

## Communication Skills FOR A Digital Age

### The Do's and Don'ts of Using Facebook for Work<sup>65</sup>

Many of today's entrepreneurs are using their Facebook for work and for pleasure. Because of their careful use of social media, these ambitious leaders are blurring the lines between their private and public lives in a seamless manner. One example of this is Ms. Randy Yezak, an animal science major from Texas A & M University, who uses her Facebook to sell necklaces, bracelets, earrings, rings, and other accessories under the name "Southern Jewlz," in addition to managing her personal relationships. Her two-year-old business has 8,000 fans on Facebook and her online sales have doubled in a six-month period.<sup>66</sup>

#### Applying Your Skills<sup>67</sup>

- *Don't have two profiles—one for personal and one for professional.* If Facebook learns that you have two profiles, they may shut down your account. The lines between personal and professional are blurring. You should be transparent and confident enough to let them blur. Of course there are some photos that you may not want your workplace colleagues to view. Facebook has excellent privacy settings that can be customized so your professional connections are limited in what they can view. Become familiar with these privacy settings.
- *Do create a Facebook page for your business.* Profiles are meant for people, whereas pages are meant for business.

Because pages were meant for businesses, they have different features that make them more valuable for a business. For example, business pages don't need to "accept" friend requests; they can get "liked" by anyone. Also, business pages come with viewer information so you know if you're reaching your customers and market on Facebook.

- *Don't turn off wall posts for your business page.* The point of Facebook is to interact with your customers. Turning off wall posts or comments screams to your customers, "We don't want to hear from you." Be prepared for what customers might post, and be ready to respond in a timely and authentic manner. Every time a user interacts with your page, that interaction gets in front of that user's network, spreading your reach far beyond your existing customer base. Use this unique opportunity carefully.
- *Do update your business page on a regular basis.* If you ignore it, your customers are going to ignore it as well. Your Facebook page should be an interactive platform where you and your customers interact regularly. If you update your business page with interesting content, your users are more likely to engage with your page, and their interactions get shown to their networks, expanding your reach exponentially. This virality is what makes Facebook such an incredibly powerful tool for businesses.

## Negotiating Solutions at Work

Another important tool essential to effective leadership is negotiation, which is a particular type of conflict management. **Negotiation** has been defined as an exchange of proposals and counterproposals as a means of reaching a satisfactory settlement to a conflict.<sup>68</sup> Whereas all negotiation is a form of conflict management, not all conflict management is negotiation. For example, if you supervise an employee who comes to work under the influence of alcohol, you have a conflict that needs to be managed. There is no negotiation. The employee violated one of the workplace rules that usually results in immediate termination. In contrast, negotiation occurs when there is room for bargaining or for give-and-take. You give some and the employee gives some until you reach a solution that suits both of you. In short, you exchange proposals and counterproposals until you can agree. During negotiation, your proposals change and evolve. It's rare to leave the negotiation process with your first proposal untouched.

You will use negotiation strategies during the interview process when a company offers you a position and your skills are worth; however, the negotiation process begins when you begin the negotiation

#### terms & definition

**Negotiation** an exchange of proposals and counterproposals

(such as traveling or commuting to work or school), draw an arrow pointing down to indicate you'd rather spend less time doing this task. Your time management audit can begin to reveal how you'd like to spend your time on a typical day.

TABLE A.1

## The Ten Biggest Time Wasters<sup>2</sup>

1. Management by crisis
2. Telephone/email interruptions
3. Inadequate planning
4. Attempting too much
5. Drop-in visitors
6. Ineffective delegation
7. Personal disorganization
8. Lack of self-discipline
9. Inability to say no
10. Procrastination

## Communication Ethics @ Work

### Mixing Business with Pleasure

Best known for his snarky sense of humor and famous “Top Ten” lists, CBS funnyman *Late Show* host David Letterman made waves for an entirely different reason in the fall of 2009.<sup>41</sup> When word got out that he had an office romance with an intern on his staff, then another, then another, the story grew to scandalous proportions. Although release of this story was sensational (as it included stories from coworkers, graphic details, and the juicy little tidbit that Letterman was in a committed relationship at the time), it did highlight an ever-increasing issue for leaders in the workplace: office romance. Just how common is workplace romance? In a survey by Careerbuilder.com, 40 percent admitted to dating a coworker, with an additional 12 percent who hadn’t but said they would.<sup>42</sup> Of the 40 percent who had dated a coworker, 42 percent said they had dated a boss or supervisor. Three of ten respondents also said they married someone they met at work. Leaders are now recognizing that workplace romances are inevitable.

Historically, workplace romance has been considered taboo. But now companies are recognizing that by permitting office

romance, employees get what they consider an important benefit of working for the company: an opportunity to enhance their social life. However, an office romance almost certainly will have an effect on the interpersonal dynamics within a group.<sup>43</sup> In a related survey, 85 percent of respondents said that although common, workplace romances are a potential distraction for everyone at work. In addition, relationships between supervisor/subordinate, such as those Letterman engaged in, can have devastating consequences. There is the risk of retribution if the romance sours. Also, “third-party” employees can feel left out or begin to question the fairness of evaluations or rewards. In addition, these types of relationships have the potential to make the work environment so uncomfortable, that parties could file sexual harassment or hostile workplace complaints.

How does a leader navigate these legally and ethically murky waters? Do you believe the potential rewards for office romance outweigh the potential risks? As a leader, would you encourage or discourage these types of relationships? Would you participate in one?

her career development." Verbal messages like this set expectations for being polite to one another.

**BE NONVERBALLY RESPONSIVE TO OTHERS.** Emotions are conveyed primarily through nonverbal messages. And remember that we don't have as much control over our nonverbal messages as we do our verbal messages; emotions have a tendency to "leak" out of us in our nonverbal behavior. Many times these leaked cues convey negative emotions. Although it is natural to have a closed body orientation (to cross arms and pull back) during conflict conversations, try remaining nonverbally responsive to the other person. Make appropriate eye contact. Ensure an open body position by facing the person, uncrossing arms and legs, leaning forward, and using appropriate head nods. Nonverbally responsive messages have a tendency to defuse or neutralize negative emotions.

#### **AVOID PERSONAL ATTACKS, NAME-CALLING, PROFANITY, AND GUNNY-SACKING.**

Because conflict situations are usually emotionally charged, it is easy to resort to what conflict researchers refer to as "below-the-belt" fighting.<sup>59</sup> This type of conflict is expressed by attacking the individual and making the conflict personal. Profanity, which is usually not acceptable in the workplace, or a personal attack is usually reciprocated by the other person. This cycle of negative emotional expression needs to be broken if there is to be any hope of managing the conflict constructively. Another way to manage emotions is to avoid engaging in gunny-sacking, or kitchen-sink fighting.<sup>60</sup> Gunny-sacking occurs when a person begins discussing a single conflict situation and then continues to unload or dump on the other person all of the things that have been bothering him or her. Essentially, it's emptying the "gunny-sack" of grievances. This type of conflict management is perceived as unfair by most people and increases negative emotions. To avoid gunny-sacking, limit the scope of your conflict conversation to a single issue rather than multiple issues.

## **Skills for Managing Conflict Conversations**

Imagine you're having a problem with your coworker Michael. Rather than talking behind his back, you discuss the problem with Michael directly. But while you're talking, something happens almost without your knowing it: Michael "spins" the conversation so that the problem seems to be about you and not him. It happens quite often, and it can be frustrating. If we're not careful, people can hijack conflict conversations. When this happens, we walk away from the conflict conversation asking ourselves, "How did that happen? Why did I let him do that?" In reality, the problem is not just the other person's and it's not just yours. Because you and the other person are interdependent, the problem belongs to both of you.

To keep your conflict conversation on track and work toward a solution acceptable to both individuals, consider structuring your conversation using what we refer to as the PUGSS model of conflict management. Each letter of the PUGSS acronym represents a different part of the conversation:<sup>61</sup>

- P = Describe the *Problem*
- U = Achieve *Understanding*
- G = Identify *Goals*
- S = Brainstorm *Solutions*
- S = Select the best *Solution*

The advantage to using the PUGSS model is that it keeps conflict conversations focused and it helps people prepare their conflict messages. Here's how the process works.