Unprofessional		Professional
Uptalk, a singsong speech pattern, making sentences sound like questions; *like* used as a filler; *go* for *said*; slang; poor grammar and profanity.	**Speech habits**	Recognizing that your credibility can be seriously damaged by sounding uneducated, crude, or adolescent.
Sloppy messages with incomplete sentences, misspelled words, exclamation points, IM slang, and mindless chatter. E-mail addresses such as *partyanimal@gmail.com, snugglykitty@icloud.com,* or *hotmama@outlook.com.*	**E-mail**	Messages with subjects, verbs, and punctuation, free from IM abbreviations; messages that are concise and spelled correctly even when brief. E-mail addresses that include a name or a positive, businesslike expression.
Suggestive Twitter handles and user names that point to an immature, unhealthy lifestyle. Posts that reveal political, religious, and other personal leanings.	**Internet, social media**	Real name Twitter handles and user names that don't sound cute or like chatroom nicknames. Posts in good taste, fit for public consumption.
An outgoing message with strident background music, weird sounds, or a joke message.	**Voice mail**	An outgoing message that states your name or phone number and provides instructions for leaving a message.
Soap operas, thunderous music, or a TV football game playing noisily in the background when you answer the phone.	**Telephone presence**	A quiet background when you answer the telephone, especially if you are expecting a prospective employer's call.
Using electronics during business meetings for unrelated purposes or during conversations with fellow employees; raising your voice (cell yell); forcing others to overhear your calls.	**Cell phones, tablets**	Turning off phone and message notification, both audible and vibrate, during meetings; using your smart devices only for meeting-related purposes.
Sending and receiving text messages during meetings, allowing texting to interrupt face-to-face conversations, or texting when driving.	**Texting**	Sending appropriate business text messages only when necessary (perhaps when a cell phone call would disturb others).

Powerful Tools for Communicating Efficiently

The tools of business communication evolve with every new generation of digital technology. Selecting the right tool for each situation can enhance your business communication in many ways. In today's flexible office settings, communication technology helps people keep in touch and stay productive. When co-workers in different cities need to collaborate, they can meet and share ideas without costly travel. Manufacturers use communication technology to keep track of parts, orders, and shipments—and to keep customers well-informed. Those same customers can also communicate with companies in many ways at any time of day or night.

Flexible Workstations

Many professionals have abandoned desktop PCs for laptops they can carry home, on travel, and to meetings. Back at their desks, a docking station transforms the laptop into a full-featured PC with network connection. Workers without permanent desks sometimes share PCs that automatically reconfigure themselves to access each user's e-mail and files.

Wireless Networks

Laptop PCs with wireless and handheld capability let workers stay connected to the network from practically anywhere within the office—any desk, any conference room. This technology offers high-speed Internet access within range of a wireless access point. New smart phones will continue this trend of connectivity on the go.

Redefining the Office

Technology makes it easier for people to retrieve information and stay connected with colleagues, suppliers, and customers—wherever they are. To simplify life for employees and reduce office expenses, many companies now enable their staffs to work from home or from special satellite offices that are closer to residential areas than their main office complexes. For example, Sun Microsystems lets staff members choose to work either at the main office or at remote offices called "drop-in centers." Many Sun facilities have specially equipped "iWork" areas that can quickly reconfigure phone and computer connections to meet individual requirements.

Follow-Me Phone Service

Rather than juggling multiple numbers for home, one or more office locations, and mobile phones, workers can use *follow-me phone service*. Callers dial one number to reach the person anywhere—at the office, a remote site, a home office, or anywhere with cell phone service. The system automatically forwards calls to a list of preprogrammed numbers and transfers unanswered calls to voice mail.
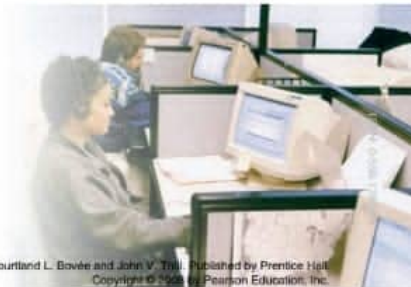
Electronic Presentations

Combining a color projector with a laptop or personal digital assistant (PDA) running the right software lets people give informative business presentations that are enhanced with sound, video animation, and live web links. Having everything in electronic form also makes it easy to customize a presentation or to make last-minute changes.

Communicating in the Office

Intranets

Businesses use Internet technologies to create an intranet, a private computer network that simplifies information sharing within the company. Intranets can handle a variety of communication needs and become "virtual office spaces" for geographically dispersed teams. To ensure the security of company communication and information, intranets are shielded from the public Internet.

Wall Displays

Teams commonly solve problems by brainstorming at a whiteboard. Wall displays take this concept one step further, letting participants transmit words and diagrams to distant colleagues via the corporate intranet. Users can even share the virtual pen to make changes and additions from more than one location.

Web-Based Meetings

Workers can actively participate in web-based meetings by logging on from a desktop PC, laptop, or cell phone. Websites such as WebEx help users integrate voice, text, and video, and let them share applications such as Microsoft PowerPoint and Microsoft Word in a single browser window.

Collaborating

Working in teams is essential in almost every business. Teamwork can become complicated, however, when team members work in different parts of the company, in different time zones, or even for different companies. Technology helps bridge the distance by making it possible to brainstorm, attend virtual meetings, and share files from widely separated locations. Communication technology also helps companies save money on costly business travel without losing most of the benefits of face-to-face collaboration.

Internet Videophone

Person-to-person video calling has long been possible through popular instant messaging programs. Internet videophone services do even more, letting multiple users participate in a videoconference without the expense and complexity of a full-fledged videoconferencing system. Some services are flexible enough to include

Shared Workspace

Online workspaces such as eRoom and Groove make it easy for far-flung team members to access shared files anywhere, any time. Accessible through a browser, the workspace contains a collection of folders and has built-in intelligence to control which team members can read, edit, and save specific files.

competitive advantage for shipping companies such as FedEx and UPS. Hand-worn scanners use wireless links to help warehouse personnel access instant information that lets them process more packages in less time at transit hubs. Currently, 300 package loaders at four UPS hub facilities are testing the new wireless application called UPScan. A pager-size cordless scanner worn on the loader's hand captures data from a package bar code and transmits the data via Bluetooth® wireless technology to a Symbol Technologies wireless terminal worn on the loader's waist.

products and services and deliver them to customers. The ability to easily access and share the latest information improves the flow and timing of supplies, lowers operating costs, and boosts financial performance. Easy information access also helps companies respond to customer needs by providing them timely, accurate information and service and by delivering the right products to them at the right time.

Package Tracking

Senders and receivers often want frequent updates when packages are in transit. Handheld devices such as the FedEx PowerPad enhance customer service by letting delivery personnel instantly upload package data to the FedEx network. The wireless PowerPad also aids drivers by automatically receiving weather advisories.

Communicating About Products and Services

Supply Chain Management

Advanced software applications let suppliers, manufacturers, and retailers share information—even when they have incompatible computer systems. Improved information flow increases report accuracy and helps each company in the supply chain manage stock levels.

Over-the-Shoulder Support

For online shoppers who need instant help, many retail websites make it easy to connect with a live sales rep via phone or instant messaging. The rep can provide quick answers to questions and, with permission, can even control a shopper's browser to help locate particular items.

Help Lines

Some people prefer the personal touch of contact by phone. Moreover, some companies assign preferred customers special ID numbers that let them jump to the front of the calling queue. Many companies are addressing the needs of foreign-language speakers by connecting them with external service providers who offer multilingual support.

Interacting

Maintaining an open dialog with customers is a great way to gain a better understanding of their likes and dislikes. Today's communication technologies make it easier for customers to interact with a company whenever, wherever, and however they wish. A well-coordinated approach to phone, web, and in-store communication helps a company build stronger relationships with its existing customers, which increases the chances of doing more business with each one.

Podcasting

With the portability and convenience of downloadable audio and video recordings, podcasts have quickly become a popular means of delivering everything from college lectures to marketing messages. Podcasts are also used for internal communication as well, replacing conference calls, newsletters, and other traditional communication vehicles.

Corporate Blogs

Web-based journals let companies offer advice, answer questions, and promote the benefits of their products and services in a fast, personal style. Elements of a successful blog include frequent updates and the participation of knowledgeable contributors. Adding a subtle mix of useful commentary and marketing messages helps get customers to visit blogs frequently or sign up for automatic updates through really simple syndication (RSS).

Communicating with Customers

In-Store Kiosks

Staples is among the retailers that let shoppers buy from the web while they're still in the store. Web-connected kiosks were originally used to let shoppers custom-configure their PCs, but the kiosks also give customers access to roughly 8,000 in-store items as well as to the 50,000 products available online.
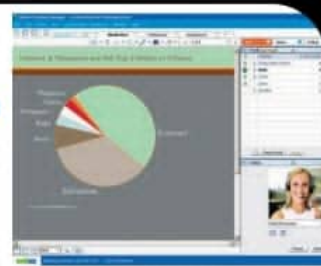
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Shared Workspace

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Communicating Remotely

Videoconferencing and Telepresence

Less costly than travel, videoconferencing provides many of the same benefits as an in-person meeting. Advanced systems include telepresence and robot surrogates, which use computers to "place" participants in the room virtually, letting them see and hear everyone while being seen and heard themselves. Such realistic interaction makes meetings more productive.

Warehouse RFID

In an effort to reduce the costs and delays associated with manual inventory reports, Wal-Mart requires its top suppliers to put radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags on all their shipping cases and pallets. These tags automatically provide information that was previously collected by hand via barcode scanners.

Extranet

Extranets are secure, private computer networks that use Internet technology to share business information with suppliers, vendors, partners, and customers. Think of an extranet as an extension of the company intranet that is available to people outside the organization by invitation only.

Wireless Warehouse

Communication technology is a key source of competitive advantage for shipping companies such as FedEx and UPS. Hand-worn scanners use wireless links to help warehouse personnel access instant information that lets them process more packages in less time at transit hubs. Currently, 300 package loaders at four UPS hub facilities are testing the new wireless application called UPScan. A pager-size cordless scanner worn on the loader's hand captures data from a package bar code and transmits the data via Bluetooth® wireless technology to a Symbol Technologies wireless terminal worn on the loader's wrist,

Sharing the Latest Information

Companies use a variety of communication technologies to create products and services and deliver them to customers. The ability to easily access and share the latest information improves the flow and timing of supplies, lowers operating costs, and boosts financial performance. Easy information access also helps companies respond to customer needs by providing them timely, accurate information and service and by delivering the right products to them at the right time.

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POWERFUL TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

The tools of business communication evolve with every advance in digital technology. The 20 technologies highlighted on the next four pages help businesses redefine the office, collaborate and share information, connect with stakeholders, and build communities of people with shared interests and needs. For more examples of business uses of social media tools in particular, see pages 144–145 in Chapter 6.

REDEFINING THE OFFICE

Thanks to advances in mobile and distributed communication, the "office" is no longer what it used to be. Technology lets today's professionals work on the move while staying in close contact with colleagues, customers, and suppliers. These technologies are also redefining the very nature of some companies, as they replace traditional hierarchies with highly adaptable, virtual networks.

Web-Based Meetings

Andrey Popov/Shutterstock

Web-based meetings allow team members from all over the world to interact in real time. Meetings can also be recorded for later playback and review. Various systems support instant messaging, video, collaborative editing tools, and more.

Videoconferencing and Telepresence

Ocoskun/Shutterstock

Videoconferencing provides many of the benefits of in-person meetings at a fraction of the cost. Advanced systems feature *telepresence,* in which the video images of meeting participants are life-sized and extremely realistic.
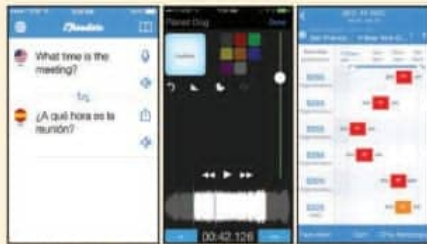
Shared Online Workspaces

Courtesy of Conceptboard

Online workspaces help teams work productively, even if they are on the move or spread out around the world. In addition to providing controlled access to shared files and other digital resources, various systems include project management functions, real-time document editing, group messaging, and other collaboration tools.

Voice Technologies

Speech recognition (converting human speech to computer commands) and *speech synthesis* (converting computer commands to human speech) can enhance communication in many ways, including simplifying mobile computing, assisting workers who are unwilling or unable to use keyboards, and allowing "one-sided" conversations with information systems. *Speech analytics software* can evaluate conversations to improve customer service and other interactions. *Mobile VoIP* lets people make voice calls on WiFi networks to save connection and roaming charges.

Fancy Collection/Superstock

Courtesy of Sonico GmbH, www.itranslate.com?; Courtesy of bossjock studio. www.bossjockstudio.com; Courtesy of Hipmunk, http://www.hipmunk.com

Mobile Business Apps

As the range of business software applications on smartphones and tablet computers continues to expand, almost anything that can be accomplished on a regular computer can be done on a mobile device (although not always as efficiently or with the same feature sets).
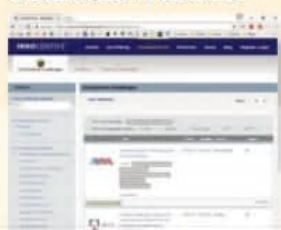
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Workgroup Messaging

Courtesy of Slack Technologies, Inc. (Headshots: Flashon Studio/T12/RF; Charles Knox/Shutterstock; Alexandre Zveiger/Shutterstock)

With workgroup messaging systems, teams can set up a variety of channels to manage communication on specific topics, and individuals can configure alerts to make sure they get the messages they need without being flooded by messages they don't. All communication is automatically archived and available to search, so vital conversational threads and other resources are easy to find.

COLLABORATING AND SHARING INFORMATION

The need to work with and share information quickly and easily is a constant in business. A wide variety of tools have been developed to facilitate collaboration and sharing, from general purpose systems such as instant messaging to more specialized capabilities such as data visualization.

Wikis promote collaboration by simplifying the process of creating and editing online content. Anyone with access (some wikis are private; some are public) can add and modify pages as new information becomes available.

Wikis

"The Motley Fool" from The Motley Fool website. Copyright © by Erik STodnik. Used by permission of Erik STodnik.

Crowdsourcing and Collaboration Platforms

Data Visualization

Tableau Software, Inc.

to find.

Crowdsourcing and Collaboration Platforms

Crowdsourcing, inviting input from groups of people inside or outside the organization, can give companies access to a much wider range of ideas, solutions to problems, and insights into market trends.

Data Visualization

Data visualization is a powerful tool for presenting and exploring sets of data that are very large, complex, or dynamic. As more companies rely on "big data" to identify and capitalize on market opportunities, the ability to extract insights from these large data sets can be an important competitive advantage.

Internet of Things

The *Internet of Things (IoT)* refers to the billions of smart, autonomous devices that are now connected via the Internet. These "things" are sensors, controllers, and other devices that send, receive, or process data. This machine-based communication can support or even replace conventional methods of business communication.

CONNECTING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Electronic media and social media in particular have redefined the relationships businesses have with internal and external stakeholders. Any groups affected by a company's decisions now have tools to give voice to their opinions and needs, and companies have many more conversational threads that need to be monitored and managed.

Applicant Tracking Systems

Applicant tracking systems now play a huge role in employment-related communications. At virtually all large companies and many medium and small companies, your resume and application information will be entered into one of these systems. Recruiters use various tools to identify promising candidates and manage the interview and selection process. After hiring, some firms use *talent management systems* to track employee development through workers' entire careers at the company.

Blogging

Blogs let companies connect with customers and other audiences in a fast and informal way. Commenting features let readers participate in the conversation, too.

Content Curation

Content curation, selecting videos and other items of interest to followers of a website or blog, has become one of the most popular ways to connect with stakeholders. Pinterest and Scoop.it are among the leading technologies in this area.

Podcasting

With the portability and convenience of downloadable audio and video recordings, podcasts have become a popular means of delivering everything from college lectures to marketing messages. Podcasts are also used for internal communication, replacing conference calls, newsletters, and other media.

Online Video

The combination of low-cost digital video cameras and video-sharing websites such as YouTube has spurred a revolution in business video. Product demonstrations, company overviews, promotional presentations, and training seminars are among the most popular applications of business video. *Branded channels* allow companies to present their videos as an integrated collection in a customized user interface.

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User-Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC) is a great way to foster a sense of community among customers and enthusiasts. UGC can be hosted permanently on websites such as YouTube or Flickr, or generated as part of a one-time program, such as this Twitter campaign by the yogurt company Chobani.

Microblogging

Twitter and other microblogging services are a great way to share ideas, solicit feedback, monitor market trends, and announce special deals and events.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

One of the most significant benefits of new communication technologies is the ease with which companies can foster a sense of community among customers, enthusiasts, and other groups. In some instances, the company establishes and manages the online community, while in others the community is driven by product champions or other enthusiasts.

Gaming Technologies

Adding game-playing elements to business processes (such as competitions for sales or service teams) can increase engagement from employees and customers alike.

Social Networking

Facebook and other social networks have become important business communication tools for interacting with customers and other stakeholders.

Community Q&A Sites

Many companies now rely heavily on communities of customers to help each other with product questions and other routine matters.