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Moreover, the business communication value of sites such as YouTube goes beyond the mere ability to deliver content. The social aspects of these sites—including the ability to vote for, comment on, and share material—encourage enthusiasts to spread the word about the companies and products they endorse.[17] Companies can also encourage UGC submissions on their own websites or through other social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. Burberry, Starbucks, and Belkin are among the companies that generated thousands of responses when they invited customers to submit photos and other media.[18]

CONTENT CURATION SITES

In many fields of business, so much original content is already available that sometimes the biggest value a communicator can offer audiences is guiding them to the best of what's out there, rather than creating new content. Similar to what museum curators do when they decide which pieces in their collection to display, business communicators can find and share valuable material with the audiences through **content curation**.

At its simplest, content curation can involve sharing links to useful articles or videos via blogs or social media accounts. Companies can also set up dedicated websites that publish links to original content in a variety of topic categories. The authors' Business Communication Headline News (bchn.businesscommunicationnetwork.com), for instance, is one of the earliest examples of content curation in the field of business communication. As an alternative, a number of websites offer ready-made content curation solutions. Pinterest and Scoop.it!, for example, make it easy to assemble attractive online magazines or portfolios on specific topics.

Curating content for a target audience can be a great way to add value and stand out as an expert in your field, but content curators need to be aware of two key ethical concerns. First, you must not plagiarize, which is presenting someone else's content as your own. Second, you are promoting yourself as an expert when you curate content, and people will expect you to do a competent job of finding and filtering materials. As with any communication task, make sure you understand the needs of your target audience so that you can provide the best material possible to meet their needs.[19]

> Content curation is the process of collecting and presenting information on a particular topic in a way that makes it convenient for target readers.

COMMUNITY Q&A SITES

Community Q&A sites, on which visitors answer questions posted by other visitors, are a contemporary twist on the early ethos of computer networking, which was people helping each other. (Groups of like-minded people connected online long before the World Wide Web was even created.) Community Q&A sites include dedicated customer support communities such as those hosted on Get Satisfaction and public sites such as Quora and Yahoo! Answers.

Responding to questions on Q&A sites can be a great way to build your personal brand, demonstrate your company's commitment to customer service, and counter misinformation about your company and its products. Keep in mind that when you respond to an individual query on a community Q&A site, you are also "responding in advance" to every person who comes to the site with the same question in the future. In other words, you are writing a type of reference material in addition to corresponding with the original questioner, so keep the long time frame and wider audience in mind.

> Community Q&A sites offer great opportunities for building your personal brand by demonstrating expertise and a helpful attitude.

Email

Email has been an important communication tool for many companies for several decades, and in the beginning it offered a huge advantage in speed and efficiency over the media it replaced (usually printed and faxed messages). Over the years, email began to be used for many communication tasks simply because it was the only widely available digital medium for written messages and millions of users were comfortable with it. However, workgroup messaging and other tools are taking over various tasks for which they are better suited than email is.

4 LEARNING OBJECTIVE Describe the evolving role of email in business communication, and explain how to adapt the three-step writing process to email messages.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATORS INNOVATING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Companies in virtually every industry use social media and continue to experiment with new ways to connect with customers and other stakeholders. From offering helpful tips on using products to helping customers meet each other, these companies show the enormous range of possibilities that new media continue to bring to business communication.

Enterprise Social Networking

The social networking concepts that keep you connected with friends and family are widely used in business today. *Enterprise social networks* are closed digital communities that connect employees within a company (and in some cases, selected external business partners). They often include a variety of communication and collaboration tools as well, including workgroup messaging, online meeting functions, and access to work files and other shared resources.

Cathy Yeulet/123RF

Monkey Business/Fotolia

Tweetups

A powerful capability of online social media is bringing people with similar interests together offline. *Tweetups*, for example, are in-person meetings planned and organized over Twitter.

Value-Added Content via Social Networks

Thousands of companies are on social networking platforms, but blatantly promotional posts are not always welcome by fans and followers. Instead, companies such as Whole Foods use social networks to share information of interest, such as recipes and nutritional advice.

Whole Foods Market
9 September

Adding veggies into your sweets is a wonderful way to get extra nutrition in your diet where you'd least expect it! http://bit.ly/1trmnLC

Courtesy of Whole Foods Market, "Whole Foods Market" is a registered trademark of Whole Foods Market IP, L.P.

Community Building via Social Media

Customer-affiliation groups can be an effective way to build stakeholder support for a company and its products. Indian Motorcycles used this Google+ post to spur interest in its rider groups.

Social Video

As social networking continues to expand, much of the content shared through online communities is shifting from text-dominant messages to video. Social video has become particularly important in consumer communication, but businesses also use it for employee recruiting, technical support, training, community outreach, and other purposes.

Employee Recruiting

Zappos is one of the many companies now using Twitter as a recruiting tool. The company's @InsideZappos account gives potential employees an insider's look at the company's offbeat and upbeat culture.

Indian Motorcycle
Shared publicly · Aug 24, 2014   #Motorcycle

Indian Motorcycle riders throughout history have been meeting to share their passion for riding and the road.

Help continue this tradition with Indian Motorcycle Riders Groups:
http://www.indianmotorcycle.com/en-us/riders-group

+184   → 20

Inside Zappos
@InsideZappos

Want to see what it's really like to work at @Zappos? We are happy to share our fun culture and show you what life #InsideZappos is all about!

Downtown Las Vegas, NV
jobs.zappos.com
Joined May 2008

Free tomorrow 5/21 at 10am PT / 1pm ET? Come join the fun of the #InsideZappos Tweetchat!

It's doggie date night @DTContainerPark tonight! Leash up your furry friend and join the fun from 6pm-9pm. #DTLV

In addition to the widespread availability of better alternatives for many communication purposes, the indiscriminate use of email has lowered its appeal in the eyes of many professionals. In a sense, email is too easy to use—with little effort you can send low-value messages to multiple recipients or trigger long message chains that become impossible to follow as people chime in along the way. And because it is such a general-purpose tool, email gets used for everything from critically important messages to automated updates and confirmations with little or no value. As a consequence, some professionals get inundated with hundreds of email messages a day.

> The overuse and misuse of email has made it less appealing for many professionals.

Email also suffers from an enormous problem with *spam* (unsolicited bulk email) and security risks such as *computer viruses* and *phishing* (fraudulent messages that prompt unwary users to divulge sensitive information or grant access to protected networks). Spam accounts for roughly half of all email and requires great effort to keep it from flooding users' inboxes.[20] Most systems use spam and threat filters, but these filters are never 100 percent accurate and can also reject messages that are legitimate.

> Even with its drawbacks, email is an important communication channel because it is universal; well-suited for private, short to medium-length messages; and not as intrusive as instant messaging systems.

Even with these drawbacks, email still has compelling advantages that will keep it in steady use in many companies. First, email is universal. Anybody with an email address can reach anybody else with an email address, no matter which systems the senders and receivers are on. Second, email is still the best medium for many private, short to medium-length messages, particularly when the exchange is limited to two people. Unlike with microblogs or most messaging systems, for instance, midsize messages are easy to compose and easy to read on email. Third, email's noninstantaneous nature is an advantage when used properly. Email lets senders compose substantial messages in private and on their own schedule, and it lets recipients read those messages at their leisure.

PLANNING EMAIL MESSAGES

> Do your part to stem the flood of email by making sure you don't send unnecessary messages.

The solution to email overload starts in the planning step, by making sure every message has a useful, business-related purpose. Also, be aware that many companies now have formal email policies that specify how employees can use email, including restrictions against using company email service for personal messages, sending confidential information, or sending material that might be deemed objectionable. In addition, many employers now monitor email, either automatically with software programmed to look for sensitive content or manually via security staff actually reading selected email messages. Regardless of formal policies, though, every email user has a responsibility to avoid actions that could cause trouble, from opening virus-infected attachments to sending inappropriate photographs.

Even with fairly short messages, spend a moment or two on the message-planning tasks described in Chapter 3: analyzing the situation, gathering necessary information for your readers, and organizing your message. You'll save time in the long run because you will craft a more effective message on the first attempt. Your readers will get the information they need and won't have to generate follow-up messages asking for clarification or additional information.

WRITING EMAIL MESSAGES

> Business email messages are more formal than the email messages you send to family and friends.

When you approach email writing on the job, recognize that business email is a more formal medium than you are probably accustomed to with personal communication (see Figure 6.3). The expectations of writing quality for business email are higher than for personal email, and the consequences of bad writing or poor judgment can be much more serious. For example, email messages and other digital documents have the same legal weight as printed documents, and they are often used as evidence in lawsuits and criminal investigations.[21]

> The subject line is critical because it often determines whether and when recipients will open a message.

The email subject line might seem like a small detail, but it is actually one of the most important parts of an email message because it helps recipients decide which messages to read and when to read them. To capture your audience's attention, make your subject lines informative and compelling. Go beyond simply describing or classifying your message; use

Burgman includes enough of the original message to remind Williams why she is writing—but she doesn't clutter the screen with the entire original message.

By itemizing the steps she wants Williams to follow, she makes it easy for him to respond and helps ensure that the work will be done correctly.

Her email signature includes alternative contact information, making it easy for the recipient to reach her.
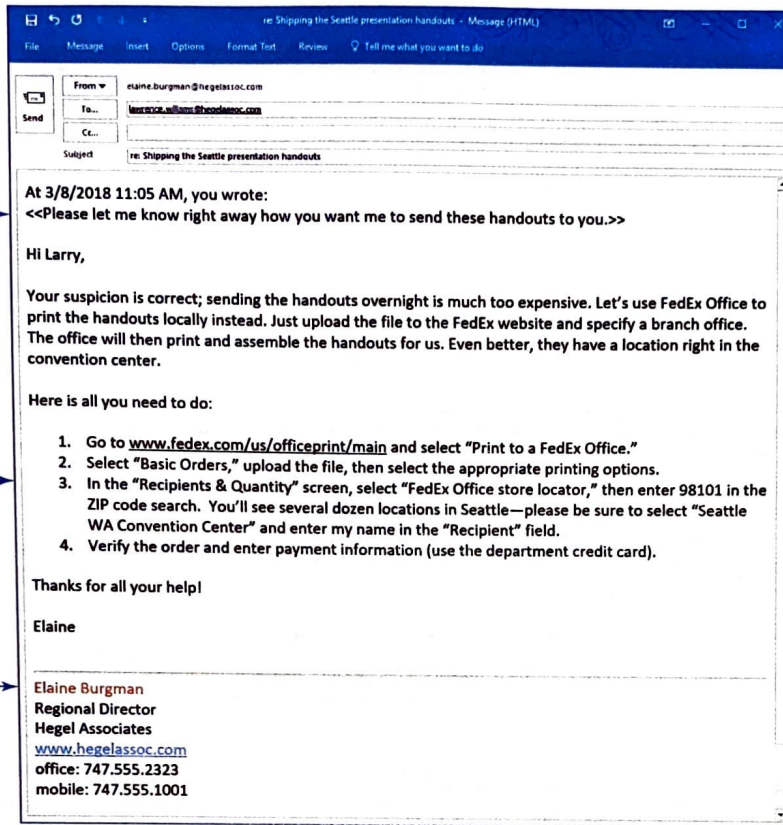
She opens with an informal salutation appropriate for communication between colleagues.

She includes the URL of the website she wants Williams to visit, so all he needs to do is click on or tap the link.

The warm complimentary close expresses her appreciation for his efforts.

At 3/8/2018 11:05 AM, you wrote:
<<Please let me know right away how you want me to send these handouts to you.>>

Hi Larry,

Your suspicion is correct; sending the handouts overnight is much too expensive. Let's use FedEx Office to print the handouts locally instead. Just upload the file to the FedEx website and specify a branch office. The office will then print and assemble the handouts for us. Even better, they have a location right in the convention center.

Here is all you need to do:

1. Go to www.fedex.com/us/officeprint/main and select "Print to a FedEx Office."
2. Select "Basic Orders," upload the file, then select the appropriate printing options.
3. In the "Recipients & Quantity" screen, select "FedEx Office store locator," then enter 98101 in the ZIP code search. You'll see several dozen locations in Seattle—please be sure to select "Seattle WA Convention Center" and enter my name in the "Recipient" field.
4. Verify the order and enter payment information (use the department credit card).

Thanks for all your help!

Elaine

Elaine Burgman
Regional Director
Hegel Associates
www.hegelassoc.com
office: 747.555.2323
mobile: 747.555.1001

Figure 6.3 Email for Business Communication
In this response to an email query from a colleague, Elaine Burgman takes advantage of her email system's features to create an efficient and effective message.
Source: Windows 10, Microsoft Corporation.

the opportunity to build interest with keywords, quotations, directions, or questions.[22] For example, "July sales results" may accurately describe the content of a message, but "July sales results: good news and bad news" is more intriguing. Readers will want to know why some news is good and some is bad.

In addition, many email programs display the first few words or lines of incoming messages, even before the recipient opens them. As noted by the social media public relations expert Steve Rubel, you can "tweetify" the opening lines of your email messages to make them stand out. In other words, choose the first few words carefully to grab your reader's attention.[23] Think of the first sentence as an extension of your subject line.

COMPLETING EMAIL MESSAGES

Particularly for important messages, taking a few moments to revise and proofread might save you hours of headaches and damage control. Also, go for simplicity when it comes to producing your email messages. A clean, easily readable font, in black on a white background, is sufficient for nearly all email messages. Take advantage of your email system's ability to include an **email signature**, a small file that automatically includes such items as your full name, title, company, and contact information at the end of your messages.

When you're ready to distribute your message, pause to verify what you're doing before you send it. Make sure you've included everyone necessary—and no one else. Don't use Reply All when you mean to select Reply. The difference could be embarrassing or even career threatening. Don't include people in the cc (courtesy copy or "carbon copy," historically) or bcc (blind courtesy copy) fields unless you know how these features work. (Everyone who receives the message can see who is on the cc line but not who is on the bcc line.) Also, don't set the message priority to "high" or "urgent" unless your message is truly urgent. And if you intend to include an attachment, be sure that it is indeed attached.

Think twice before hitting Send. A simple mistake in your content or distribution can cause major headaches.

TABLE 6.1 Tips for Effective Email Messages

Tip	Why It's Important
When you request information or action, make it clear what you're asking for, why it's important, and how soon you need it; don't make your reader write back for details.	People will be tempted to ignore your messages if they're not clear about what you want or how soon you want it.
When responding to a request, either paraphrase the request or include enough of the original message to remind the reader what you're replying to.	Some businesspeople get hundreds of email messages a day and may need reminding what your specific response is about.
If possible, avoid sending long, complex messages via email.	Long messages are easier to read as attached reports or web content.
Adjust the level of formality to the message and the audience.	Overly formal messages to colleagues can be perceived as stuffy and distant; overly informal messages to customers or top executives can be perceived as disrespectful.
Activate a signature file, which automatically pastes your contact information into every message you create.	A signature saves you the trouble of retyping vital information and ensures that recipients know how to reach you through other means.
Don't let unread messages pile up in your in-box.	You'll miss important information and create the impression that you're ignoring other people.
Never type in all caps.	ALL CAPS ARE INTERPRETED AS SCREAMING.
Don't overformat your messages with background colors, multicolored type, unusual fonts, and so on.	Such messages can be difficult and annoying to read on screen.
Remember that messages can be forwarded anywhere and saved forever.	Don't let a moment of anger or poor judgment haunt you for the rest of your career.
Use the *return receipt requested* feature only for the most critical messages.	This feature triggers a message back to you whenever someone receives or opens your message; many consider this an invasion of privacy.
Make sure your computer has up-to-date virus protection.	One of the worst breaches of "netiquette" is infecting other computers because you haven't bothered to protect your own system.
Pay attention to grammar, spelling, and capitalization.	Some people don't think email needs formal rules, but careless messages make you look unprofessional and can annoy readers.
Use acronyms sparingly.	Shorthand such as IMHO (in my humble opinion) and LOL (laughing out loud) can be useful in informal correspondence with colleagues, but avoid using them in more formal messages.
Assume that recipients may read your messages on small mobile screens.	Email is more difficult to read on small screens, so don't burden recipients with long, complicated messages.

Table 6.1 offers a number of helpful tips for effective email; for the latest information on using email in business, visit **real-timeupdates.com/bce8** and select Chapter 6.

Messaging

5 LEARNING OBJECTIVE
Describe the advantages and disadvantages of business messaging, and identify guidelines for effective messaging in the workplace.

A variety of digital messaging solutions are now available, from text messaging on mobile devices to private group messaging systems.

In contrast to email, which is a digital alternative to printed memos and letters, messaging is best thought of as a digital alternative to live voice conversation. Messaging technologies include messaging apps on mobile phones, computer-based instant messaging (IM) systems, online chat systems (such as those used by many companies for customer support), and workplace or workgroup messaging systems.

Messaging is a diverse category, and various systems offer a variety of capabilities. They range from semipublic systems such as standard text messaging on mobile phones, in which anyone with your phone number can send you a message, to private systems that are closed to anyone outside of invited members. The popular Slack and other enterprise or workgroup messaging systems are catching on with many businesses because they do a better job of enabling and capturing the communication flows that teams, departments, and other groups need in order to work together successfully. Messaging is also a feature available on many collaboration platforms and social networks and within a number of mobile apps. And messaging isn't strictly limited to human-to-human exchanges. Automated messaging bots can participate in simple conversational exchanges and assist users with various business tasks (see page 181).

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