

Module 2 Tasks

- Read Chapters 1 and posted pdf
- Read Module Overview
- Discussion Board Post (discussing the role of organizational communication)
- Sign up for article reports (2 slots; review directions for the assignment)

Disclaimer: The module overview is only meant to serve as a supplement to the required readings. This review does not include all of the information from the chapter. Instead, it provides a brief summary while also factoring in discussion questions and additional examples. Please see the end of the document for a formal reference list, which includes our textbook as well as any other resources used to complete this document.

Module 2 Overview

What is Organizational Communication?

This week we begin our journey by exploring the definition of organizational communication. According to Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, and Goodall (2017), organizational communication is the “interaction required to direct a group toward a shared goal” (p. 4). Chapter 2 delves more into the actual definition of organizational communication. But first, our textbook authors explain the importance of communicating in a constant changing world of work. In order to understand how to engage in effective communication, organizations must understand their goals, employees, industry, culture—and the role of change.

In fact, Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, and Goodall (2017), explain that an expert in organizational communication must understand and accept change. The communication skills you use in one organization in 2017 may be different from the skills you will need for effective communication when working at a different organization and during a different time period.

Change is inevitable. I’m sure we can all think of instances where we had to adapt to some type of change. Perhaps we dealt with a personal change (e.g. addition to the family) or a change that impacted all of society (e.g. the rise of gas prices). There are tons of examples and more to come as we continue to experience change throughout our lives. This is no different for organizations. Changes can occur within an organization or changes in society may impact an organization’s operations. Because of this, change is considered when different organizations define effective communication. In doing so, organizations also consider their goals, unique culture, key publics, and the industry (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017). For example, as social media became popular, organization’s had to consider how this new tool fit into their definition of effective communication. How could this tool be used to communicate with their internal and external publics?

When discussing the role of change, we must consider certain factors.

Globalization. Improvements in transportation, communication, and technology have helped us practice business on a global scale. We are able to do business with individuals in various locations. Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, and Goodall (2017) discuss how global business is often expected of organizations now because of the rise of globalization. For example, consider how a person may expect a company to be able to ship their goods, regardless of the location of the buyer and seller. As you read throughout the chapter, you’ll learn about some of the pros and cons associated with

globalization. There are also some current debates on how to handle globalization. For example—what is the best way to regulate this global market? Being a part of this global economy brings about different requirements and considerations. Working across international borders only increases the tendency for an organization to work with a multicultural workforce. This only heightens the need to recognize diversity, adapt, and understand how it can be beneficial to the work environment (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017).

Communication Technologies. Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, and Goodall (2017) define communication technology as, “any type of electronic tool or device that may be used to enhance or enable information sharing or person-to-person interaction” (p. 17). Such technologies can help organizational members communicate with each other and their consumers—even globally. Think about how Gordon was able to email out all relevant audiences to notify them about the early school closing following the forecast for possible inclement weather. Text messages, emails, and automated phone calls helped make this a time efficient process. Communication technologies play a major role in globalization. Imagine how much harder it would be to handle business across international borders if we could only do business via traditional mail.

Organizations can use communication technologies: “(1) to bring elements of the organization closer together in the service of increased effectiveness and efficiency and (2) to bring the organization closer to the customer” (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017, p. 18). There are some clear benefits to using communication technologies as part of an organization’s practices. Notice how many organizations now have Facebook pages. These pages can serve many functions. A company can communicate updates to their customers, while also receiving their feedback. This type of interactivity (between organizations and consumers) is one of the many benefits of communication technologies.

As mentioned earlier, consumers have begun to expect global business from different organizations. The same could be argued for organizations. Take, for instance, this concept of the *urgent organization*. Because of technology and its ability to speed up business practices, customers have higher expectations for “access to products, service, information and response time” (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017, p. 18). Think about if you call into a technical support line to get assistance with your computer. Oftentimes, we expect to call and have the issue handled as soon as possible. Long wait times are annoying and if we need a call back, we expect it to occur sooner rather than later. These are examples of how technology has impacted our expectations for customer service from organizations. In fact, providing customers with this fast service is another means of competition between organizations. The chapter discusses many advantages associated with organizations being the fastest.

Of course, this great resource comes with a price. Not only do organizations have to invest in the actual technologies, but they also have to invest in people using those tools. This can include training seminars. There are also potential risks associated with communication technology. Our textbook includes discussion of security concerns such as cybercrime (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017).

The Meaning of Work. What do you look for in a fulfilling career? What do you consider to be a successful career path? What does work mean to you? Different people will have different answers

to these questions because of various personal and professional commitments. Our textbook authors argue that the meaning of work has changed. One reason for this new definition is because of *the new social contract*, which means “‘job security’ is fleeting and tied expressly to whether one’s skills fit the organization’s needs at specific time” (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017, p. 21). For example, imagine I work at an organization as part of the payroll team and I am responsible for the third stage of the pay process. But, a new technology has been adopted that eliminates the second and third stage of the pay process. Would my job be safe? This is a fear for many. To help combat this Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, and Goodall (2017) discuss the importance of continuous learning, networking, and building strong working relationships.

The meaning of work has also changed because of some individuals’ growing distrust in organizations. The new social contract, discussed above, causes some employees to question their organization’s loyalty. (Will they keep me around if another technology does my job and they no longer need me?) An organization’s unethical behaviors may also lead to a lack of trust for organizations. The chapter provides examples of unethical practices on the part of different companies. Even responses to unethical behaviors will impact the way an organization is viewed by internal (e.g. employees) and external (e.g. customers) publics (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017).

When a person defines “work” we must also consider quality of life (Eisenberg, Trethewey, LeGreco, & Goodall, 2017). Earlier in these notes, I asked you about what you considered to be a fulfilling career. Is it more money? Flexible schedules? Opportunities to help the community? Strong working relationships? Again, this definition may vary from person to person.

Ultimately, when understanding the role of effective communication with organizations, we must understand a continuously changing environment, which includes the role of globalization, communication technologies, and the meaning of work. Staying current in these areas is important to reach your audience. Think of it this way—if you are speaking to a group but you are not understanding the global reach of your company, the role of technology, and the way in which they may define “work”, would you be able to adapt to your environment and provide a clear and relevant message?

This week you also had a pdf to read from another textbook on Organizational Communication – *Organizational Communication: Perspectives and Trends* (Papa, Daniels, and Spiker, 2007). This document adds to our understanding of organizational communication by exploring the function of communication. You’ll notice the pdf of the book chapter breaks down the function of verbal communication (communicating with words) and nonverbal communication (communicating without words). As we explore organizational communication, consider how both verbal and nonverbal messages communicate a message about an organization. For example, look at an organization’s website. Take a look at the mission statement; how are words and images strategically used by the organization? How does context play a role? Is there any ambiguity—is it strategic? We’ll address this more with your first discussion board.

So what's the bottom line?

Effective communication is important for organizations when communicating with their different publics. A part of this effective communication is understanding the role of change (and adapting). Organizations must also consider their own culture, industry, and members in order to understand exactly how to communicate effectively. Furthermore, an organization should consider how to use verbal and nonverbal communication to handle business and shape perceptions.

Don't forget to complete the required discussion board and sign up for your two article reports.

To sign up for Article Reports, click on the discussion board that matches the week you have selected. Create a thread with your name. Make sure to do so for two weeks/slots.

Eisenberg, E. M., Trethewey, A., LeGreco, M. & Goodall Jr., H. L. (2017). *Organizational communication: Balancing creativity and constraint*. 8th ed. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins.