

Modes of Communication—Getting Through to Others

Communication is probably the most vital component of success in the business community. Simply defined, the communication process involves the exchange of information and meaning between individuals. Research shows that managers spend approximately 60% to 80% of their work time involved in communicating with others.

The process of sending and receiving messages requires strong, effective communication skills. The communication process can be complicated because of the differences in how individuals receive and process information. In your communication encounters, you must decide on the most effective and appropriate techniques for conveying your message.

As a businessperson, you can use many communication strategies and tools. The most common form of business communication is the telephone. Telephone calls play an important role in conveying personal and immediate attention to issues of concern, and they are an opportunity for timely feedback. And with the proliferation of cell phones and virtually worldwide cellular and satellite networks, it is now possible to reach almost anyone anywhere at any time.

Electronic mail (e-mail) has become a critical communication tool in the business world because it is fast, flexible, and inexpensive. Today, it is hard to imagine doing business without e-mail. Though typically considered informal, it is the recognized solution to many communication needs. Following are some examples of when e-mail might be the best mode of communication:

- when a large amount of detail is required in a request
- when requests are informal
- when work schedules are not conducive to telephone contact
- when several co-workers need to see the same information
- when co-workers want others to react to information and participate in decision making

The most formal type of business communication is the letter. Seen as formal because they require a signature and are sent on company letterhead, letters are used to communicate official or formal messages. Letters are often used to convey messages of gratitude or information, and they are typically viewed as the least time-sensitive form of communication.

Other documents, as well as letters, may be sent to others through a facsimile transmission (fax). Although faxing documents is common, you will typically find that faxes are most often used when key documents need to be transmitted, time pressures are extreme, and formality is unimportant. Faxes, though, are more commonly being replaced by e-mails with documents attached to them. High-speed connections along with scanner/copiers and more powerful computers now enable transmission of very large documents via e-mail at resolutions and at speeds not possible by fax.

