

Lesson:-13

COMMUNICATION

Research indicates that poor communication is probably the most frequently cited source of interpersonal conflict.² Because individuals spend nearly 70 percent of their waking hours communicating—writing, reading, speaking, listening—it seems reasonable to conclude that one of the most inhibiting forces to successful group performance is a lack of effective communication. No group can exist without communication: the transference of meaning among its members. It is only through transmitting meaning from one person to another that information and ideas can be conveyed. Communication, however, is more than merely imparting meaning. It must also be understood. In a group in which one member speaks only German and the others do not know German, the individual speaking German will not be fully understood. Therefore, **communication** must include both the *transference and the understanding of meaning*.

An idea, no matter how great, is useless until it is transmitted and understood by others. Perfect communication, if there were such a thing, would exist when a thought or an idea was transmitted so that the mental picture perceived by the receiver was exactly the same as that envisioned by the sender. Although elementary in theory, perfect communication is never achieved in practice, for reasons we shall expand on later in the chapter.

Before making too many generalizations concerning communication and problems in communicating effectively, we need to review briefly the functions that communication performs and describe the communication process.

FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication serves four major functions within a group or organization: control, motivation, emotional expression, and information.³

Communication acts to *control* member behavior in several ways. Organizations have authority hierarchies and formal guidelines that employees are required to follow. When employees, for instance, are required to first communicate any job-related grievance to their immediate boss, to follow their job description, or to comply with company policies, communication is performing a control function. But informal communication also controls behavior. When work groups tease or harass a member who produces too much (and makes the rest of the group look bad), they are informally communicating with, and controlling, the member's behavior.

Communication fosters *motivation* by clarifying to employees what is to be done, how well they are doing, and what can be done to improve performance if it's subpar. We saw this operating in our review of goal-setting and reinforcement theories in Chapter 6. The formation of specific goals, feedback on progress toward the goals, and reinforcement of desired behavior all stimulate motivation and require communication.

For many employees, their work group is a primary source for social interaction. The communication that takes place within the group is a fundamental mechanism by which

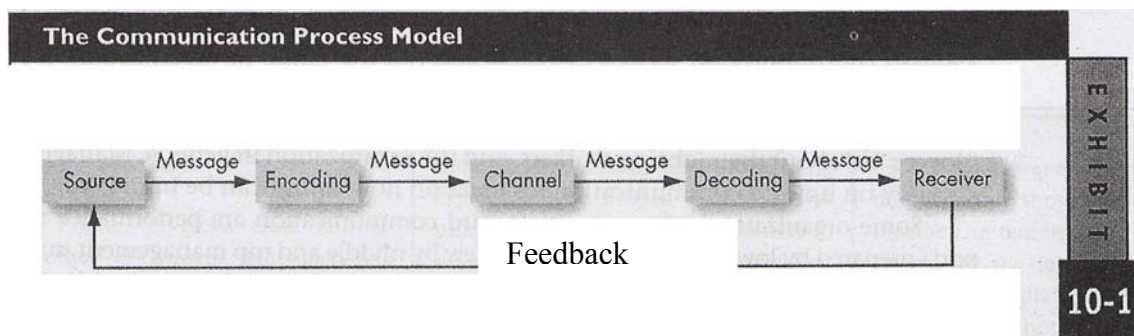
members show their frustrations and feelings of satisfaction. Communication, therefore, provides a release for the *emotional expression* of feelings and for fulfillment of social needs.

The final function that communication performs relates to its role in facilitating decision making. It provides the *information* that individuals and groups need to make decisions by transmitting the data to identify and evaluate alternative choices.

No one of these four functions should be seen as being more important than the others. For groups to perform effectively, they need to maintain some form of control over members, stimulate members to perform, provide a means for emotional expression, and make decision choices. You can assume that almost every communication interaction that takes place in a group or organization performs one or more of these four functions.

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Before communication can take place, a purpose, expressed as a message to be conveyed, is needed. It passes between a source (the sender) and a receiver. The message is encoded (converted to a symbolic form) and passed by way of some medium



(Channel) to the receiver, who retranslates (decodes) the message initiated by the sender. The result is a transference of meaning from one person to another.⁴

Exhibit 10-1 depicts this communication process: This model is made up of seven parts: (1) the communication source, (2) encoding, (3) the message, (4) the channel; (5) decoding, (6) the receiver, and (7) feedback.

The *source* initiates a message by encoding a thought. The *message* is the actual physical product from the source *encoding*. When we speak, the speech is the message. When we write; the writing is the message. When we gesture, the movements of our arms and the expressions on *surfaces* are the message. The *channel* is the mediate through which the message travels. It is selected by the source, who must determine whether to use a formal or informal channel. Formal channels are established by the organization and transmit messages that are related to the professional activities of members. They traditionally follow the authority chain within the organization. Other forms of messages, such as personal or social, follow the informal channels in the organization. The *receiver* is the object to whom the message is directed. But before the message can be received, the symbols in it must be translated into a form that can be understood by the receiver. This step is the *decoding* of the message. The timeline in the communication

process is a feedback loop. *Feedback* is the check on how successful we have been in transferring our messages as originally intended. It determines whether understanding has been achieved.

DIRECTION OF COMMUNICATION

Communication can flow vertically *or* laterally: The vertical dimension can be further divided into downward and upward directions; 5

Downward

Communication that flows from one level of a group or organization to a lower level is a downward communication. When we think of managers communizing with, employees, the downward pattern is the one we are usually thinking of. It's used by group leaders and managers to assign goals, provide job instructions, inform employees of policies and procedures, point out problems that need attention, and offer feedback about performance. But downward communication doesn't have to be oral or face-to-face contact. When management sends letters to employees' homes to advise them of the organization's new sick leave policy, it's using downward communication. So is an e-mail from a team leader to the members of her team, reminding them of an upcoming deadline.

Upward.

Upward communication flows to a higher level in the group or organization. It's used to provide feedback to higher-ups, inform them of progress toward goals, and relay current problems. Upward communication keeps managers aware of how employees feel about their jobs, coworkers, and the organization in general. Managers also rely on upward communication for ideas on how things can be improved.

Some organizational examples of upward communication are performance reports prepared by lower management for review by middle and top management, suggestion boxes, employee attitude surveys, grievance procedures, superior-subordinate discussions, and informal "gripe" sessions in which employees have the opportunity.

When communication takes place among members of the same work group, among members of work groups at the same level, among managers at the same level, or among any horizontally equivalent personnel, we describe it as lateral communications.

Why would there be a need for horizontal communications if a group or organization's vertical communications are effective? The answer is that horizontal communications are often necessary to save time and facilitate coordination. In some cases, these lateral relationships are formally sanctioned. More often, they are informally created to short-circuit the vertical hierarchy and expedite action. So lateral communications can, from management's viewpoint, be good or bad. Since strict adherence to the formal vertical structure for all communications can impede the efficient and accurate transfer of information, lateral communications can be beneficial. In such cases, they occur with the knowledge and support of superiors. But they can create dysfunctional conflicts when the formal vertical channels are breached, when members go above or around their superiors to get things done, or when bosses find out that actions have been taken or decisions made without their knowledge.

- to identify and discuss problems with their boss or representatives of higher management. For example, FedEx prides itself on its computerized upward communication program. All its employees annually complete climate surveys and reviews of management. This program was cited as a key human resources strength by the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality wanted examiners when FedEx won the honor.

Lateral

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

How do group members transfer meaning between and among each other? There are three basic methods. People essentially rely on oral, written, and nonverbal communication.

Oral Communication

The chief means of conveying messages is oral communication. Speeches, formal one-on-one and group discussions, and the informal rumor mill or grapevine are popular forms of oral communication.

The advantages of oral communication are speed and feedback. A verbal message can be conveyed and a response received in a minimal amount of time. If the receiver is unsure of the message, rapid feedback allows for early detection by the sender and, hence, allows for early correction.

The major disadvantage of oral communication surfaces in organizations or whenever the message has to be passed through a number of people.

DB'in the News

<p>What'd He Say?</p> <p>Larry Kinder, the global chief information officer of Cendant, remembers well the confusion he caused when he addressed some of Cendant's 25 business unit leaders recently to talk about capital expenditures for technology.</p> <p>"I mentioned that we would be opening up Cendant's technical architecture to wireless platforms," says Kinder. The room fell silent. Architecture? Wireless platforms? Instead of asking questions to gain clarity, the business leaders incorrectly interpreted "architecture" to mean "infrastructure," something completely different in technology vernacular. "They</p>	<p>thought I was talking about something expensive," says Kinder. But Kinder was using the word "architecture" to refer to developing an overall strategy and design that didn't involve big expenditures on new servers and software. His plan was to actually <i>lower</i> the cost of running the company's network.</p> <p>Misunderstandings such as this are one reason why 30 percent of technology projects begun by companies in the U.S. are canceled before completion, at a cost to the American economy of more than \$75 billion a year.</p> <p>While jargon has always been a problem in organizations, the rise of computer- and network-related technology has un-</p>	<p>leashed a tidal wave of technobabble that often confuses those who don't live and breathe the terminology. What, for instance, do the following terms mean: asymmetric digital subscriber line, dark fiber, dynamic host configuration protocol, enterprise information portal, ERP, M-commerce, replatforming systems, simple object access protocol, or zettabyte? Most chief information officers and technology executives understand these terms. But for others, it can be overwhelming. How, for instance, can a chief executive decide whether to invest in a "routing-switch platform that has an MPLS-enabled ATM core switch" if he or she doesn't understand those terms?</p>
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Source: N. Hutheesing, "It's All Geek to Me," *Forbes*, September 10, 2001, p. 24.

The more people a message must pass through, the greater the potential distortion. If you ever played the game "telephone" at a party, you know the problem. Each person interprets the message in his or her own way. The message's content, when it reaches its destination, is often very different from that of the original. In an organization, where decisions and other communications are verbally passed up and down the authority hierarchy, there are considerable opportunities for messages to become distorted.

Written Communication

Written communications include memos, letters, electronic mail, fax transmissions, organizational periodicals, notices placed on bulletin boards, or any other device that is transmitted via written words or symbols.

Why would a sender choose to use written communications? They're tangible and verifiable. Typically, both the sender and receiver have a record of the communication. The message can be stored for an indefinite period. If there are questions concerning the content of the message, it is physically available for later reference. This feature is particularly important for complex and lengthy communications. The marketing plan for a new product, for instance, is likely to contain a number of tasks spread out over several months. By putting it in writing, those who have to initiate the plan can readily refer to it over the life of the plan. A final benefit of written communication comes from the process itself. You're usually more careful with the written word than the oral word. You're forced to think more thoroughly about what you want to convey in a written message than in a spoken one. Thus, written communications are more likely to be well thought out, logical, and clear. Of course, written messages have their drawbacks. They're time consuming. You could convey far more information to a college instructor in a one-hour oral exam than in a one-hour written exam. In fact, you could probably say anything in 10 to 15 minutes that it would take you an hour to write. So, although writing may be more precise, it also consumes a great deal of time. The other major disadvantage is feedback, or lack of it. Oral communication allows the receiver to respond rapidly to what he thinks he hears. Written communication, however, does not have a built-in feedback mechanism. The result is that the mailing of a memo has no assurance it has been received, and, if received, there is no guarantee the recipient will interpret it as the sender intended. The litterbin is also relevant in oral communications, except it's easy in such cases merely to ask the receiver to summarize what you've said. An accurate summary presents feedback evidence that the message has been received and understood.

Nonverbal Communication

"Every time we verbally give a message to someone, we also impart a nonverbal message. In some instances, the nonverbal component may stand alone. For example, in a singles bar, a glance, a stare, a smile, a frown, and a provocative body movement all convey meaning. As such, no discussion of communication would be complete without consideration of *nonverbal communication-which* includes body movements, the intonations or emphasis we give to words, facial expressions, and the physical distance between the sender and receiver.

. It can be argued that every *body movement* has a meaning and no movement is accidental. For example, through body language we say, "Help me, I'm lonely"; "Take me, I'm available";

"Leave me alone, I'm depressed." And rarely do we send our messages conically. We act out our state of being with nonverbal body language. We lift one eyebrow for disbelief. We rub our noses for puzzlement. We clasp our arms to isolate ourselves or to protect ourselves. We shrug our shoulders for indifference, wink one eye for intimacy, tap our fingers for impatience, slap our forehead for forgetfulness.⁶

The two most important messages that body language conveys are. (1) the extent to which an individual likes another and is interested in his or her views and (2) the relative perceived status between a sender and receiver. ⁷ For instance, we're more likely to position ourselves closer to people we like and touch them more often. Similarly, if you feel that you're higher status than another, you're more likely to display body movements-such as crossed legs or a slouched seating position that reflect a casual and relaxed manner.

Body language adds to, and often complicates, verbal communication. A body position or movement does not by itself have a precise, or universal meaning, but when it is linked with spoken language, it gives fuller meaning to a sender's message.

If you read the verbatim minutes of a meeting, you wouldn't grasp the impact of what was said in the same way you would if you had been there or saw the meeting on video. Why? There is no record of nonverbal communication. The emphasis given to words or phrases is missing. Exhibit 10-2 illustrates how *intonations* can change the meaning of a message.

Facial expressions also convey meaning. A snarling face says something different from a smile. Facial expressions, along with intonations, can show arrogance, aggressiveness, fear, shyness, and other characteristics that would never be communicated if you read a transcript of what had been said.

The way individuals space themselves in terms of *physical distance* also has meaning. What is considered proper spacing is largely dependent on cultural norms. For example, what is considered a businesslike distance in some European countries would be viewed as intimate in many parts of North America. If someone stands closer to you than is considered appropriate, it may indicate aggressiveness.

Intonations: It's the Way You Say It!

Change your tone and you change your meaning:

Placement of the emphasis

What it means

Why don't I take **you** to dinner tonight?
Why don't I take **I** to dinner tonight?
Why don't I take **you** to dinner tonight?
Why don't I take you to dinner tonight?
Why don't I take **take** you to dinner tonight?
Why don't I take you to **dinner** tonight?
Why don't I take you to dinner **tonight**?

I was going to take someone else.
Instead of the guy you were going with.
I'm trying to find a reason why I shouldn't take you.
Do you have a problem with me?
Instead of going on your own.
Instead of lunch tomorrow.
Not tomorrow night.

Source: Based on M. Kiely: "When 'No' Means 'Yes' in *Marketing*, October 1993, pp. 7-9. Reproduced in A. Huczynski and D. Buchanan, *Organizational Behaviour*, 4th ed. (Essex, England: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 194.

siveness or sexual interest; if farther away than usual, it may mean disinterest or displeasure with what is being said.

It's important for the receiver to be alert to these nonverbal aspects of communication. You should look for nonverbal cues as well as listen to the literal meaning of a sender's words. You should particularly be aware of contradictions between the messages. Your boss may say she is free to talk to you about a pressing budget problem, but you may see nonverbal signals suggesting that this is *not* the time to discuss the subject. Regardless of what is being said, an individual who frequently glances at her wristwatch is giving the message that she would prefer to terminate the conversation. We misinform others when we express one message verbally, such as trust, but nonverbally communicate a contradictory message that reads, "I don't have confidence in you."

OR SCIENCE ?

MYTH

"It's Not What You Say, It's What You Do"

This statement is mostly true. Actions DO speak louder than words.⁸ When faced with inconsistencies between words and actions, people tend to give greater credence to actions. It's behavior that counts. The implications of this is that managers and leaders are role models. Employees will imitate their behaviors and attitudes. They will, for example, watch what their boss does and then imitate or adapt what they do. This conclusion doesn't mean that words fall on deaf ears. Words can influence others.⁹ But when words and actions diverge, people focus most on what they see in terms of behavior.

There is an obvious exception to the previous conclusion. An increasing number of leaders (and

their associates) have developed the skill of shaping words and putting the proper "spin" on situations so that others focus on the leader's words rather than the behavior. Successful politicians seem particularly adept at this skill. Why people believe these spins when faced with conflicting behavioral evidence is not clear. Do we want to believe that our leaders would not lie to us? Do we want to believe what politicians say, especially when we hold them in high regard? Do we give high-status people, for whom we've previously given our vote, the benefit of the doubt when confronted with their negative behavior? Additional research is necessary to clarify these questions.

In this section we move from interpersonal communication to organizational communication. Our focus here will be on formal networks, the grapevine, and computer-aided mechanisms used by organizations to facilitate communication.

Formal Small-Group Networks

Formal organizational networks can be very complicated. They can, for instance, include hundreds of people and a half-dozen or more hierarchical levels. To simplify our discussion, we've condensed these networks into three common small groups of five people each (see Exhibit 10-3). These three networks are the chain, wheel, and all-channel. Although these three networks have been extremely simplified, they do allow us to describe the unique qualities of each.

The *chain* rigidly follows the formal chain of command. This network approximates the communication channels you might find in a rigid three-level organization. The *wheel* relies on a central figure to act as the conduit for all the group's communication. It

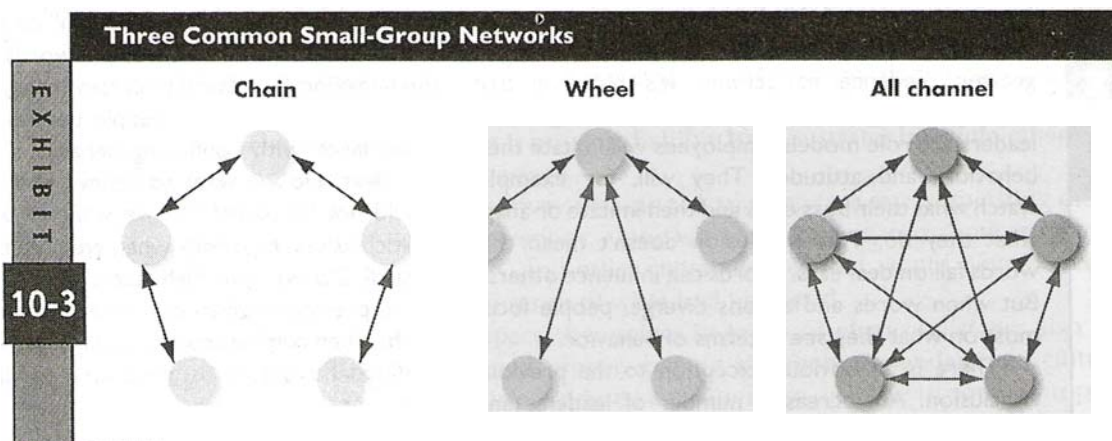
simulates the communication network you would find on a team with a strong leader. The *all-channel* network permits all group members to actively communicate with each other. The all-channel network is most often characterized in practice by self-managed teams, in which all group members are free to contribute and no one person takes on a leadership role.

As Exhibit 10-4 demonstrates, the effectiveness of each network depends on the dependent variable you're concerned about. For instance, the structure of the wheel facilitates the emergence of a leader, the all-channel network is best if you are concerned with having high member satisfaction, and the chain is best if accuracy is most important. Exhibit 10-4 leads us to the conclusion that no single network will be best for all occasions.

The Grapevine

The formal system is not the only communication network in a group or organization. There is also an informal one, which is called the grapevine.¹⁰ And although the grapevine may be informal, this doesn't mean it's not an important source of information. For instance, a survey found that 75 percent of employees hear about matters first through rumors on the grapevine.

The grapevine has three main characteristics,¹² First, it is not controlled by management. Second, it is perceived by most employees as being more believable



Small-Group Networks and Effectiveness Criteria

Criteria	Networks		
	Chain	Wheel	All Channel
Speed	Moderate	Fast	Fast
Accuracy	High	High	Moderate
Emergence of a leader	Moderate	High	None
Member satisfaction	Moderate	Low	High

EXHIBIT

10-4

and reliable than formal communiqués issued by top management. And third, it is largely used to serve the self-interests of the people within it.

One of the most famous studies of the grapevine investigated the communication pattern among 67 managerial personnel in a small manufacturing firm.¹³ The basic approach used was to learn from each communication recipient how he or she first received a given-piece of information and then trace it back to its source. It was found that, while the grapevine was an important source of information, only 10 percent of the executives acted as liaison individuals, that is, passed the information on to more than one other person. For example, when one executive decided to resign to enter the insurance business, 81 percent of the executives knew about it, but only 11 percent transmitted this information to others.

Two other conclusions from this study are also worth noting. Information on events of general interest tended to flow between the major functional groups (production, sales) rather than within them. Also, no evidence surfaced to suggest that anyone group consistently acted as liaisons; rather, different types of information passed through different liaison persons.

An attempt to replicate this study among employees in a small state government office also found that only 10 percent act as liaison individuals.¹⁴ This finding is interesting, because the replication contained a wider spectrum of employees, including operative as well as managerial personnel. But the flow of information in the government office took place within, rather than between, functional groups. It was proposed that this discrepancy might be due to comparing an executive-only sample against one that also included operative workers. Managers, for example, might feel greater pressure to stay informed and thus cultivate others outside their immediate functional group. Also, in contrast to the findings of the original study; the replication found that a consistent group of individuals acted as liaisons by transmitting information in the government office.

Is the information that flows along the grapevine accurate? The evidence indicates that about 75 percent of what is carried is accurate. IS But what conditions foster an active grapevine? What gets the rumor mill rolling?

Suggestions for Reducing the Negative Consequences of Rumors

EXHIBIT

10-5

1. Announce timetables for making important decisions.
2. Explain decisions and behaviors that may appear inconsistent or secretive.
3. Emphasize the downside, as well as the upside, of current decisions and future plans.
4. Openly discuss worst-case possibilities—it is almost never as anxiety provoking as the unspoken fantasy.

Source: Adapted from L. Hirschhorn, "Managing Rumors," in L. Hirschhorn (ed.), *Cutting Back* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983), pp. 54-56. With permission.

It is frequently assumed that rumors start because they- make titillating gossip. This is rarely the case. Rumors emerge as a response to situations that are *important* to us, when there is *ambiguity*, and under conditions that arouse *anxiety*.¹⁶ The fact that work situations frequently contain these three elements explains why rumors flourish in organizations. The secrecy and competition that typically prevail in large organizations-around issues such as the appointment of new bosses, the relocation of offices, downsizing decisions, and the realignment of work assignments-create conditions that encourage and sustain rumors on the grapevine. A rumor will persist either until the wants and expectations creating the uncertainty underlying the rumor are fulfilled or until the anxiety is reduced.

What can we conclude from the preceding discussion? Certainly the grapevine is an important part of any group or organization's communication network and is well worth understanding,¹⁷ It identifies for managers the confusing issues that employees consider important and that create anxiety. It acts, therefore, as both a filter and a feedback mechanism, picking up the issues that employees 'consider relevant. For employees, the grapevine is particularly valuable for translating formal communications into their group's own jargon. Maybe more important, again from a managerial perspective, it seems possible to analyze grapevine information and to predict its flow, given that only a small set of individuals (approximately 10 percent) actively pass on information to more than one other person. By assessing which liaison individuals will consider a given piece of information to be relevant, we can improve our ability to explain and predict the pattern of the grapevine.

-Can management entirely eliminate rumors? No. What management should do, however, is minimize the negative consequences of rumors by limiting their range and impact. Exhibit 10-5 offers a few suggestions for minimizing those negative consequences.

Computer-Aided Communication

Communication in today's organizations is enhanced and enriched by computer-aided technologies. These "include electronic mail, intranet and extranet links, and videoconferencing. Electronic mail, for instance, has dramatically reduced the number of memos, letters, and phone calls that employees historically used' to communicate among themselves and with suppliers, customers, or other outside stakeholders.

E-Mail Electronic mail (or e-mail) uses the Internet to transmit and receive computer-generated text and documents. Its growth has been spectacular. Most

Emoticons: Showing Emotion in E-Mail

Electronic mail needn't be emotion free. Over the years, a set of symbols (*emotions*) has evolved that e-mail users have developed for expressing emotions. For instance, the use of all caps (Le., THIS PROJECT NEEDS YOUR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION!) is the e-mail equivalent of shouting. The following highlights some emotions:

:)	Smile	:-e	Disappointed
<g>	Grin	:-@	Scream
:	Frown	:-0	Yell
:)	Wink	:-D	Shock or surprise
:-[Really sad face	:'(Crying

10-6

white-collar employees now regularly use e-mail. In fact, a recent study found that the average U.S. employee receives 31 e-mail messages a day.¹⁸ And organizations are recognizing the value of e-mail for all workers. Ford Motor Co., for instance, recently made a computer, modem, printer, and e-mail account available for \$5 month to all of its more than 300,000 employees worldwide.¹⁹

As a communication tool, e-mail has a long list of benefits. E-mail messages can be quickly written, edited, and stored. They can be distributed to one person or thousands with a click of a mouse. They can be read, in their entirety, at the convenience of the recipient. And the cost of sending formal e-mail messages to employees is a fraction of what it would cost to print, duplicate, and distribute a comparable letter or brochure.

E-mail, of course, is not without its drawbacks. At the top of the list is information overload. It's not unusual for employees to get a hundred or more e-mails a day. Reading, absorbing, and responding to such an inflow can literally consume an employee's entire day. In essence, e-mail's ease of use has become its biggest negative. Employees are finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish important e-mails from junk mail and irrelevant messages. Another drawback of e-mails is that they lack emotional content. The nonverbal cues in a face-to-face message or the tone of voice from a phone call convey important information that doesn't come across in e-mail, although efforts have been made to create emotional icons (see Exhibit 10-6). Finally, e-mail tends to be cold and impersonal. As such, it's not the ideal means to convey information like layoffs, plant closings, or other messages that might evoke emotional responses and require empathy or social support.

Intranet and Extranet Links *Intranets* are private, organization-wide information networks that look and act like a Web site but to which only people in an organization have access. Intranets are rapidly becoming the preferred means for employees within companies to communicate with each other. IBM, as a case in point, recently brought together 52,000 of its employees online for what it called WorldJam.²⁰ Using the company's intranet, IBMers everywhere swapped ideas on everything from how to retain employees to how to work faster without under mining quality.

In addition, organizations are creating *extranet* links that connect Internal employees with selected suppliers, customers, and strategic partners. For instance, an extranet allows GM employees to send electronic messages and documents to its steel and rubber suppliers as well as to communicate with its dealers. Similarly, all Wal-Mart vendors are linked into its extra net system, allowing Wal-Mart buyers to easily communicate with its suppliers and for suppliers to monitor the inventory status of its products at Wal-Mart stores.

Videoconferencing *Videoconferencing* is an extension of intranet or extranet systems. It permits employees in an organization to have meetings with people at different locations. Live audio and video images of members allow them to see, hear, and talk with each other. Videoconferencing technology, in effect, allows employees to conduct interactive meetings without the necessity of all physically being in the same location.

In the late 1990s, videoconferencing was basically conducted from special rooms equipped with television cameras, located at company facilities. More recently cameras and microphones are being attached to individual computers, allowing people to participate in videoconferences without leaving their desks. As the cost of this technology drops in price videoconferencing is likely to be increasingly seen as an alternative to expensive and time-consuming travel.

Summary Computer-aided communications are reshaping the way we communicate in organizations. Specifically, it's no longer necessary for employees to be at their work station or desk to be "available." Pagers, cellular phones and personal communicators allow employees to be reached when they're in a meeting, during a lunch *break* while visiting a customer across *town* or during a golf game on Saturday morning. The line between an employee's work and non-work life is no longer distinct. In the electronic *angel* all employees can theoretically be "on call" 24 hours a *day* 7 days a week.

Organizational boundaries become less relevant as a result of computer-aided communications. Networked computers allow employees to jump vertical levels within the organizational work full-time at home or someplace other than an organizationally operated *facility* and conduct ongoing communications with people in other organizations. The market researcher who wants to discuss an issue with the vice president of marketing (who is three levels up in the hierarchy), can bypass the people in between and send an e-mail message directly. And in so doing, the traditional status hierarchy largely determined by level and access, becomes essentially negated. Or that same market researcher may choose to live in the Cayman Islands and work at home via telecommuting rather than do his or her job in the company's Chicago office. And when an employee's computer is linked to suppliers and customers' computers, the boundaries separating organizations become further blurred. As a case in point, because Levi Strauss and Wal-Mart's computers are *linked* Levi is able to monitor Wal-Mart's inventory of its jeans and to replace merchandise as *needed* clouding the distinction between Levi and Wal-Mart employees.