaching Practices	9

Community Building	9
Engagement	9
Background	9
Learning Outcome Alignment	9
Instructions	9
Time Estimate: 30 minutes	9
Discussion Prompts	10
Debrief	10
Online Variation	11
Activity Three: Building and Strengthening Connections	13
Evidence-Based Teaching Practices	13
Contextualization	13
Scaffolding	13
Background	13
Learning Outcome Alignment	13
Instructions	13
Time Estimate: 30 minutes	13
Discussion Prompts	14
Debrief	14
Online Variation	15
Assignments	15
Assignment Package	15

Learning Outcomes

[Detailed Course Learning Outcome Spreadsheet is linked here.](#)

Topic	Student Learning Goals
Effective Communication	• Explore how good communication skills can make you a better employee • Understand the difference between the main audience and other audiences in business communication • Understand the social communication model • Recognize the important characteristics of effective business writing • Explain how professional and personal communication can overlap
Forms of Communication	• Understand the importance of listening • Understand what verbal communication is and its role in business • Understand what nonverbal communication is and its role in business
Ethics and Communication	• Understand guidelines for communicating ethically • Understand how to communicate ethically online
Staying Connected in the Digital Age	• Explore the importance of maintaining connections with colleagues and other professionals in the digital age • Understand the importance of keeping in contact with customers in the digital age

Module Resources

Cheat Sheet



[Module 1 Cheat Sheet in English](#)



[Module 1 Cheat Sheet in Spanish](#)

Instructional Support



[Module 1 Slide Deck](#)



[Video List](#)



[Evidence-Based Teaching Practices](#)

Summary of Module

Readiness Check focuses on communication and professionalism as distinct career competencies.

Practice provides content that closes the module with an interactive where students explore various communication skills and self-assess their strengths and areas of improvement and flashcards as a study aid.

Student's Choice: communication skills self-assessment interactive

Among the **real world examples** in this module are:

- Former CEO of Crossfit forced to resign after controversial remarks on social media cost the company millions in lost revenue
- Retailers such as Sephora, Target, and the Gap marketing to primary and secondary audiences
- How a communication breakdown led to General Motors failing to prioritize faulty ignition switches
- How small businesses can leverage artificial intelligence (AI) tools
- Attorney Akiva Cohen using non-traditional digital networking via social media to build a legal team

Apply It Warm-Up

The following questions relate to the Apply It examples in this module and can be used to open class discussion or check whether students understood the reading.

1. In a workplace message, why is it important to identify both the main audience and any secondary audiences before deciding what to say and how to say it?
2. Imagine you're meeting with a coworker or supervisor who shares an idea you disagree with. What specific listening and nonverbal communication skills would

help you have a productive, professional conversation without immediately trying to change their mind?

3. A business uses an AI tool to draft customer messages and social media posts. What steps should an employee take before publishing the content to make sure the communication is accurate, transparent, and ethical?
 4. Many employers and colleagues first encounter people through their online presence. What communication habits can help someone build a professional reputation and maintain strong connections with coworkers, customers, or others in their network?
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Activity One: Professional vs. Personal Communication

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices



Higher Order Thinking

Students debate the distinction between professional and personal communication and think critically about whether that distinction is important in the workplace.



Reflecting Student Experiences

Students draw upon their diverse communication experiences from different cultural backgrounds, workplaces, and generational perspectives as evidence during the debate, validating their lived experiences as valuable contributions to understanding professional norms. By sharing examples from their own contexts, students become experts in their own experiences while learning that professional communication varies across contexts and cultures.

Background

In this activity, students will be divided into groups to explore and discuss the boundaries and intersections between professional and personal communication. They will research their assigned perspectives, engage in small group discussions, and then mix groups to share and debate their findings. This activity aims to enhance students' awareness of how communication styles and expectations may differ or overlap in various contexts.

Learning Outcome Alignment

- Describe the overlap between professional and personal communication

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30-45 minutes

1. Conversation starter

What characteristics do you associate with professional communication?

2. Review

You may wish to review the differences between formal and informal communication styles and how there can be an overlap between professional and personal communication within the workplace.

3. Split class into groups of 3-5 students

Assign half of the groups to argue that professional and personal communication should be distinct and the other half to argue that there is significant overlap. Students should research and discuss their assigned position, gather evidence, and prepare arguments and counterarguments.

4. Share findings

- a. Reorganize the students into new groups where each group contains members from both perspectives.
- b. Each student shares their initial group's perspective and key points, followed by an open discussion within the new group. Allow 10-15 minutes for this discussion.

Debrief

With the full class, highlight important insights and discuss the implications of the overlap between professional and personal communication.

Large Class Variation

Implement a fishbowl discussion format where students from both sides debate in turn while others observe and submit questions/comments digitally.

Online Variation

Assign half of the students to argue that professional and personal communication should be distinct and the other half to argue that there is significant overlap.

Students should research and discuss their assigned position, gather evidence, and prepare arguments and counterarguments.

1. Post an initial argument (300-500 words) in the designated discussion thread. Include evidence, examples, and key points supporting your assigned position.
2. Respond to at least two posts from the opposing viewpoint (100-200 words each). Provide counterarguments, questions, or additional insights to challenge the opposing view.

After the discussion, write a reflection (300-500 words) on what you learned, how your perspective may have changed, and the importance of understanding both professional and personal communication. Upload your reflection to the LMS.

Activity Two: Speed Networking

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices



Community Building

This activity encourages students to build relationships with each other to establish peer networks of support by giving them an opportunity to introduce themselves and identify common interests.



Engagement

This activity requires students to interact with each other and practice their communication skills.

Background

This icebreaker activity will help students practice their communication skills while building valuable connections.

Learning Outcome Alignment

- Explain the importance of listening
- Describe verbal communication and its role in business
- Describe nonverbal communication and its role in business

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30 minutes

1. Conversation starter

When you meet someone for the first time, what are you most curious about?

2. Review

You may wish to review elements of active listening and the distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication.

3. Split class into pairs

Students will need to take some notes during this activity. Explain to students that the objectives of this activity are:

- a. Engage in a 3-minute conversation
- b. Find mutual interests
- c. Exchange contact information to establish connections

Optional AI Component: Students could use an AI tool such as ChatGPT or Claude to help craft their personal introduction before the networking activity, focusing on clarity and conciseness.

4. Speed Networking Rounds

- a. Students take seats facing each other.
- b. When the timer starts, each student will introduce themselves, share their interests, and exchange contact information.
- c. Encourage students to focus on finding at least one area of mutual interest.
- d. After the timer signals the end of the round, one person will get up and shift to the right so that each student has a new partner for the next round.
- e. Repeat the process until everyone has had the opportunity to speak with at least 5 partners.

Discussion Prompts

- What part of this activity did you find easy?
- What part of this activity did you find challenging?

Debrief

Students may have different levels of confidence when introducing themselves to someone new. To encourage them to form connections with their new classmates, assign

them the task of following up with at least 3 of their new connections. Let students know that this will be the basis for a future class activity.

You may wish to give students some tips about how to follow up in writing:

- **Personalize Your Message:**
 - Reference specifics from your initial conversation.
 - Use their name and details you remember.
- **Be Prompt:**
 - Follow up within a day
 - Your interaction will be fresh in their minds
- **Be Clear and Concise:**
 - Keep your message short and to the point.
- **Show Appreciation:**
 - Thank them for their time and conversation.
 - Express genuine interest in their insights.
- **Be Professional:**
 - Check for typos and grammatical errors.

Online Variation

1. Create a shared document or platform where students can sign up for time slots to meet one-on-one virtually (e.g., using Zoom, Teams, or a similar tool).
2. Speed Networking Rounds
 - a. Students schedule and participate in 5-minute virtual meetings with 3 different classmates.
 - b. During each meeting, students introduce themselves, discuss mutual interests, and exchange contact information.
 - c. Encourage students to keep notes on the connections made for follow-up.
3. Debrief
 - a. Set up a discussion board or forum thread for students to reflect on their experiences. What did they find easy and challenging about the experience?

- b. Ask them to post about interesting connections made and insights gained from the experience.

To encourage them to form connections with their new classmates, assign them the task of following up with their new connections. Let students know that this will be the basis for a future class activity.

You may wish to give students some tips about how to follow up in writing:

- **Personalize Your Message:**
 - Reference specifics from your initial conversation.
 - Use their name and details you remember.
- **Be Prompt:**
 - Follow up within a day
 - Your interaction will be fresh in their minds
- **Be Clear and Concise:**
 - Keep your message short and to the point.
- **Show Appreciation:**
 - Thank them for their time and conversation.
 - Express genuine interest in their insights.
- **Be Professional:**
 - Check for typos and grammatical errors.

Activity Three: Building and Strengthening Connections

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices



Contextualization

This activity helps students understand the transferability of communication skills by demonstrating how the icebreaker activity in Activity Two utilizes skills important to professional networking.



Scaffolding

This activity builds upon the icebreaker to show students how they can incrementally improve their professional networking skills.

Background

This activity builds upon Activity Two by asking students to follow up outside of class with 3 of the new connections they made in the previous activity.

Learning Outcome Alignment

- Discuss the importance of staying connected with colleagues and other professionals in the digital age
- Discuss the importance of staying connected with customers in the digital age

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30 minutes

1. Conversation starter

When you meet someone new, what about the person or the interaction makes them memorable to you?

2. Review

You may wish to review the importance of professionals staying connected to build relationships.

3. Split class into groups of 3-5 students

- a. Within their groups, students share their follow-up experiences, including:
 - i. How they approached the follow-up communication.
 - ii. The responses they received (or lack thereof).
 - iii. Any interesting developments or outcomes from the follow-up.
- b. Each group selects a spokesperson to summarize their discussion for the larger class.

Discussion Prompts

- **How did you approach the follow-up communication?**
- **Did you receive a response to your follow-ups?**
- **Were there any interesting outcomes as a result of the follow-ups?**

Debrief

- Each group's spokesperson presents a summary of their discussion.
- Facilitate a class-wide discussion on the following points:
 - Strategies that worked well for follow-up communication.
 - Common challenges encountered and how they were addressed.
 - The importance of persistence and professionalism in follow-up interactions.
 - Insights on how effective follow-up can lead to stronger professional relationships.

Online Variation

You have already assigned students the task of following up with their 3 new connections at the end of Activity One.

Create a discussion to reflect upon the follow-up activity. Prompts may include:

- Strategies that worked well for follow-up communication.
- Common challenges encountered and how they were addressed.
- The importance of professionalism in follow-up interactions.
- Insights on how effective follow-up can lead to stronger professional relationships.
- Ask students to submit a short reflection on what they learned from both the initial networking and follow-up activities.

Assignments

[Assignment Package](#)

This document contains a collection of written assignments and recommendations about how to incorporate them into your course. All major assignments include an optional component where students use an artificial intelligence tool as part of their work process.

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