

GUFFEY & LOEWY

# Business Communication

Process & Product



8th edition

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8<sup>th</sup> edition

# Business Communication

Process & Product

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# Business Communication: Process and Product



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The Eighth Edition of ***Business Communication: Process and Product*** prepares you for a career in an increasingly digital and global workplace. My coauthor Dr. Dana Loewy and I have substantially revised our award-winning book to show how the explosive growth of social media networks and mobile technology is changing the workplace.

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- **Integrated coverage of communication technologies.** The Eighth Edition provides you with integrated coverage and applications of the latest digital technologies and mobile devices, emphasizing best practices for texting, instant messaging, blogging, wikis, and social media.
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As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions as you use the No. 1 business communication book in this country and abroad.

Cordially,

**Mary Ellen Guffey and Dana Loewy**



Dana Loewy and Mary Ellen Guffey

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Fred DeCasperis, *Siena College*

Guy Devitt, *Herkimer County Community College*

Linda Di Desidero, *University of Maryland University College*

John Donnellan, *University of Texas at Austin*

J. Yellowless Douglas, *University of Florida*

Bertha Du-Babcock, *City University of Hong Kong*

Dorothy Drayton, *Texas Southern University*

Kay Durden, *University of Tennessee*

Anna Easton, *Indiana University*  
 Lorena B. Edwards, *Belmont University*  
 Donald E. English, *Texas A&M University*  
 Margaret Erthal, *Southern Illinois University*  
 Donna R. Everett, *Morehead State University*  
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 Anne Finestone, *Santa Monica Community College*  
 Peggy B. Fisher, *Ball State University*  
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 Janice Rowan, *Rowan University*  
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 Paula J. Pomeranke, *Illinois State University*  
 Jean Anna Sellers, *Fort Hays State University*  
 Deborah Von Sprecken, *Anoka-Ramsey Community College*  
 Karen Sterkel Powell, *Colorado State University*  
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# About the Authors

## Dr. Mary Ellen Guffey

A dedicated professional, Mary Ellen Guffey has taught business communication and business English topics for over thirty-five years. She received a bachelor's degree, *summa cum laude*, from Bowling Green State University; a master's degree from the University of Illinois, and a doctorate in business and economic education from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She has taught at the University of Illinois, Santa Monica College, and Los Angeles Pierce College.



Now recognized as the world's leading business communication author, Dr. Guffey corresponds with instructors around the globe who are using her books. She is the founding author of the award-winning *Business Communication: Process and Product*, the leading business communication textbook in this country. She also wrote *Business English*, which serves more students than any other book in its field; *Essentials of College English*; and *Essentials of Business Communication*, the leading text/workbook in its market. Dr. Guffey is active professionally, serving on the review boards of the *Business Communication Quarterly* and the *Journal of Business Communication*, publications of the Association for Business Communication. She participates in national meetings, sponsors business communication awards, and is committed to promoting excellence in business communication pedagogy and the development of student writing skills.

## Dr. Dana Loewy

Dana Loewy has been teaching business communication at California State University, Fullerton since 1996. She enjoys introducing undergraduates to business writing and honing the skills of graduate students in managerial communication. Most recently, she has also taught various German courses and is a regular guest lecturer at Fachhochschule Nürtingen, Germany. In addition to completing numerous brand-name consulting assignments, she is a certified business etiquette consultant. Dr. Loewy has collaborated with Dr. Guffey on recent editions of *Business Communication: Process & Product* as well as on *Essentials of Business Communication*.



Dr. Loewy holds a master's degree from Bonn University, Germany, and earned a PhD in English from the University of Southern California. Fluent in several languages, among them German and Czech, her two native languages, Dr. Loewy has authored critical articles in many areas of interest—literary criticism, translation, business communication, and business ethics. Before teaming up with Dr. Guffey, Dr. Loewy published various poetry and prose translations, most notably *The Early Poetry* of Jaroslav Seifert and *On the Waves of TSE*. Active in the Association for Business Communication, Dr. Loewy focuses on creating effective teaching/learning materials for undergraduate and graduate business communication students.



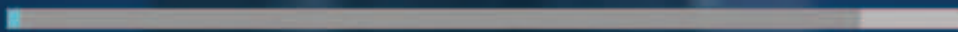
# Unit 1

## Communication Foundations

Chapter 1  
Business  
Communication in  
the Digital Age

Chapter 2  
Professionalism:  
Team, Meeting,  
Listening, Nonverbal,  
and Etiquette Skills

Chapter 3  
Intercultural  
Communication



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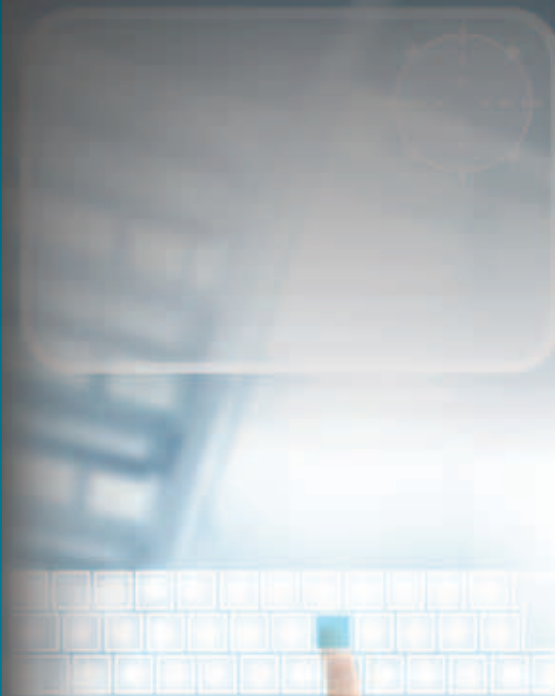


# Business Communication in the Digital Age

## OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- 1 Explain how communication skills fuel career success, and understand why writing skills are vital in a digital workplace embracing social media.
- 2 Identify the tools for success in the hyperconnected 21st-century workplace, and appreciate the importance of critical-thinking skills in the competitive job market of the digital age.
- 3 Describe significant trends in today's dynamic, networked work environment, and recognize that social media and other new communication technologies require excellent communication skills, particularly in an uncertain economy.
- 4 Examine critically the internal and external flow of communication in organizations through formal and informal channels, explain the importance of effective media choices, and understand how to overcome typical barriers to organizational communication.
- 5 Analyze ethics in the workplace, understand the goals of ethical business communicators, recognize and avoid ethical traps, and choose the tools for doing the right thing.



# Intel Blazes the Social Media Trail

Technology giant Intel is known for being on the cutting edge of an industry that epitomizes innovation. Its many products power computers, phones, and even car security systems. However, its sophisticated use of social media has made Intel a leader in a wholly separate sphere: strategic communication with customers.



© AP Images/Ben Margot

From blogs to wikis to social media networks, Intel's social media presence permeates the Internet. Its Facebook presence is especially effective. Ekaterina Walter, a member of Intel's Social Media Center of Excellence team, explains some of the reasons for that success. Wall posts are written to enhance "news feed optimization,"<sup>1</sup> which encourages more viewers to join Intel's Facebook conversation, says Walter. "The higher the engagement with you (which are 'likes' and comments), the more likely it is that your page will be picked up by the

Facebook algorithm and make it to the news feed," she adds.<sup>2</sup>

Posts go beyond sharing information, however. The page contains humorous videos, offers good wishes during the holidays, and thanks "friends" when they compliment an Intel product. Contributors customize every post and stick to a strict editorial calendar.

Whichever social media mode is used, Intel's 100,100 employees in 65 countries must undergo training before participating.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Intel Social Media Guidelines provide the firm's core social media principles, and, not surprisingly, offer writing advice. Authors are urged to compose in the first person so readers are clear about who is responsible for each message. They are reminded that social media is a conversation. "Talk to your readers like you would talk to real people in professional situations . . . avoid overly pedantic language," the guidelines recommend.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, writers must be considerate, cautious not to post in haste, and willing to revise. Content should add value and be "thought-provoking."<sup>5</sup>

Intel demonstrated its leadership when it made its Social Media Guidelines available on the Internet. Doing so at a time when many other firms were banning employees from using social media is just another example of Intel's trailblazing ethos.

You will learn more about Intel and be asked to complete a relevant task at the end of this chapter.



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## Critical Thinking

- **Why is a natural writing style more appropriate for social media than a formal writing style?**
- **Why is reading and revising especially important when using social media?**
- **How are an organization's values reflected in its business practices?**

## Communicating in the Digital World

You may wonder what kind of workplace you will enter when you graduate and which skills you will need to be successful in it. Expect a fast-paced, competitive, and highly connected digital environment. Communication technology provides unmatched mobility and connects individuals anytime and anywhere in the world. Today's communicators interact using multiple electronic devices and access information stored in remote locations, "in the cloud." This mobility and instant access explain why increasing numbers of workers must be available practically around the clock and respond quickly. Intel and other technology-savvy businesses have recognized the power of social media networks and seek to engage their customers and other stakeholders where they meet online. Communication no longer flows one way; rather, electronic media have empowered the public to participate and be heard.

In this increasingly complex, networked digital environment, communication skills matter more than ever.<sup>6</sup> Such skills are particularly significant at a time when jobs are scarce and competition is keen. However, job candidates with exceptional communication skills immediately stand out. In this chapter you will learn about communication skills in the digital era and about the changing world of work. Later you will study tools to help you negotiate ethical minefields and do the right thing. Each section covers the latest information about communicating in business. Each section also provides tips that will help you function effectively and ethically in today's fast-moving, information-driven workplace.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1

Explain how communication skills fuel career success, and understand why writing skills are vital in a digital workplace embracing social media.

## Communication Skills: Your Pass to Success

Over the last decade, employer surveys have consistently shown that strong communication skills are critical to effective job placement, performance, career advancement, and organizational success.<sup>7</sup> In making hiring decisions, employers often rank communication skills among the most desirable competencies.<sup>8</sup>

Interviewers for defense contractor BAE Systems may request a writing sample to “literally see if the candidate can write,” but also to find out whether the applicant can organize and share ideas, explains Curt Gray, senior vice president of human resources and administration. UPS requires its workers to write clear and concise messages and “to investigate, analyze and report their findings in a professional manner,” says Matt Lavery, managing director of corporate talent acquisition.<sup>9</sup> In a Fortune poll, 1,000 executives cited writing, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills along with self-motivation and team skills as their top choices in new-hires.<sup>10</sup>

Writing skills can be your ticket to work—or your ticket out the door, according to a business executive responding to a significant survey. This much-quoted study of 120 American corporations by the National Commission on Writing found that two thirds of salaried employees have some writing responsibility. However, about one third of them do not meet the writing requirements for their positions.<sup>11</sup> “Businesses are crying out—they need to have people who write better,” said Gaston Caperton, executive and College Board president.


Writing has been variously called a “career sifter,” a “threshold skill,” and “the price of admission,”<sup>12</sup> indicating that effective writing skills can be a stepping stone to great job opportunities, or, if poorly developed, may derail a career. Writing is a marker of high-skill, high-wage, professional work, according to Bob Kerrey, university president and chair of the National Commission on Writing. If you can’t express yourself clearly, he says, you limit your opportunities for many positions.<sup>13</sup>

When we discuss communication skills, we generally mean reading, listening, nonverbal, speaking, and writing skills. In addition, workers today must be media savvy and exercise good judgment when posting messages on the Internet and writing e-mails. To be successful, they must guard their online image and protect the reputation of their employers. In this book we focus on the listening, nonverbal, speaking, and writing skills necessary in a digital workplace. Chapters are devoted to each of these skills. Special attention is given to writing skills because they are difficult to develop and increasingly significant in e-communication.

### Writing in the Digital Age

If you are like many young adults, you may think that your daily texts, instant messages, Facebook posts, blog entries, e-mails, and more are not “real writing.” A Pew Internet & American Life study found that teens and young adults consider their frequent e-communication to be very different from the traditional writing they learn in school.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps young people understand that their digital writing is largely casual, but that employers expect more formal, thoughtful, informative, and error-free messages. In any case, the respondents in the study rightly believe that solid writing skills are a necessity in today’s networked digital world.

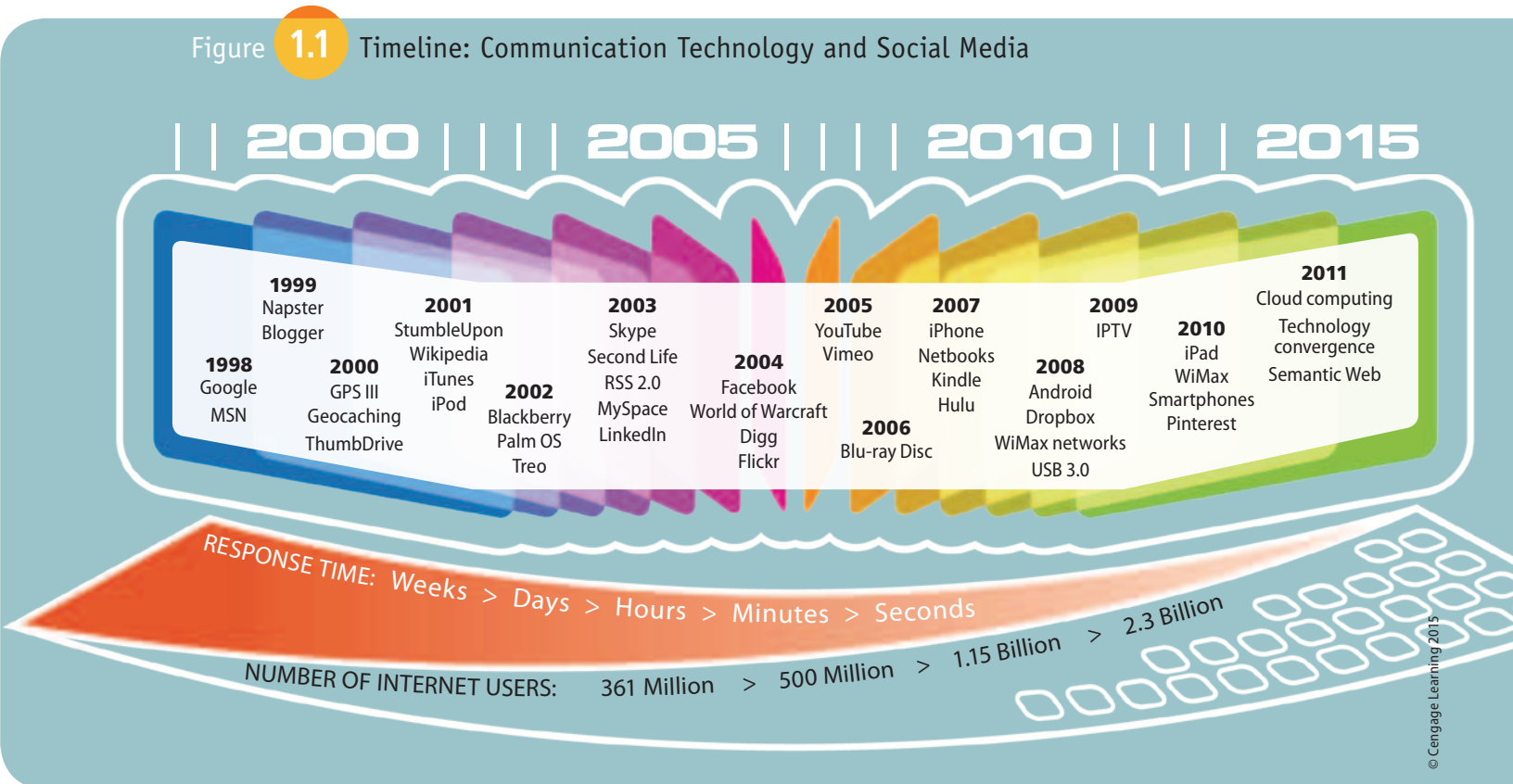
Long gone are the days when business was mostly conducted face-to-face and when administrative assistants corrected spelling and grammar for their bosses. Although interpersonal skills still matter greatly, writing effectively is critical. Ever since the digital revolution swept the workplace, most workers write their own messages. New communication channels appeared, including the Web and e-mail, followed by instant messaging, blogs, and social media networks. Figure 1.1 displays the emergence of new communication technology and the rapid growth of Internet users over the last two decades. So far, the number of Internet users has roughly doubled every five years.



Communication technology connects individuals anytime and anywhere in the world.

**NOTE: Because this is a well-researched textbook, you will find small superscript numbers in the text. These announce information sources. Full citations are located in the Notes section at the end of each chapter. This edition uses a modified American Psychological Association (APA) reference citation format.**

Figure 1.1 Timeline: Communication Technology and Social Media



Writing matters more than ever because the online media require more of it, not less.<sup>15</sup> An important poll by Hart Research Associates supports this view. The participating employers admitted that their expectations of employees have increased because the challenges on the job are more complex than in the past. The executives also said that employees today need a broader range of skills as well as higher levels of knowledge in their fields.<sup>16</sup> “Communicating clearly and effectively has NEVER been more important than it is today. Whether it’s fair or not, life-changing critical judgments about you are being made based solely on your writing ability,” says management consultant Victor Urbach. “Having excellent command of your online digital persona will enable you to quickly surpass those who present themselves weakly in the new competitive arena. Since you probably won’t get a second chance, what kind of digital first impression will you choose to make?”<sup>17</sup> Developing these skills in this course will help you stand out.

## It’s Up to You: Communication Skills Can Be Learned

By enrolling in a business writing class, you have already taken the first step toward improving or polishing your communication skills. The goals of this course and this book include teaching you basic business communication skills, such as how to write an effective e-mail or a clear business letter and how to make a memorable presentation in person or using various digital media. Thriving in the challenging digital work world depends on many factors, some of which you cannot control. However, one factor that you do control is how well you communicate. You are not born with the abilities to read, listen, speak, and write effectively. These skills must be learned. This book and this course may well be the most important in your entire college curriculum because they will equip you with the skills most needed in today’s fast-paced digital workplace.



Job candidates with exceptional communication skills instantly stand out. Communication skills are critical to career success.

## REALITY CHECK: Digital Workplace Survival Skills

"To succeed in today's workplace, young people need more than basic reading and math skills. They need substantial content knowledge and information technology skills; advanced thinking skills, flexibility to adapt to change; and interpersonal skills to succeed in multi-cultural, cross-functional teams."<sup>18</sup>

—J. WILLARD MARRIOTT, JR., Chairman and CEO, Marriott International, Inc.



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### LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2

Identify the tools for success in the hyperconnected 21st-century workplace, and appreciate the importance of critical-thinking skills in the competitive job market of the digital age.

## The Digital Revolution and You: Tools for Success in the 21st-Century Workplace

If you are a young adult, chances are that you check for Facebook posts, smartphone texts, tweets, or e-mails first thing in the morning and repeatedly throughout the day to stay connected with your friends and family. Most likely you write and create digital documents with computers and other Internet-enabled electronic devices in today's networked environment without thinking much about the technology enabling you to do all this. Information technology has changed how we work, play, and communicate in distinct ways. It has never been easier to access and share information via various digital media from a vast network of sources and to distribute it nearly instantly and to widespread audiences.<sup>19</sup> What hasn't changed is that communication skills need time and effort to develop.

To achieve literacy in the digital age means not only using multimedia applications and snazzy late-model gadgets but also thinking critically about new media. It means using technology thoughtfully and in a professional manner to achieve success in such a hyperconnected digital world.

The 21st-century economy depends mainly on information and knowledge. Previously, in the Industrial Age, raw materials and physical labor were the key ingredients in the creation of wealth. Today, however, individuals in the workforce offer their knowledge, not their muscles.

Knowledge workers (a term first coined by management guru Peter Drucker) get paid for their education and their ability to learn.<sup>20</sup> More recently, we are hearing the term *information worker* to describe those who produce and consume information in the workplace.<sup>21</sup> Regardless of the terminology, knowledge and information workers engage in mind work. They must make sense of words, figures, and data. At the same time, the knowledge available in the "digital universe" is more than doubling every year, according to computing pioneer George Dyson.<sup>22</sup>

In this light it may not surprise you that jobs in the information technology sector are likely to jump 24 percent in the next seven years.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, despite a bleak U.S. labor market, hundreds of thousands of jobs in science, technology, engineering, and math remain unfilled.<sup>24</sup> Experts also worry about domestic "talent shortages" in skilled manufacturing.<sup>25</sup> In such a demanding environment, continuous, lifelong learning will make you more competitive and valuable to future employers. An adaptable, highly skilled workforce is well equipped to weather even the deepest recessions and the threat of outsourcing.

### Why Should You Care?

As a knowledge worker in the digital age, you can expect to be generating, processing, and exchanging information. You will need to be able to transmit it effectively across various communication channels and multiple media. You might be called upon to use e-mail, electronic slide presentations, wikis, podcasts, or Facebook and other social media in a



© Marina Zlochinn/Photos.com

It has never been easier to access and share information via various digital media from a vast network of sources and to distribute it instantly to widespread audiences.





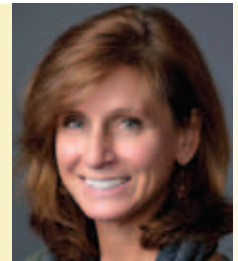
professional setting. With added job responsibilities, you will be expected to make sound decisions and solve complex problems. Interviewers at global giant Siemens probe job applicants for the ability “to quickly distill the key issues and relationships in complex situations,” says Mike Panigel, senior vice president of human resources.<sup>26</sup>

In a study conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management and *The Wall Street Journal*, human resources professionals identified problem solving and critical thinking as top workplace skills today, right behind adaptability and flexibility.<sup>27</sup> You are learning to think, read, and ask questions in a networked world, accessed with computers, tablets, smartphones, e-readers, and more. The avalanche of information that engulfs you daily requires you to evaluate all sources critically because information flows at a great speed, across various media, and in many directions. With potentially a global audience watching, you can choose to project a positive, professional image, or you can publish misinformation and embarrassing falsehoods.<sup>28</sup>

## REALITY CHECK: Wanted! 21st-Century Skills

In the media-driven world of the 21st century, workers must process vast amounts of information fast and judge accurately whether the information is reliable. “It’s important that students know how to manage it, interpret it, validate it, and how to act on it.”<sup>29</sup>

—KAREN BRUETT, higher education expert, former Dell executive



© Courtesy of Karen Bruett

## Thinking Critically in the Digital Age

Whether you work in *m-commerce* (mobile technology businesses), *e-commerce* (Internet-based businesses), or *brick-and-mortar commerce*, nearly three out of four jobs will involve some form of mind work. Jobs that require thinking, brainpower, and decision-making skills are likely to remain plentiful. To be successful in these jobs, you will need to be able to think critically, make decisions, and communicate those decisions.

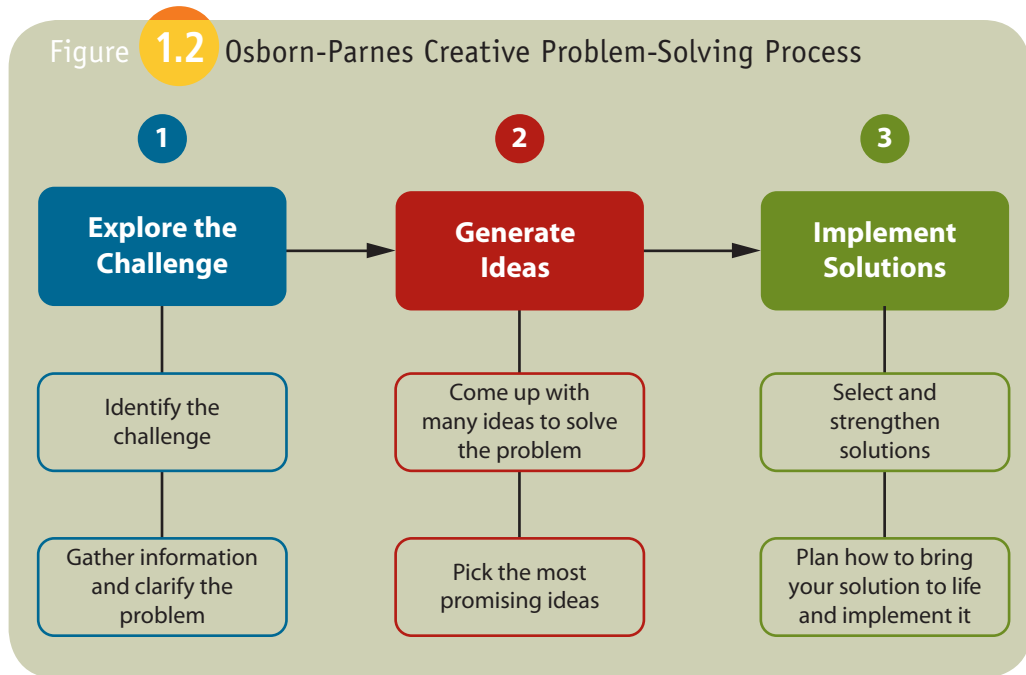
Management and employees work together in such areas as product development, quality control, and customer satisfaction. All workers, from executives to subordinates, need to think creatively and critically. Even in factory production lines, workers are part of the knowledge culture. Toyota’s management philosophy of continuous improvement by engaged and empowered workers is much admired around the world.<sup>30</sup> One of the secrets of Toyota’s success, said Takis Athanasopoulos, former chief executive of the Japanese carmaker’s European operations, “is that the company encourages every worker, no matter how far down the production line, to consider himself a knowledge worker and to think creatively about improving his particular corner of the organization.”<sup>31</sup>

When your boss or team leader says, “What do you think we ought to do?” you want to be able to supply good ideas and demonstrate that you can think critically. This means having opinions that are backed by reasons and evidence. Faced with a problem or an issue, most of us do a lot of worrying before separating the issues or making a decision. Figure 1.2 provides a three-point plan to help you think critically and solve problems competently. As you can probably see, understanding the problem is essential and must come first. Generating and selecting the most feasible ideas is the intermediate step. Finally, the problem-solving model prompts you to refine, justify, and implement the solution. At the end of each chapter in this text, you will find activities and problems that will help you develop and apply your critical-thinking skills.

## Managing Your Career Well

In a dynamic, highly competitive world of work, not even the most talented college graduate can afford to send out résumés, kick back, and wait to be discovered. You will need to be proactive and exercise greater control over your career than college graduates before you did. Like most workers today, you will not find nine-to-five jobs, predictable pay increases, lifetime

Figure 1.2 Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem-Solving Process



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security, and even conventional workplaces.<sup>32</sup> Don't presume that companies will provide you with a clearly defined career path or planned developmental experiences. In the private sector, you can expect to work for multiple employers, moving back and forth between work and education and between work and family responsibilities.<sup>33</sup>

To keep up with evolving technologies and procedures, you can look forward to constant training and lifelong learning. Whether you are currently employed or about to enter today's demanding workplace, you must be willing to continually learn new skills that supplement the strong foundation of basic skills you are acquiring in college.

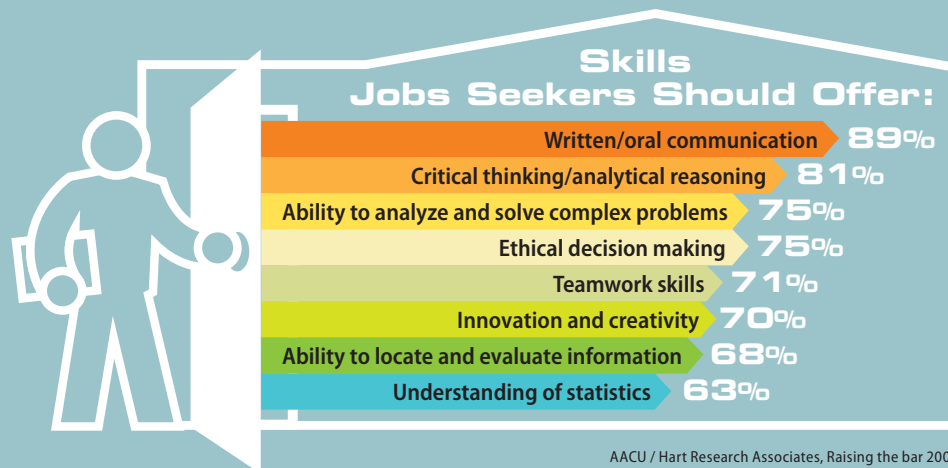
In addition, in the networked professional environment of the digital era, you must manage and guard your reputation—at the office and online. How you present yourself in the virtual world, meaning how well you communicate and protect your “brand,” may very well determine how successful your career will be. Thoughtful blog posts, astute comments on LinkedIn and Facebook, as well as competent e-mails will help you make a positive impression.

## Succeeding in a Volatile, Competitive Job Market

In an unstable economy and a tight job market, you may rightly worry about finding work.<sup>34</sup> In one of its much-noted Job Outlook studies, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) investigated what makes the “perfect” job candidate in a gloomy economy. First, a prospective employee must meet the employer's fundamental criteria, including having the required major, course work, and GPA. By the way, nearly 70 percent of employers in the study reported that they screened candidates by grade point average, with 3.0 (a B average) considered the cutoff point. If a candidate passes these hurdles, then employers look for communication skills, a strong work ethic, the ability to work in a team, and initiative.<sup>35</sup> Similar results from another employer survey are summarized in Figure 1.3.

Considering that employers in the United States spend more than \$3 billion annually on improving writing on the job, your potential competitive advantage becomes clear. Facing about \$950 per employee in training costs, companies desperately seek excellent communicators in a market in which at least a third of the applicants come without the requisite skills.<sup>36</sup> If you are able to communicate effectively about work that is increasingly complex and intellectually demanding, you will be more likely to secure employment even in a tough market. Job candidates needing remediation in basic skills will be last on the list of potential new-hires.

Figure 1.3 Survey Shows Skills Employers Want



## Trends and Challenges Affecting You in the Information Age Workplace

Today's digital workplace is changing profoundly and rapidly. As a businessperson and especially as a business communicator, you will undoubtedly be affected by many trends. Some of those trends include new communication technologies such as social media, expectations of around-the-clock availability, and global competition. Other trends include flattened management hierarchies, team-based projects, a diverse workforce, and the mobile or virtual office. The following overview reveals how communication skills are closely tied to your success in a constantly evolving networked workplace.

### Social Media and Changing Communication Technologies

Although interacting with others on Facebook, YouTube, Skype, or Twitter may seem a daily necessity to you, social media are still relatively new and untried communication channels for some businesses. Other organizations, however, are completely "plugged in" and have created a positive presence with the help of both old and new media. Quite logically, social media networks first attracted industries built on communication and technology, such as traditional media outlets and information technology firms. New communication technologies also quickly took hold among marketers, in public relations, and in advertising. Even so, many businesses relying on traditional media seem to be waiting to figure out how the new media might benefit them<sup>37</sup> to justify the huge investments that are needed.

However, even the most reluctant late adopters of technology eye the explosive growth of social media networks in the last decade with some interest. After all, online communities continue to draw huge numbers of people from all over the world, as Figure 1.4 illustrates. Since its inception in 2004, Facebook alone has ballooned into a massive global force of more than 1 billion users. Figure 1.5, on page 11, shows some of the current statistics, which tend to become obsolete by the time they are printed.

Twitter has demonstrated the power of crowds during political crises in Iran and during the Arab Spring. The more than 145 million users of the microblogging site today clock an average 90 million "tweets" per day.<sup>38</sup> Ordinary citizens can organize protests and boycotts within hours, even minutes. Bad customer-service experiences

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3**  
Describe significant trends in today's dynamic, networked work environment, and recognize that social media and other new communication technologies require excellent communication skills, particularly in an uncertain economy.