Part of Jenny Jankovich's effectiveness in communicating with her staff is choosing the right medium for delivering her message.

A s Jenny Jankovich related the experience, she knew she had made a major mistake soon after arriving at work on Monday, July 9th.

As director of nursing at Scripps Memorial Hospital in San Diego, Jenny oversees nine shift supervisors and 115 registered nurses and nursing aides.

When Jenny came into the hospital around 6:05 a.m., she saw a number of nurses—from both the shift going off duty and the new shift coming on—in scattered groups, talking in a very animated fashion. But when the group members saw Jenny, they immediately stopped talking. The sudden silence and the cold stares told her that *she* was the object of discussion and what they'd been saying wasn't likely to be complimentary.

About thirty seconds after Jenny had settled into her office, one of her supervisors, Dee Marcos, came in. Dee didn't mince words.

"Jenny, you really blew it with those letters you sent out last week. Everyone is upset."

"What's the problem?" asked Jenny. "We had agreed at the supervisory staff meeting that we would notify everyone in our unit about the budget problems and the possibility of layoffs. All I did was carry that decision out."

"What are you talking about?" replied Dee. She was obviously upset. "We're dealing with people's livelihoods here. We [the supervisors] assumed that you'd talk to all the nurses directly, in small groups, tell them about the problem, break it to them gently, and allow them to ask questions. In that way, we'd cushion a large part of the blow. But you sent them this form letter, to their homes! My God, Jenny, they got those letters on Friday and have spent all weekend anguishing, calling friends and colleagues, spreading rumors. We've had a near riot on our hands all weekend. I've never seen staff morale this low."

Jenny Jankovich had made a mistake. Maybe two. First, she clearly failed to communicate to her staff her intention to mail letters. Second, those letters were the wrong medium for delivering her message. Some communications are effectively handled in the written form. Others are better relayed orally. When Jenny later reflected on her action, she came to the conclusion that—like many individuals—she tends to avoid oral communications. She suffers from oral communication apprehension.[1] Unfortunately, in this case, her apprehension acted as a barrier to selecting the right medium for communicating a message that she knew was likely to create fear and uncertainty for her staff. In such a situation, Jenny needed to convey her message in a manner that would allow for maximum clarity and that would allow her and her supervisors to quickly manage the potential damage. And the best way to do that is orally. The decision to mail letters to employees' homes with the unexpected bad news proved to be an unfortunate mistake.

J enny Jankovich's mistake illustrates an important point: Communication is fundamentally linked to managerial performance.[2] In this chapter, we will present basic concepts in interpersonal communication. We'll explain the communication process, methods of communicating, barriers to effective communication, and ways to overcome those barriers. Additionally, because most interpersonal skills rely heavily on effective communication, we'll also use this chapter to review the basic interpersonal skills in which every manager needs to become proficient. These include active listening, providing feedback, delegating, disciplining, managing conflict, and negotiating.

Understanding Communication

The importance of effective communication for managers can't be overemphasized for one specific reason: Everything a manager does involves communicating. Not *some* things, but everything! A manager can't make a decision without information. That information has to be communicated. Once a decision is made, communication must again take place. Otherwise, no one will know that a decision has been made. The best idea, the most creative suggestion, or the finest plan cannot take form without communication. Managers therefore need effective communication skills. We are not suggesting, of course, that good communication skills alone make a successful manager. We can say, however, that ineffective communication skills can lead to a continuous stream of problems for the manager.

What Is Communication?

Communication involves the transfer of meaning. If no information or ideas have been conveyed, communication has not taken place. The speaker who is not heard or the writer who is not read does not communicate. The philosophical question, "If a tree falls in a forest and no one hears it, does it make any noise?" must, in a communicative context, be answered negatively.

However, for communication to be successful, the meaning must be not only imparted, but also understood. A letter addressed to me but written in Portuguese (a language of which I am totally ignorant) cannot be considered a communication until I have it translated. **Communication** is the *transferring* and *understanding* of meaning. Perfect communication, if such a thing were possible, would exist when a transmitted thought or idea was perceived by the receiver exactly as it was envisioned by the sender.

Another point to keep in mind is that *good* communication is often erroneously defined by the communicator as *agreement* instead of clarity of understanding.[3] If someone disagrees with us, many of us assume that the person just didn't fully understand our position. In other words, many of us define good communication as having someone accept our views. But I can understand very clearly what you mean and *not* agree with what you say. In fact, when observers conclude that a lack of communication must exist because a conflict has continued for a prolonged time, a

communication
The transferring and understanding of meaning.

interpersonal communication
Communication between two or more people in which the parties are treated as individuals rather than objects.

message
A purpose to be conveyed.

encoding
Converting a message into symbols.

channel
The medium by which a message travels.

decoding
Retranslating a sender's message.

communication process
The seven stages in which meaning is transmitted and understood.

noise
Disturbances that interfere with the transmission of a message.

close examination often reveals that there is plenty of effective communication going on. Each fully understands the other's position. The problem is one of equating effective communication with agreement.

A final point before we move on: Our attention in this chapter will be on **interpersonal communication.** This is communication between two or more people in which the parties are treated as individuals rather than objects. Organizationwide communication—which encompasses topics such as the flow of organizational communication, communication networks, and the development of management information systems—will be covered in our discussion of information control systems in Chapter 20.

The Communication Process

Before communication can take place, a purpose, expressed as a **message** to be conveyed, must exist. It passes between a source (the sender) and a receiver. The message is converted to symbolic form (called **encoding**) and passed by way of some medium (**channel**) to the receiver, who retranslates the sender's message (called **decoding**). The result is the transfer of meaning from one person to another.[4]

Figure 18–1 depicts the **communication process.** This model is made up of seven stages: (1) the communication source, (2) the message, (3) encoding, (4) the channel, (5) decoding, (6) the receiver, and (7) feedback. In addition, the entire process is susceptible to **noise**—that is, disturbances that interfere with the transmission of the message (depicted in Figure 18–1 as lightning bolts). Typical examples of noise include illegible print, telephone static, inattention by the receiver, or the background sounds of machinery on the production floor. Remember that anything that interferes with understanding—whether internal (such as the low speaking voice of the speaker/sender) or external (like the loud voices of co-workers talking at an adjoining desk)—represents noise. Noise can create distortion at any point in the communication process. Because the impact of external noise on communication effectiveness is self-evident, let's look at some potential internal sources of distortion in the communication process.

A source initiates a message by encoding a thought. Four conditions affect the encoded message: skill, attitudes, knowledge, and the social-cultural system.

If textbook authors are without the requisite skills, their message will not reach students in the form desired. My success in communicating to you depends upon my

FIGURE 18–1
The Communication Process

writing skills. One's total communicative success also includes speaking, reading, listening, and reasoning skills. As we discussed in Chapter 14, our attitudes influence our behavior. We hold preformed ideas on numerous topics, and these ideas affect our communications. Furthermore, we are restricted in our communicative activity by the extent of our knowledge of a particular topic. We cannot communicate what we do not know; and should our knowledge be too extensive, it is possible that our receiver will not understand our message. Clearly, the amount of knowledge we have about a subject affects the message we seek to transfer. Finally, just as our attitudes influence our behavior, so does our position in the social-cultural system in which we exist. Our beliefs and values (all part of our culture) act to influence us as communication sources.

The message itself can cause distortion in the communication process, regardless of the supporting apparatus used to convey it. Our message is the actual physical product encoded by the source. "When we speak, the speech is the message. When we write, the writing is the message. When we paint, the picture is the message. When we gesture, the movements of our arms, the expressions on our face are the message."[5] Our message is affected by the code or group of symbols we use to transfer meaning, the content of the message itself, and the decisions that the source makes in selecting and arranging both codes and content. Each of these three segments can act to distort the message.

The *channel* is the medium through which the message travels. It is selected by the sender. Common channels are air for the spoken word and paper for the written word. If you decide to convey to a friend something that happened to you during the day in a face-to-face conversation, you're using spoken words and gestures to transmit your message. But you have choices. A specific message—an invitation to a party, for example—can be communicated orally or in writing. In an organization, certain channels are more appropriate for certain messages. Obviously, if the building is on fire, a memo to convey the fact is inappropriate! If something is important, such as an employee's performance appraisal, a manager might want to use multiple channels—for instance, an oral review followed by a summary letter. This decreases the potential for distortion.

The *receiver* is the individual 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 is the *decoding* of the message. Just as the encoder was limited by his or her skills, attitudes, knowledge, and social-cultural system, so is the receiver equally restricted. Just as the source must be skillful in writing or speaking, the receiver must be skillful in reading or listening, and both must be able to reason. A person's level of knowledge influences his or her ability to receive, just as it does his or her ability to send. Moreover, the receiver's preformed attitudes and cultural background can distort the message being transferred.

The final link in the communicative process is a feedback loop. "If a communication source decodes the message that he encodes, if the message is put back into the system, we have feedback."[6] That is, *feedback* returns the message to the sender and provides a check on whether understanding has been achieved.

Methods of Communicating

The most popular communication methods used by people in organizations are verbal or oral interaction, written communications, nonverbal communication, and electronic media. In this section we'll briefly describe each method.

Oral   People communicate with each other most often by talking, or oral communication. Popular forms of oral communication include speeches, formal one-on-one and group discussions, informal discussions, and the rumor mill or grapevine.
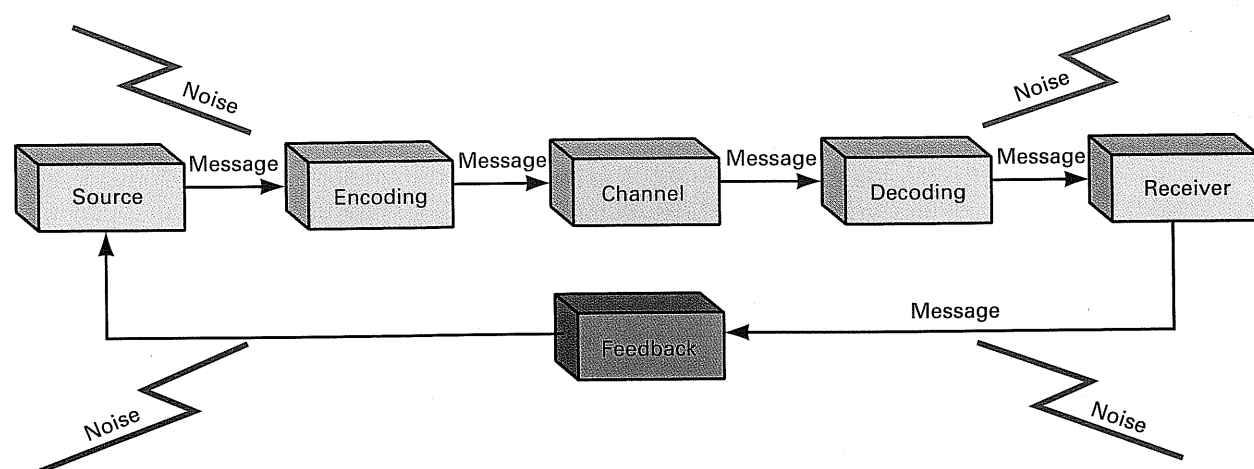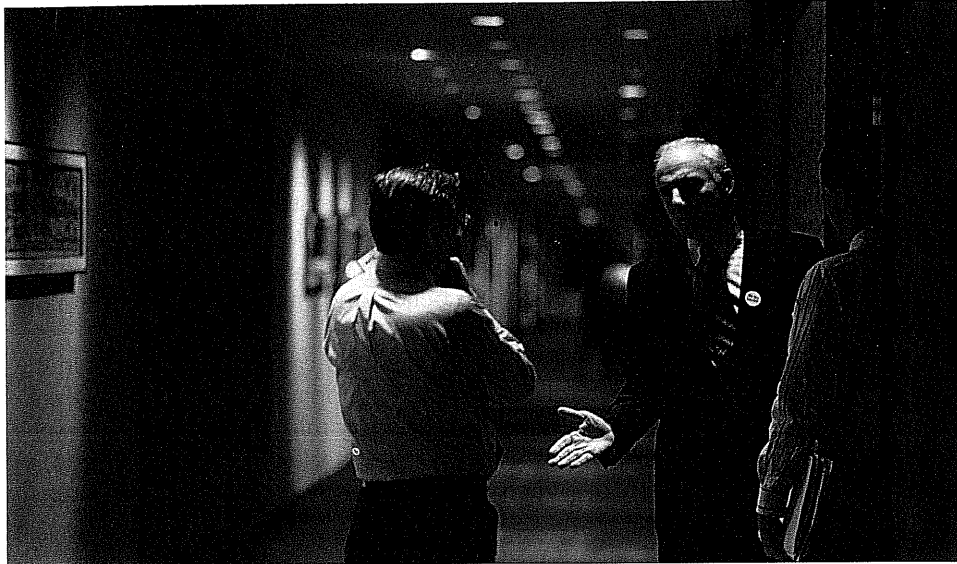
Most managers are like Joseph Vittoria, CEO at Avis. They rely heavily on face-to-face communication to get their job done.

The advantages of oral communications are quick transmission and quick feedback. A verbal message can be conveyed and a response received in a minimum amount of time. If the receiver is unsure of the message, rapid feedback allows the sender to detect the uncertainty and to correct it.

The major disadvantage of oral communication surfaces whenever a message has to be passed through a number of people. The more people who are involved, the greater the potential for distortion. 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 the original. In an organization where decisions and other communiqués are verbally passed up and down the authority hierarchy, considerable opportunity exists for messages to become distorted.

Written Written communications include memos, letters, organizational periodicals, bulletin boards, or any other device that transmits written words or symbols.

Why would a sender choose to use written communications? Because they're permanent, tangible, and verifiable. Typically, both sender and receiver have a record of the communication. The message can be stored for an indefinite period of time. If there are questions about the content of the message, it is physically available for later reference. This is particularly important for complex or lengthy communications. The marketing plan for a new product 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. Except in rare instances, such as when presenting a formal speech, more care is taken with the written word than with the oral word. Having to put something in writing forces a person to think more carefully about what he or she wants to convey. Therefore written communications are more likely to be well thought out, logical, and clear.

Of course, written messages have their drawbacks. While writing may be more precise, it also consumes a great deal more time. You could convey far more information to your college instructor in a one-hour oral exam than in a one-hour written exam. In fact, you could probably say the same thing in ten to fifteen minutes that takes you an hour to write. The other major disadvantage is feedback or lack of it. Oral communications allow the receivers to respond rapidly to what they think they hear. However, written communications do not have a built-in feedback mechanism.

The result is that sending a memo is no assurance that it will be received: if it is received, there is no guarantee that the recipient will interpret it as the sender meant. The latter point is also relevant in oral communiqués, except that it's easier 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
Communication transmitted without words.

Nonverbal Some of the most meaningful communications are neither spoken nor written. These are **nonverbal communications.** A loud siren or a red light at an intersection tells you something without words. When a college instructor is teaching a large lecture class, she doesn't need words to tell her that her students are bored when eyes get glassy or students begin to read the school newspaper. Similarly, when papers start to rustle and notebooks begin to close, the message is clear: Class time is about over. The size of a person's office and desk or the clothes a person wears also conveys messages to others. However, the best-known areas of nonverbal communication are body language and verbal intonation.

body language
Gestures, facial configurations, and other movements of the body that convey meaning.

Body language refers to gestures, facial configurations, and other movements of the body. A snarled face, for example, says something different from a smile. Hand motions, facial expressions, and other gestures can communicate emotions or temperaments such as aggression, fear, shyness, arrogance, joy, and anger.

verbal intonation
An emphasis given to words or phrases that conveys meaning.

Verbal intonation refers to the emphasis someone gives to words or phrases. To illustrate how intonations can change the meaning of a message, consider the student who asks the instructor a question. The instructor replies, "What do you mean by that?" The student's reaction will vary, depending on the tone of the instructor's response. A soft, smooth tone creates a different meaning from one that is abrasive and puts a strong emphasis on the last word. Most of us would view the first intonation as coming from someone who sincerely sought clarification, whereas the second suggests that the person is aggressive or defensive.

The fact that every oral communication also has a nonverbal message cannot be overemphasized. Why? Because the nonverbal component is likely to carry the greatest impact. One researcher found that 55 percent of an oral message is derived from facial expression and physical posture, 38 percent from verbal intonation, and only 7 percent from the actual words used.[7] Most of us know that animals respond to how we say something rather than what we say. Apparently, people aren't much different.

Electronic Media Today we rely on a number of sophisticated electronic media to carry our communications. In addition to the more common media—the telephone and public address system—we have closed-circuit television, voice-activated computers, xerographic reproduction, fax machines, and a host of other electronic devices that we can use in conjunction with speech or paper to create more effective communication. Maybe the fastest growing is **electronic mail**. Electronic mail allows individuals to instantaneously transmit written messages on computers that are linked together with the appropriate software. Messages sit at the receiver's terminal to be read at the receiver's convenience. Electronic mail is fast and cheap and can be used to send the same message to dozens of people at the same time. Its other strengths and weaknesses generally parallel those of written communications.

electronic mail
Instantaneous transmission of written messages on computers that are linked together.

Barriers to Effective Communication

In our discussion of the communication process, we noted the consistent potential for distortion. What causes such distortions? In addition to the general distortions identified in the communication process, there are other barriers to effective communication.

MANAGING
FROM A
GLOBAL
PERSPECTIVE

Cross-Cultural Insights Into Communication Processes

Interpersonal communication is not conducted in the same way around the world. For example, compare countries that place a high value on individualism (such as the United States) with countries where the emphasis is on collectivism (such as Japan).[8]

Owing to the emphasis on the individual in countries such as the United States, communication patterns there are individual-oriented and rather clearly spelled out. For instance, U.S. managers rely heavily on memoranda, announcements, position papers, and other formal forms of communication to stake out their positions in intra-organizational negotiations. Supervisors in the United States often hoard secret information in an attempt to promote their own advancement and as a way of inducing their subordinates to accept decisions and plans. For their own protection, lower-level employees also engage in this practice.

In collectivist countries such as Japan, there is more interaction for its own sake and a more informal manner of interpersonal contact. The Japanese manager, in contrast to U.S. managers, will engage in extensive verbal consultation over an issue first and only draw up a formal document later to outline the agreement that was made. Face-to-face communication is encouraged. Additionally, open communication is an inherent part of the Japanese work setting. Work spaces are open and crowded with individuals at different levels in the work hierarchy. U.S. organizations emphasize authority, hierarchy, and formal lines of communication.

These cultural differences between the United States and Japan can make negotiations difficult between executives from these countries.[9] Research on negotiations has found, for example, that executives from these countries come to the negotiating table with two different objectives. Americans come to make a deal, while their Japanese counterparts come to start a relationship. Americans want to begin talking immediately about numbers and details. Japanese executives start the process by talking in generalities. Americans tend to be blunt and forthright in their refusals. Many Japanese find this aggressiveness and frankness offensive.

filtering
The deliberate manipulation of information to make it appear more favorable to the receiver.

Filtering   **Filtering** is the deliberate manipulation of information to make it appear more favorable to the receiver. For example, when a manager tells his or her boss what the boss wants to hear, the manager is filtering information.

The extent of filtering tends to be a function of the height of the structure and the organizational culture. The more vertical levels there are in an organization's hierarchy, the more opportunities there are for filtering. The organizational culture encourages or discourages filtering by the type of behavior it emphasizes through rewards. The more rewards emphasize style and appearance, the more managers are motivated to alter communications in their favor.

Selective Perception   We've mentioned selective perception several times throughout this book. The receiver in the communication process selectively sees and hears communications depending on his or her needs, motivations, experience, background, and other personal characteristics. The receiver also projects his or her interests and expectations into communications in decoding them. The employment interviewer who expects a female job candidate to put family before career is likely to

see that in female candidates, regardless of whether the candidates feel that way. As we said in Chapter 14, we don't see reality; instead, we interpret what we see and call it reality.

Emotions   How the receiver feels when a message is received influences how he or she interprets it. You will often interpret the same message differently, depending on whether you are happy or distressed. Extreme emotions such as jubilation or depression are most likely to hinder effective communication. In such instances, we often disregard our rational and objective thinking processes and substitute emotional judgments. It's best to avoid making decisions when you're upset because you're not likely to be thinking clearly.

Language   Words mean different things to different people. Age, education, and cultural background are three of the more obvious variables that influence the language a person uses and the definitions he or she gives to words. The language of William F. Buckley, Jr., is clearly different from that of the typical high-school-educated factory worker. The latter, in fact, would undoubtedly have trouble understanding much of Buckley's vocabulary. In an organization, employees usually come from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, horizontal differentiation creates specialists who develop their own jargon or technical language. In large organizations, members are often widely dispersed geographically (some even work in different countries), and employees in each locale will use terms and phrases that are unique to their area. Vertical differentiation can also cause language problems. For instance, differences in the meaning of words such as *incentives* and *quotas* occur at different levels of management.[10] Top managers often speak about the need for incentives and quotas, yet these terms imply manipulation and create resentment among lower managers.

The point is that while you and I might both speak the same language (English), our use of that language is far from uniform. A knowledge of how each of us modifies the language would minimize communication difficulties. The problem is that members in an organization usually don't know how others with whom they interact have modified the language. Senders tend to assume that their words and terms will be appropriately interpreted by the receiver. This, of course, is often incorrect and creates communication difficulties.

Nonverbal Cues   Earlier, we noted the nonverbal communication is an important way in which people convey messages to others. But nonverbal communication is almost always accompanied by oral communication. As long as the two are in agreement, they act to reinforce each other. My boss's words tell me that he is angry; his tone of voice and body movements indicate anger. I can conclude—probably correctly—that he is angry. When nonverbal cues are inconsistent with the oral message, the receiver becomes confused, and the clarity of the message suffers. The boss who tells you that she sincerely wants to hear about your problem and then proceeds to read her mail while you talk is sending conflicting signals.

Overcoming the Barriers

Given these barriers to communication, what can managers do to overcome them? The following suggestions should help to make communication more effective.

Use Feedback   Many communication problems can be directly attributed to misunderstandings and inaccuracies. These problems are less likely to occur if the manager uses the feedback loop in the communication process. This feedback can be verbal or nonverbal.

If a manager asks a receiver, "Did you understand what I said?" the response
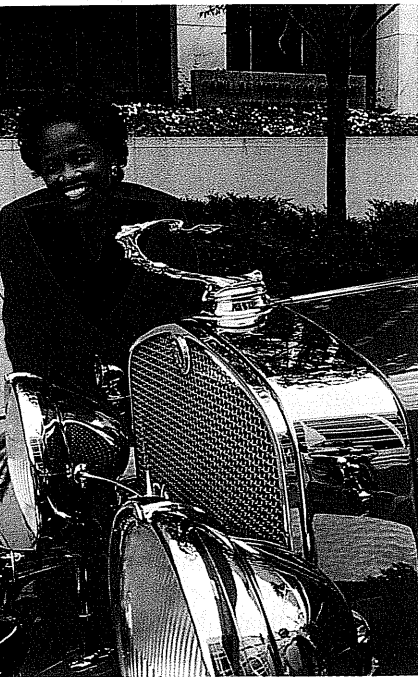
When Rosetta Riley was hired in 1986 as director of customer satisfaction at the Cadillac division of General Motors, she was frustrated by the lack of feedback from customers. She recruited key dealerships across the United States to serve as "listening posts" and had the dealers call a team of technical specialists directly with comments. Riley also convinced everyone at the company, from plant workers to executives, to call new Cadillac buyers for feedback. Her program proved highly successful. Her work helped Cadillac win the highly prized Baldridge quality award.

active listening
Listening for full meaning without making premature judgments or interpretations.

represents feedback. Also, feedback should include more than yes and no answers. The manager can ask a set of questions about a message in order to determine whether or not the message was received as intended. Better yet, the manager can ask the receiver to restate the message in his or her own words. If the manager then hears what was intended, understanding and accuracy should be enhanced. Feedback includes subtler methods than the direct asking of questions or the summarizing of messages. General comments can give a manager a sense of the receiver's reaction to a message. In addition, performance appraisals, salary reviews, and promotions represent important forms of feedback.

Of course, feedback does not have to be conveyed in words. Actions *can* speak louder than words. The sales manager who sends out a directive to his or her staff describing a new monthly sales report that all sales personnel will need to complete receives feedback if some of the salespeople fail to turn in the new report. This feedback suggests that the sales manager needs to clarify further the initial directive. Similarly, when you give a speech to a group of people, you watch their eyes and look for other nonverbal clues to tell you whether they are getting your message or not.

Simplify Language   Because language can be a barrier, managers should choose words and structure their messages in ways that will make those messages clear and understandable to the receiver. The manager needs to simplify his or her language and consider the audience to whom the message is directed so that the language will be tailored to the receivers. Remember, effective communication is achieved when a message is both received and *understood*. Understanding is improved by simplifying the language used in relation to the audience intended. This means, for example, that a hospital administrator should always try to communicate in clear, easily understood terms and that the language used in messages to the surgical staff should be purposely different from that used with office employees. Jargon can facilitate understanding when it is used within a group of those who know what it means, but it can cause innumerable problems when used outside that group.

Consistent with the previous discussion on feedback, language problems in an important message can be minimized by trying out the message on someone who is unfamiliar with the issue. For example, having a friend read a speech or letter before it is officially communicated can be an effective device for identifying confusing terminology, unclear assumptions, or discontinuous logic flows.

Listen Actively   When someone talks, we hear. But too often we don't listen. Listening is an active search for meaning, whereas hearing is passive. In listening, two people are thinking: the receiver and the sender.

Many of us are poor listeners. Why? Because it's difficult, and it's usually more satisfying to be on the offensive. Listening, in fact, is often more tiring than talking. It demands intellectual effort. Unlike hearing, **active listening** demands total concentration. The average person speaks at a rate of about 150 words per minute, whereas we have the capacity to listen at the rate of nearly 1,000 words per minute.[11] The difference obviously leaves idle time for the brain and opportunities for the mind to wander.

Active listening is enhanced by developing empathy with the sender—that is, by placing yourself in the sender's position. Because senders differ in attitudes, interests, needs, and expectations, empathy makes it easier to understand the actual content of a message. An empathetic listener reserves judgment on the message's content and carefully listens to what is being said. The goal is to improve one's ability to receive the full meaning of a communication without having it distorted by premature
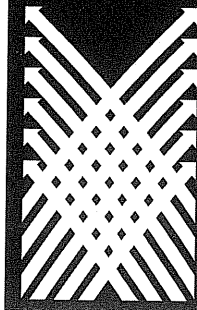
Is It Unethical to Purposely Distort Information?

The issue of "ethics in lying" was introduced in Chapter 1. Since then, you've had ample time to think about this issue. Because lying is such a broad concern and so closely intertwined with interpersonal communication, this might be a good time to think again about dilemmas that managers face relating to the intentional distortion of information.

You have just seen your division's sales report for last month. Sales are down considerably. Your boss, who works 2,000 miles away in another city, is unlikely to see last month's sales figures. You're optimistic that sales will pick up this month and next so that your overall quarterly numbers will be acceptable. You also know that your boss is the type of person who hates to hear bad news. You're having a phone conversation today with your boss. He happens to ask, in passing, how last month's sales went. Do you tell him the truth?

A subordinate asks you about a rumor she's heard that your department and all its employees will be transferred from New York to Dallas. You know the rumor to be true, but you would rather not let the information out just yet. You're fearful that it could hurt departmental morale and lead to premature resignations. What do you say to your employee?

These two incidents illustrate dilemmas that managers face relating to evading the truth, distorting facts, or lying to others.

It might not always be in a manager's best interest or those of his or her unit to provide full and complete information. In fact, a strong argument can be made for managers to purposely keep their communications vague and unclear.[12] Keeping communications fuzzy can cut down on questions, permit faster decision making, minimize objections, reduce opposition, make it easier to deny one's earlier statements, preserve the freedom to change one's mind, permit one to say "No" diplomatically, help to avoid confrontation and anxiety, and provide other benefits that work to the advantage of the manager.

Is it unethical to purposely distort communications to get a favorable outcome? Is distortion acceptable but lying not? What about "little white lies" that really don't hurt anybody? What do *you* think?

judgments or interpretations. Active listening skills are discussed in considerable detail beginning on the next page.

Constrain Emotions   It would be naive to assume that managers always communicate in a fully rational manner. We know that emotions can severely cloud and distort the transference of meaning. A manager who is emotionally upset over an issue is more likely to misconstrue incoming messages and fail to express his or her outgoing messages clearly and accurately. What can the manager do? The simplest answer is to desist from further communication until he or she has regained composure.

Watch Nonverbal Cues   If actions speak louder than words, then it's important to watch your actions to make sure that they align with and reinforce the words that go along with them. We noted that nonverbal messages carry a great deal of weight.

Given this fact, the effective communicator watches his or her nonverbal cues to ensure that they too convey the desired message.

Developing Interpersonal Skills

Would it surprise you to know that more managers are probably fired because of poor interpersonal skills than for lack of technical ability on the job?[13] A survey of 191 top executives at six *Fortune* 500 companies found that, according to these executives, the single biggest reason for failure was poor interpersonal skills.[14] The Center for Creative Leadership in North Carolina estimates that half of all managers and 30 percent of all senior managers have some type of difficulty with people.[15]

If you need any further evidence of the importance of interpersonal skills, we would point to a recent comprehensive study of the people who hire students with undergraduate business degrees and depend on these hires to fill future management vacancies. This study found that the area in which these graduates were most deficient was in leadership and interpersonal skills.[16] Of course, these overall findings are consistent with our view of the manager's job. Because managers ultimately get things done through others, competencies in leadership, communication, and other interpersonal skills must be a prerequisite to managerial effectiveness.

In the rest of this chapter, we'll review the key interpersonal skills that every manager needs to develop.[17]

Active Listening Skills

The ability to be an effective listener is too often taken for granted. We confuse hearing with listening. Hearing is merely picking up sound vibrations. Listening is making sense of what we hear. Listening requires paying attention, interpreting, and remembering sound stimuli.

Active Versus Passive Listening

Effective listening is active rather than passive. In passive listening, you're much like a tape recorder. You absorb the information given. If the speaker provides you with a clear message and makes his or her delivery interesting enough to keep your attention, you'll probably get most of what the speaker is trying to communicate. But active listening requires you to get inside the speaker so that you can understand the communication from his or her point of view. As you'll see, active listening is hard work. You have to concentrate, and you have to want to fully understand what a speaker is saying. Students who use active listening techniques for an entire fifty-minute lecture are as tired as their instructor when the lecture is over because they have put as much energy into listening as the instructor put into speaking.

There are four essential requirements for active listening. You need to listen with (1) intensity, (2) empathy, (3) acceptance, and (4) a willingness to take responsibility for completeness.[18]

As noted previously, the human brain is capable of handling a speaking rate that is about six times as fast as that of the average speaker. That leaves a lot of time for idle mind wandering while listening. The active listener concentrates intensely on what the speaker is saying and tunes out the thousands of miscellaneous thoughts (about money, sex, vacations, parties, friends, getting the car fixed, and the like) that create distractions. What do active listeners do with their idle brain time? Summarize and

Patricia Carrigan, a former plant manager for General Motors, used her finely-honed interpersonal skills to break down the traditionally antagonistic relationship between management and the union at GM's Lakewood assembly plant in Atlanta.

integrate what has been said! They put each new bit of information into the context of what has preceded it.

Empathy requires you to put yourself in the speaker's shoes. You try to understand what the *speaker* wants to communicate rather than what *you* want to understand. Notice that empathy demands both knowledge of the speaker and flexibility on your part. You need to suspend your own thoughts and feelings and adjust what you see and feel to your speaker's world. In that way you increase the likelihood that you will interpret the message being spoken in the way the speaker intended.

An active listener demonstrates acceptance. He or she listens objectively without judging content. This is no easy task. It is natural to be distracted by the content of what a speaker says, especially when we disagree with it. When we hear something we disagree with, we begin formulating our mental arguments to counter what is being said. Of course, in doing this we miss the rest of the message. The challenge for the active listener is to absorb what is being said and to withhold judgment on content until the speaker is finished.

The final ingredient of active listening is taking responsibility for completeness. That is, the listener does whatever is necessary to get the full intended meaning from the speaker's communication. Two widely used active listening techniques to achieve this end are listening for feelings as well as for content and asking questions to ensure understanding.

Developing Effective Active Listening Skills

From a review of the active listening literature, we can identify eight specific behaviors that effective listeners demonstrate.[19] As you review these behaviors, ask yourself the degree to which they describe your listening practices. If you're not currently using these techniques, there is no better time than today to begin developing them.

Make Eye Contact   How do you feel when somebody doesn't look at you when you're speaking? If you're like most people, you're likely to interpret this as aloofness or disinterest. It's ironic that while "you listen with your ears, people judge whether you are listening by looking at your eyes."[20] Making eye contact with the speaker focuses your attention, reduces the likelihood that you will become distracted, and encourages the speaker.

Exhibit Affirmative Nods and Appropriate Facial Expressions   The effective listener shows interest in what is being said. How? Through nonverbal signals. Affirmative nods and appropriate facial expressions, when added to good eye contact, convey to the speaker that you're listening.

Avoid Distracting Actions or Gestures   The other side of showing interest is avoiding actions that suggest that your mind is somewhere else. When listening, *don't* look at your watch, shuffle papers, play with your pencil, or engage in similar distractions. They make the speaker feel that you're bored or uninterested. Furthermore, they indicate that you *aren't* fully attentive and might be missing part of the message that the speaker wants to convey.

Ask Questions   The critical listener analyzes what he or she hears and asks questions. This behavior provides clarification, ensures understanding, and assures the speaker that you're listening.

paraphrasing
Restating what a speaker has said but in your own words.

Paraphrase   **Paraphrasing** means restating *in your own words* what the speaker has said. The effective listener uses phrases as: "What I hear you saying is . . ." or "Do you mean . . . ?" Why rephrase what's already been said? There are two reasons.

First, it's an excellent control device to check on whether you're listening carefully. You can't paraphrase accurately if your mind is wandering or if you're thinking about what you're going to say next. Second, it's a control for accuracy. By rephrasing in your own words what the speaker has said and feeding it back to the speaker, you verify the accuracy of your understanding.

Avoid Interrupting the Speaker   Let the speaker complete his or her thought before you try to respond. Don't try to second-guess where the speaker's thoughts are going. When the speaker is finished, you'll know it.

Don't Overtalk   Most of us would rather speak our own ideas than listen to what someone else says. Too many of us listen only because it's the price we have to pay to get people to let us talk. While talking might be more fun and silence might be uncomfortable, you can't talk and listen at the same time. The good listener recognizes this fact and doesn't overtalk.

Make Smooth Transitions Between the Roles of Speaker and Listener   As a student sitting in a lecture hall, you probably find it relatively easy to get into an effective listening frame of mind. Why? Because communication is essentially one-way; the instructor talks and you listen. But the instructor–student dyad is atypical. In most work situations you're continually shifting back and forth between the roles of speaker and listener. The effective listener makes transitions smoothly from speaker to listener and back to speaker. From a listening perspective this means concentrating on what a speaker has to say and practicing not thinking about what you're going to say as soon as you get your chance.

Feedback Skills

Ask a manager about the feedback he or she gives subordinates, and you're likely to get a qualified answer. If the feedback is positive, it's likely to be given promptly and enthusiastically. Negative feedback is often treated very differently. Like most of us, managers don't particularly enjoy being the bearers of bad news. They fear offending or having to deal with the recipient's defensiveness. The result is that negative feedback is often avoided, delayed, or substantially distorted.[21] The purposes of this section are to show you the importance of providing both positive and negative feedback and to identify specific techniques to make your feedback more effective.

Positive Versus Negative Feedback

We said that managers treat positive and negative feedback differently. So, too, do recipients. You need to understand this fact and adjust your style accordingly.

Positive feedback is more readily and accurately perceived than negative feedback. Furthermore, while positive feedback is almost always accepted, negative feedback often meets resistance.[22] Why? The logical answer seems to be that people want to hear good news and block out the bad. Positive feedback fits what most people wish to hear and already believe about themselves.

Does this mean that you should avoid giving negative feedback? No! What it means is that you need to be aware of potential resistance and learn to use negative feedback in situations in which it is most likely to be accepted.[23] What are those situations? Research indicates that negative feedback is most likely to be accepted when it comes from a credible source or if it is objective in form. Subjective impressions carry weight only when they come from a person with high status and

credibility.[24] This suggests that negative feedback that is supported by hard data—numbers, specific examples, and the like—has a good chance of being accepted. Negative feedback that is subjective can be a meaningful tool for experienced managers, particularly those high in the organization who have earned the respect of their employees. From less experienced managers, those in the lower ranks of the organization, and those whose reputations have not yet been established, negative feedback that is subjective in nature is not likely to be well received.

Developing Effective Feedback Skills

There are six specific suggestions that we can make to help you be more effective in providing feedback.

Focus on Specific Behaviors   Feedback should be specific rather than general.[25] Avoid such statements as "You have a bad attitude" or "I'm really impressed with the good job you did." They're vague, and while they provide information, they don't tell the recipient enough to correct the "bad attitude" or *on what basis* you concluded that a "good job" had been done.

Suppose you said something like "Bob, I'm concerned with your attitude toward your work. You were a half hour late to yesterday's staff meeting and then told me you hadn't read the preliminary report we were discussing. Today you tell me you're taking off three hours early for a dental appointment"; or "Jan, I was really pleased with the job you did on the Phillips account. They increased their purchases from us by 22 percent last month, and I got a call a few days ago from Dan Phillips complimenting me on how quickly you responded to those specification changes for the MJ-7 microchip." Both of these statements focus on specific behaviors. They tell the recipient *why* you are being critical or complimentary.

Keep Feedback Impersonal   Feedback, particularly the negative kind, should be descriptive rather than judgmental or evaluative.[26] No matter how upset you are, keep the feedback job-related and never criticize someone personally because of an inappropriate action. Telling people they're "stupid," "incompetent," or the like is almost always counterproductive. It provokes such an emotional reaction that the performance deviation itself is apt to be overlooked. When you're criticizing, remember that you're censuring a job-related behavior, not the person. You might be tempted to tell someone he or she is "rude and insensitive" (which might well be true); however, that's hardly impersonal It's better to say something like "You interrupted me three times, with questions that were not urgent, when you knew I was talking long-distance to a customer in Scotland."

Keep Feedback Goal-Oriented   Feedback should not be given primarily to "dump" or "unload" on another.[27] If you have to say something negative, make sure it's directed toward the recipient's goals. Ask yourself whom the feedback is supposed to help. If the answer is essentially *you*—"I've got something I just want to get off my chest"—bite your tongue. Such feedback undermines your credibility and lessens the meaning and influence of future feedback.

Make Feedback Well-Timed   Feedback is most meaningful to a recipient when there is a very short interval between his or her behavior and the receipt of feedback about that behavior.[28] To illustrate, a new employee who makes a mistake is more likely to respond to his manager's suggestions for improvement right after the mistake or at the end of that working day, rather than during a performance-review session several months later. If you have to spend time recreating a situation and refreshing someone's memory of it, the feedback you're providing is likely to be ineffective.[29]

Moreover, if you are particularly concerned with *changing* behavior, delays in providing feedback on the undesirable actions lessen the likelihood that the feedback will be effective in bringing about the desired change.[30] Of course, making feedback prompt merely for promptness' sake can backfire if you have insufficient information, if you're angry, or if you're otherwise emotionally upset. In such instances, "well-timed" could mean "somewhat delayed."

Ensure Understanding   Is your feedback concise and complete enough that the recipient clearly and fully understands your communication? Remember that every successful communication requires both transference and understanding of meaning. If feedback is to be effective, you need to ensure that the recipient understands it.[31] Consistent with our discussion of listening techniques, you should have the recipient rephrase the content of your feedback to find out whether it fully captures the meaning you intended.

Direct Negative Feedback Toward Behavior That the Recipient Can Control
There's little value in reminding a person of some shortcoming over which he or she has no control. Negative feedback should be directed toward behavior the recipient can do something about.[32] For example, to criticize an employee who is late because she forgot to set her wake-up alarm is valid. To criticize her for being late when the subway she takes to work every day had a power failure, trapping her underground for half an hour, is pointless. There is nothing she could have done to correct what happened.

Additionally, when negative feedback is given concerning something that the recipient can control, it might be a good idea to indicate specifically what can be done to improve the situation. This takes some of the sting out of the criticism and offers guidance to recipients who understand the problem but don't know how to resolve it.

Delegation Skills

Managers get things done through other people. This description recognizes that there are limits to any manager's time and knowledge. Effective managers, therefore, need to understand the value of delegating and know how to do it.[33]

What Is Delegation?

delegation
The assignment of authority and responsibility to another person to carry out specific activities.

Delegation is the assignment of authority to another person to carry out specific activities. It allows a subordinate to make decisions—that is, it's a shift of decision-making authority from one organizational level to another, lower one.[34] (See Figure 18-2.)

Delegation should not be confused with participation. In participative decision making, there is a sharing of authority. With delegation, subordinates make decisions on their own.
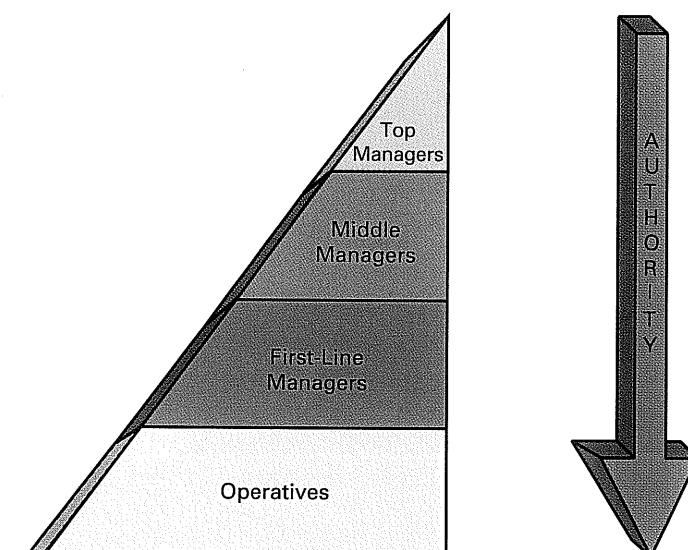
Is Delegation Abdication?

When done properly, delegation is *not* abdication. The key word here is "properly." If you dump tasks on a subordinate without clarifying the exact job to be done, the range of the subordinate's discretion, the expected level of performance, the time the tasks are to be completed, and similar concerns, you are abdicating responsibility and inviting trouble.[35]

FIGURE 18-2
Effective Delegation

Effective delegation pushes authority down vertically through the ranks of an organization.

Don't fall into the trap of assuming that, to avoid the appearance of abdicating, you should minimize delegation. Unfortunately, this is the approach taken by many new and inexperienced managers. Lacking confidence in their subordinates or fearful that they will be criticized for their subordinates' mistakes, these managers try to do everything themselves.

It might very well be true that you're capable of doing the tasks better, faster, or with fewer mistakes. The catch is that your time and energy are scarce resources. It's not possible for you to do everything yourself. You need to learn to delegate if you're going to be effective in your job.[36] This fact suggests two important points. First, you should expect and accept some mistakes by your subordinates. Mistakes are part of delegation. They are often good learning experiences for your subordinates, as long as their costs are not excessive. Second, to ensure that the costs of mistakes don't exceed the value of the learning, you need to put adequate controls in place. As we'll discuss later in this section, delegation without feedback controls that let you know when there are serious problems *is* abdication.

Contingency Factors in Delegation

How much authority should a manager delegate? Should he or she keep authority centralized, delegating only the least number of duties? If not, what contingency factors should be considered in determining the degree to which authority is delegated? The following contingency factors provide some guidance.

The Size of the Organization   The larger the organization, the greater the number of decisions that have to be made. Because the top managers in an organization have only so much time and can obtain only so much information, they become increasingly dependent in larger organizations on the decision making of lower-level managers. Therefore, managers in large organizations resort to increased delegation.

The Importance of the Duty or Decision   The more important a duty or decision is (as expressed in terms of cost and impact on the future of the organization), the less likely it is to be delegated. For instance, a department head may be delegated

In large companies such as Citibank, effective managers have to delegate authority or decision making will become slow and unresponsive.
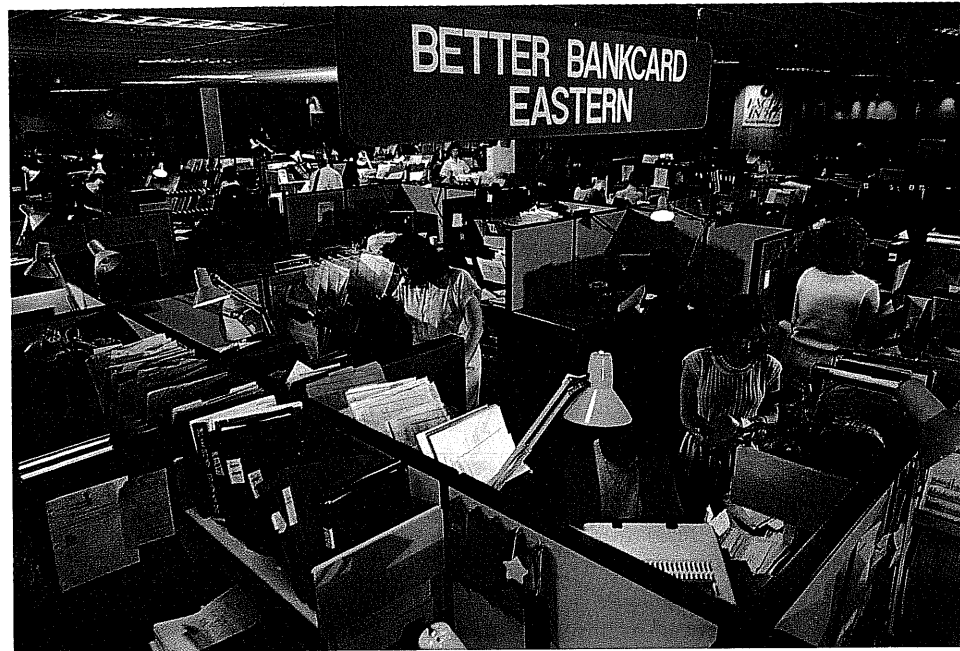
authority to make expenditures up to $5,000, and division heads and vice presidents up to $25,000 and $100,000, respectively.

Task Complexity The more complex the task, the more difficult it is for top management to possess current and sufficient technical information to make effective decisions. Complex tasks require greater expertise, and decisions about them should be delegated to the individuals who possess the necessary technical knowledge.

Organizational Culture If management has confidence and trust in subordinates, the culture will support a greater degree of delegation. However, if top management does not have confidence in the abilities of lower-level managers, it will delegate authority begrudgingly. In such instances, as little authority as possible will be delegated.

Qualities of Subordinates A final contingency consideration is the qualities of subordinates. Delegation requires subordinates with the skills, abilities, and motivation to accept authority and act on it. If this is lacking, top management will be reluctant to relinquish authority.

Developing Effective Delegating Skills

A number of actions differentiate the effective from the ineffective delegator.[37]

Clarify the Assignment The place to begin is to determine *what* is to be delegated and to *whom*. You need to identify the person who is best capable of doing the task and then determine whether he or she has the time and motivation to do the job.

Assuming that you have a willing and able subordinate, it is your responsibility to provide clear information on what is being delegated, the results you expect, and any time or performance expectations you hold.

Unless there is an overriding need to adhere to specific methods you should delegate only the results. That is, get agreement on what is to be done and the results

**MANAGERS
WHO MADE A
DIFFERENCE**

Debbi Fields at Mrs. Fields Inc.

Debbi Fields' desire to do it all—to be involved in every decision—was almost the undoing of her cookie empire. Fortunately for her company, she recognized the problem in time and has learned the importance of delegating.[38]

The Debbi Fields story is well known. She began selling chocolate chip cookies in 1977, at the age of twenty. Annual sales rocketed from $200,000 in 1977 to more than $100 million in 1988. But along the way she remained fixed to a style that has destroyed many growing companies: She wouldn't delegate. Says Fields, " . . . I used to ask managers what they needed, and then I did it for them. 'Your ice machine is broken? Your milk delivery is off? I'll take care of it.' If I saw something I didn't like, I fixed it myself, right then and there."

Her micromanagement style worked when she had one or two stores. It didn't work when she had 600. Insistent on doing everything herself, Fields didn't pay attention to the big picture. The company's aggressive growth strategy—which included the purchase of the La Petite Boulangerie bakery chain from PepsiCo and expansion into Europe—demanded her time, but she was too busy trying to make all the decisions. And her failure to delegate began to show by the late 1980s. Profits plummeted. Costs got out of hand. In 1988, the company closed eighty-five stores.

Although it hasn't been easy for Debbi Fields, she's learned her lesson. The company reorganized by adding another layer of management. And she is delegating real decision authority to lower-level managers.

One of the more pleasant surprises for Mrs. Fields is that by delegating authority she is actually more accessible to her employees. She now has more opportunity to visit stores, meet the stores' staffs, and get involved in the company's employee training and development program.

expected, but let the subordinate decide on the means. By focusing on goals and allowing the employee the freedom to use his or her own judgment as to how those goals are to be achieved, you increase trust between you and the employee, improve the employee's motivation, and enhance accountability for the results.

Specify the Subordinate's Range of Discretion Every act of delegation comes with constraints. You are delegating authority to act, but not *unlimited* authority. What you are delegating is authority to act on certain issues within certain parameters. You need to specify what those parameters are so that subordinates know, in no uncertain terms, the range of their discretion. When this has been successfully communicated, both you and the subordinate will have the same idea of the limits to the latter's authority and how far he or she can go without further approval.

Allow the Subordinate to Participate One of the best ways to decide how much authority will be necessary to accomplish a task is to allow the subordinate who will

be held accountable for that task to participate in that decision. Be aware, however, that participation can present its own set of potential problems as a result of subordinates' self-interest and biases in evaluating their own abilities. Some subordinates might be personally motivated to expand their authority beyond what they need and beyond what they are capable of handling. Allowing such people too much participation in deciding what tasks they should take on and how much authority they must have to complete those tasks can undermine the effectiveness of the delegation process.

Inform Others That Delegation Has Occurred   Delegation should not take place in a vacuum. Not only do the manager and subordinate need to know specifically what has been delegated and how much authority has been granted, but anyone else who is likely to be affected by the delegation act also needs to be informed. This includes people outside the organization as well as inside it. Essentially, you need to convey what has been delegated (the task and amount of authority) and to whom. Failure to inform others makes conflict likely and decreases the chances that your subordinate will be able to accomplish the delegated task efficiently.

Establish Feedback Controls   To delegate without instituting feedback controls is to invite problems. There is always the possibility that a subordinate will misuse the discretion that he or she has been delegated. The establishment of controls to monitor the subordinate's progress increases the likelihood that important problems will be identified early and that the task will be completed on time and to the desired specifications.

Ideally, controls should be determined at the time of the initial assignment. Agree on a specific time for completion of the task and then set progress dates when the subordinate will report back on how well he or she is doing and any major problems that have surfaced. These controls can be supplemented with periodic spot checks to ensure that authority guidelines are not being abused, organization policies are being followed, proper procedures are being met, and the like.

Too much of a good thing can be dysfunctional. If the controls are too constraining, the subordinate will be deprived of the opportunity to build self-confidence and much of the motivational aspects of delegation will be lost. A well-designed control system, which we'll elaborate on in detail in Chapter 19, permits your subordinates to make small mistakes but quickly alerts you when big mistakes are imminent.

Discipline Skills

discipline
Actions taken by a manager to enforce the organization's standards and regulations.

It has been fashionable in management circles for years to talk about rewards and downplay punishment or discipline. This tendency has essentially derived from the research on learning, which was discussed in Chapter 14. According to learning theorists, punishment can decrease or eliminate an undesirable behavior, but it will not necessarily lead to desirable behaviors. The negative connotation of punishment and discipline is not a sufficient reason to dismiss it as a management skill for modifying employee behavior.[39] As most practicing managers have learned, the use of discipline is sometimes necessary in dealing with problem employees.

What specifically do we mean when we use the term **discipline?** It refers to actions taken by a manager to enforce the organization's standards and regulations. Table 18–1 lists the most common types of discipline problems.

TABLE 18–1   Types of Discipline Problems and Examples of Each

Attendance
    Absenteeism, tardiness, abuse of sick leave
On-the-Job Behaviors
    Insubordination, failure to use safety devices, alcohol or drug abuse
Dishonesty
    Theft, lying to superiors, falsifying information on employment applications
Outside Activities
    Working for a competing organization, criminal activities, unauthorized strike activities

The "Hot Stove" Rule

"hot stove" rule
Discipline should immediately follow an infraction, provide ample warning, be consistent, and impersonal.

The **"hot stove" rule** is a frequently cited set of principles that can guide you in effectively disciplining an employee.[40] The name comes from the similarities between touching a hot stove and administering discipline. Both are painful, but the analogy goes further. When you touch a hot stove, you get an *immediate* response. The burn you receive is instantaneous, leaving no doubt in your mind about the relation between cause and effect. You have ample *warning*. You know what happens if you touch a hot stove. Furthermore, the result is *consistent*. Every time you touch a hot stove, you get the same result—you get burned. Finally, the result is *impersonal*. Regardless of who you are, if you touch a hot stove, you will be burned.

The analogy with discipline should be apparent, but let's briefly expand on each of these four points, since they are central tenets in developing your disciplining skills.

Immediacy   The effect of a disciplinary action will be reduced as the time between the infraction and the penalty lengthens. The more quickly the discipline follows the offense, the more likely it is that the employee will associate the discipline with the offense rather than with you as the imposer of the discipline. Therefore it is best to begin the disciplinary process as soon as possible after you notice a violation. Of course, the immediacy requirement should not result in undue haste. Fair and objective treatment should not be compromised for expediency.

Advance Warning   As a manager, you have an obligation to give advance warning before initiating formal disciplinary action. This means that the employee must be aware of the organization's rules and accept its standards of behavior. Disciplinary action is more likely to be interpreted as fair by employees when they have received clear warning that a given violation will lead to discipline and when they know what that discipline will be.

Consistency   Fair treatment of employees demands that disciplinary action be consistent. If you enforce rule violations in an inconsistent manner, the rules will lose their impact, morale will decline, and employees will question your competence. Productivity will suffer as a result of employee insecurity and anxiety. Your employees will want to know the limits of permissible behavior, and they will look to your actions for guidance. Consistency, by the way, need not result in treating everyone exactly alike because that ignores mitigating circumstances. It does, however, put the responsibility on you to clearly justify disciplinary actions that might appear inconsistent to employees.

Impersonal Nature   The last guideline that flows from the "hot stove" rule is to keep the discipline impersonal. Penalties should be connected with a given violation, not with the personality of the violator. That is, discipline should be directed at what the employee has done, not at the employee. You are penalizing the rule violation, not the individual. Once the penalty has been imposed, you must make every effort to forget the incident. You should attempt to treat the employee just as you did before the infraction.

Developing Effective Discipline Skills

The essence of effective disciplining can be summarized by the following seven behaviors:[41]

Confront the Employee in a Calm, Objective, and Serious Manner   Managers can facilitate many interpersonal situations by a loose, informal, and relaxed manner. The idea in such situations is to put the employee at ease. Administering discipline is not one of those situations. Avoid anger or other emotional responses, and convey your comments in a calm, serious tone. But do *not* try to lessen the tension by cracking jokes or making small talk. Such actions are likely to confuse the employee because they send conflicting signals.

State the Problem Specifically   When you sit down with the employee, indicate that you have documentation and be specific about the problem. Give the date, time, place, individuals involved, and any mitigating circumstances surrounding the violation. Be sure to define the violation in exact terms instead of just citing company regulations or the union contract. It's not the breaking of the rules per se about which you want to convey concern. It's the effect that the rule violation has on the work unit's performance. Explain why the behavior can't be continued by showing how it specifically affects the employee's job performance, the unit's effectiveness, and the employee's colleagues.

Keep the Discussion Impersonal   As we stated in our discussion of feedback skills, criticism should focus on the employee's behavior rather than on the individual personally. For instance, if an employee has been late for work several times, point out how this behavior has increased the workload of others or has lowered departmental morale. Don't criticize the person for being thoughtless or irresponsible.

Allow the Employee to Explain His or Her Position   Regardless of what facts you have uncovered, even if you have the proverbial "smoking gun" to support your accusations, due process demands that you give the employee the opportunity to explain his or her position. From the employee's perspective, what happened? Why did it happen? What was his or her perception of the rules, regulations, and circumstances? If there are significant discrepancies between your version of the violation and the employee's, you might need to do more investigating.

Maintain Control of the Discussion   In most interpersonal exchanges, you want to encourage open dialogue. You want to give up control and create a climate of open communication between equals. This won't work in administering discipline. Why? Because violators are prone to use any opportunity to put you on the defensive. In other words, if you don't take control, they will. Disciplining an employee is, by definition, an authority-based act. You are *enforcing* the organization's standards and regulations, so take control. Ask the employee for his or her side of the story. Get the facts. But don't let the employee interrupt you or divert you from your objective.

Disciplinary action should fit the offense. In the case of William Aramony, head of the United Way, the board bypassed progressive discipline and immediately fired him when it discovered that he was misusing the organization's funds.

Obtain Agreement on How Mistakes Can Be Prevented in the Future   Disciplining should include guidance and direction for correcting the problem. Let the employee state what he or she plans to do in the future to ensure that the violation isn't repeated. For serious violations, have the employee draft a step-by-step plan to change the problem behavior. Then set a timetable with follow-up meetings in which progress can be evaluated.

Select Disciplinary Action Progressively, Considering Mitigating Circumstances   Choose a punishment that is appropriate to the crime.[42] Penalties should get progressively stronger if, or when, an offense is repeated. Typically, progressive disciplinary action begins with a verbal warning and then proceeds through a written reprimand, suspension, a demotion or pay cut, and finally, in the most serious cases, dismissal. The punishment you select should be viewed as fair and consistent. This means acknowledging mitigating circumstances. For example, how severe is the problem? Have there been other disciplinary problems with this employee? If so, for how long? To what extent has the employee been previously warned about the offense? How have similar infractions been dealt with in the past? Answers to questions such as these can help to ensure that mitigating circumstances are considered.

Conflict Management Skills

The ability to manage conflict is undoubtedly one of the most important skills a manager needs to possess. A study of middle- and top-level executives by the American Management Association revealed that the average manager spends approximately 20 percent of his or her time dealing with conflict.[43] The importance of conflict management is reinforced by a survey of what topics practicing managers consider most important in management development programs; conflict management was rated as being more important than decision making, leadership, or communication skills.[44] In further support of our claim, one researcher studied a group of managers and looked at twenty-five skill and personality factors to determine which, if any, were related to managerial success (defined in terms of ratings by one's boss, salary increases, and promotions).[45] Of the twenty-five measures, only one—the ability to handle conflict—was positively related to managerial success.

What Is Conflict?

conflict
Perceived incompatible differences that result in interference or opposition.

When we use the term **conflict**, we are referring to perceived incompatible differences resulting in some form of interference or opposition. Whether the differences are real or not is irrelevant. If people perceive that differences exist, then a conflict state exists. In addition, our definition includes the extremes, from subtle, indirect, and highly controlled forms of interference to overt acts such as strikes, riots, and wars.

traditional view of conflict
The view that all conflict is bad and must be avoided.

human relations view of conflict
The view that conflict is a natural and inevitable outcome in any organization.

Over the years, three differing views have evolved toward conflict in organizations.[46] One argues that conflict must be avoided, that it indicates a malfunctioning within the organization. We call this the **traditional view of conflict**. A second, the **human relations view of conflict**, argues that conflict is a natural and inevitable outcome in any organization and that it need not be evil but, rather, has the potential to be a positive force in contributing to an organization's performance. The third and most recent perspective proposes not only that conflict can be a positive force in an organization, but also that some conflict is *absolutely necessary* for an organization or

interactionist view of conflict
The view that some conflict is necessary for an organization to perform effectively.

units within the organization to perform effectively. We label this third approach the **interactionist view of conflict.**

The Traditional View   The early approach assumed that conflict was bad and would *always* have a negative impact on an organization. Conflict became synonymous with violence, destruction, and irrationality. Because conflict was harmful, it was to be avoided. Management had a responsibility to rid the organization of conflict. This traditional view dominated management literature during the late nineteenth century and continued until the mid-1940s.

The Human Relations View   The human relations position argued that conflict was a natural and inevitable occurrence in all organizations. Because conflict was inevitable, the human relations approach advocated acceptance of conflict. This approach rationalized the existence of conflict; conflict cannot be eliminated, and there are times when it may even benefit the organization. The human relations view dominated conflict thinking from the late 1940s through the mid-1970s.

The Interactionist View   The current theoretical perspective on conflict is the interactionist approach. While the human relations approach accepts conflict, the interactionist approach *encourages* conflict on the grounds that a harmonious, peaceful, tranquil, and cooperative organization is prone to becoming static, apathetic, and nonresponsive to needs for change and innovation. The major contribution of the interactionist approach, therefore, is that it encourages managers to maintain an ongoing minimum level of conflict—enough to keep units viable, self-critical, and creative.

Functional Versus Dysfunctional Conflict

functional conflicts
Conflicts that support an organization's goals.

dysfunctional conflicts
Conflicts that prevent an organization from achieving its goals.

The interactionist view does not propose that *all* conflicts are good. Rather, some conflicts support the goals of the organization; these are **functional conflicts** of a constructive form. However, some conflicts prevent an organization from achieving its goals; these are **dysfunctional conflicts** and are destructive forms.

Of course, it is one thing to argue that conflict can be valuable, but how does a manager tell whether a conflict is functional or dysfunctional? Unfortunately, the

Digital Equipment Corp. is one of an increasing number of firms that have learned the value of functional conflict. DEC openly encourages all employees "to push back against the system," and the company rewards those that do.
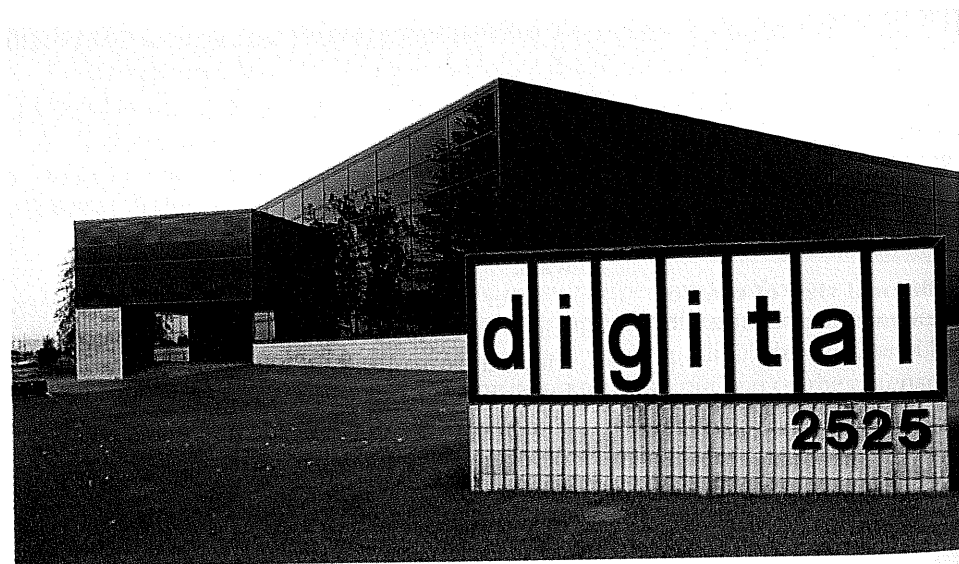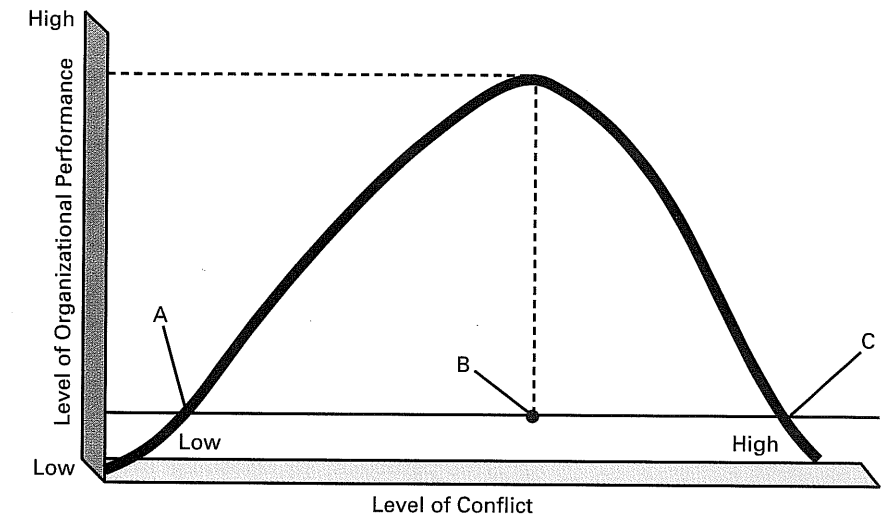
FIGURE 18-3
Conflict and Organizational Performance

Situation	Level of Conflict	Type of Conflict	Organization's Internal Characteristics	Level of Organizational Performance
A	Low or none	Dysfunctional	Apathetic Stagnant Unresponsive to change Lack of new ideas	Low
B	Optimal	Functional	Viable Self-critical Innovative	High
C	High	Dysfunctional	Disruptive Chaotic Uncooperative	Low

demarcation is neither clear nor precise. No one level of conflict can be adopted as acceptable or unacceptable under all conditions. The type and level of conflict that promote a healthy and positive involvement toward one department's goals may, in another department or in the same department at another time, be highly dysfunctional. Functionality or dysfunctionality, therefore, is a matter of judgment. Figure 18-3 illustrates the challenge facing managers. They want to create an environment within their organization or organizational unit in which conflict is healthy but not allowed to run to pathological extremes. Neither too little nor too much conflict is desirable. Managers should stimulate conflict to gain the full benefits of its functional properties, yet reduce its level when it becomes a disruptive force. Because we have yet to devise a sophisticated measuring instrument for assessing whether a given conflict level is functional or dysfunctional, it remains for managers to make intelligent judgments concerning whether conflict levels in their units are optimal, too high, or too low.

Developing Effective Conflict Resolution Skills

If conflict is dysfunctional, what can a manager do? In this section, we'll review conflict resolution skills. Essentially, you need to know your basic conflict-handling style, as well as those of the conflicting parties, to understand the situation that has created the conflict and to be aware of your options.

What Is Your Underlying Conflict-Handling Style?   While most of us have the ability to vary our conflict response according to the situation, each of us has a preferred style for handling conflicts.[47] The self-assessment exercise at the end of this chapter can help you to identify your basic conflict handling style. You might be able to change your preferred style to suit the context in which a certain conflict exists; however, your basic style tells you how you're *most likely* to behave and the conflict-handling approaches on which you *most often* rely.

Be Judicious in Selecting the Conflicts That You Want to Handle   Not every conflict justifies your attention. Some might not be worth the effort; others might be unmanageable.

Not every conflict is worth your time and effort to resolve. While avoidance might appear to be a "cop-out," it can sometimes be the most appropriate response. You can improve your overall management effectiveness, and your conflict-management skills in particular, by avoiding trivial conflicts. Choose your battles judiciously, saving your efforts for the ones that count.

Regardless of our desires, reality tells us that some conflicts are unmanageable.[48] When antagonisms are deeply rooted, when one or both parties wish to prolong a conflict, or when emotions run so high that constructive interaction is impossible, your efforts to manage the conflict are unlikely to meet with much success.

Don't be lured into the naive belief that a good manager can resolve every conflict effectively. Some aren't worth the effort. Some are outside your realm of influence. Still others may be functional and, as such, are best left alone.

Evaluate the Conflict Players   If you choose to manage a conflict situation, it's important that you take the time to get to know the players. Who is involved in the conflict? What interests does each party represent? What are each player's values, personality, feelings, and resources? Your chances of success in managing a conflict will be greatly enhanced if you can view the conflict situation through the eyes of the conflicting parties.

Assess the Source of the Conflict   Conflicts don't pop out of thin air. They have causes. Because your approach to resolving a conflict is likely to be determined largely by its causes, you need to determine the source of the conflict. Research indicates that while conflicts have varying causes, they can generally be separated into three categories: Communication differences, structural differences, and personal differences.[49]

Communication differences are disagreements arising from semantic difficulties, misunderstandings, and noise in the communication channels. People are often quick to assume that most conflicts are caused by lack of communication but, as one author has noted, there is usually plenty of communication going on in most conflicts.[50] As we pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the mistake many people make is equating good communication with having others agree with their views. What might at first look like an interpersonal conflict based on poor communication is usually found, upon closer analysis, to be a disagreement caused by different role requirements, unit goals, personalities, value systems, or similar factors. As a source of conflict for managers, poor communication probably gets more attention than it deserves.

As we discussed in Chapter 10, organizations are horizontally and vertically differentiated. This *structural differentiation* creates problems of integration. The frequent result is conflicts. Individuals disagree over goals, decision alternatives, performance criteria, and resource allocations. These conflicts are not due to poor communication or personal animosities. Rather, they are rooted in the structure of the organization itself.

The third conflict source is *personal differences*. Conflicts can evolve out of individual idiosyncrasies and personal value systems. The chemistry between some people makes it hard for them to work together. Factors such as background, education, experience, and training mold each individual into a unique personality with a particular set of values. The result is people who may be perceived by others as abrasive, untrustworthy, or strange. These personal differences can create conflict.

Know Your Options   What resolution tools or techniques can a manager call upon to reduce conflict when it is too high? Managers essentially can draw upon five conflict-resolution options: Avoidance, accommodation, forcing, compromise, and collaboration.[51] Each has particular strengths and weaknesses, and no one option is ideal for every situation. You should consider each a "tool" in your conflict-management "tool chest." While you might be better at using some tools than others, the skilled manager knows what each tool can do and when each is likely to be most effective.

As we noted earlier, not every conflict requires an assertive action. Sometimes **avoidance**—just withdrawing from or suppressing the conflict—is the best solution. When is avoidance a desirable strategy? When the conflict is trivial, when emotions are running high and time is needed to cool them down, or when the potential disruption from a more assertive action outweighs the benefits of resolution.

The goal of **accommodation** is to maintain harmonious relationships by placing another's needs and concerns above your own. You might, for example, yield to another person's position on an issue. This option is most viable when the issue under dispute isn't that important to you or when you want to build up credits for later issues.

In **forcing**, you attempt to satisfy your own needs at the expense of the other party. In organizations this is most often illustrated by a manager using his or her formal authority to resolve a dispute. Forcing works well when you need a quick resolution on important issues where unpopular actions must be taken, and when commitment by others to your solution is not critical.

A **compromise** requires each party to give up something of value. Typically this is the approach taken by management and labor in negotiating a new labor contract. Compromise can be an optimum strategy when conflicting parties are about equal in power, when it is desirable to achieve a temporary solution to a complex issue, or when time pressures demand an expedient solution.

Collaboration is the ultimate win–win solution. All parties to the conflict seek to satisfy their interests. It is typically characterized by open and honest discussion among the parties, active listening to understand differences, and careful deliberation over a full range of alternatives to find a solution that is advantageous to all. When is collaboration the best conflict option? When time pressures are minimal, when all parties seriously want a win–win solution, and when the issue is too important to be compromised.

What About Conflict Stimulation?

What about the other side of conflict management—situations that require managers to *stimulate* conflict? The notion of stimulating conflict is often difficult to accept. For almost all of us the term "conflict" has a negative connotation, and the idea of purposely creating conflict seems to be the antithesis of good management. Few of us personally enjoy being in conflict situations. Yet the evidence demonstrates that there are situations in which an increase in conflict is constructive.[52] Given this reality and the fact that there is no clear demarcation between functional and dysfunctional conflict, we have listed in Table 18–2 a set of questions that might help you. While there is no definitive method for assessing the need for more conflict, an affirmative

avoidance
Withdrawal from or suppression of conflict.

accommodation
Resolving conflicts by placing another's needs and concerns above one's own.

forcing
Satisfying one's own needs at the expense of another's.

compromise
A solution to conflict in which each party gives up something of value.

collaboration
Resolving conflict by seeking a solution advantageous to all parties.

TABLE 18-2 Is Conflict Stimulation Needed?*

1. Are you surrounded by "yes people"?
2. Are subordinates afraid to admit ignorance and uncertainties to you?
3. Is there so much concentration by decision makers on reaching a compromise that they lose sight of values, long-term objectives, or the organization's welfare?
4. Do managers believe that it is in their best interest to maintain the impression of peace and cooperation in their unit, regardless of the price?
5. Is there an excessive concern by decision makers for not hurting the feelings of others?
6. Do managers believe that popularity is more important for obtaining organizational rewards than competence and high performance?
7. Are managers unduly enamored of obtaining consensus for their decisions?
8. Do employees show unusually high resistance to change?
9. Is there a lack of new ideas?
10. Is there an unusually low level of employee turnover?

* An affirmative answer to any or all of these questions suggests the need for conflict stimulation.
Source: From Stephen P. Robbins, "'Conflict Management' and 'Conflict Resolution' Are Not Synonymous Terms," *California Management Review*, Winter 1978, p. 71. With permission of the Regents.

answer to one or more of the questions in Table 18–2 suggests a need for conflict stimulation.

We know a lot more about resolving conflict than about stimulating it. That's only natural, because human beings have been concerned with the subject of conflict reduction for hundreds, maybe thousands, of years. The dearth of ideas on conflict stimulation techniques reflects the very recent interest in the subject. The following are some preliminary suggestions that managers might want to utilize.[53]

Change the Organization's Culture   The initial step in stimulating functional conflict is for managers to convey to subordinates the message, supported by actions, that conflict has its legitimate place. Individuals who challenge the status quo, suggest innovative ideas, offer divergent opinions, and demonstrate original thinking need to be rewarded visibly with promotions, salary increases, and other positive reinforcers.

Use Communication   As far back as Franklin Roosevelt's administration, and probably before, the White House consistently has used communication to stimulate conflict. Senior officials "plant" possible decisions with the media through the infamous "reliable source" route. For example, the name of a prominent judge is "leaked" as a possible Supreme Court appointment. If the candidate survives the public scrutiny, his or her appointment will be announced by the president. However, if the candidate is found lacking by the press, media, and public, the president's press secretary or other high-level official will make a formal statement such as, "At no time was this candidate under consideration." Regardless of party affiliation, occupants of the White House have regularly used the reliable source as a conflict stimulation technique. It is all the more popular because of its handy escape mechanism. If the conflict level gets too high, the source can be denied and eliminated.

Ambiguous or threatening messages also encourage conflict. Information that a plant might close, that a department is likely to be eliminated, or that a layoff is imminent can reduce apathy, stimulate new ideas, and force reevaluation—all positive outcomes that result from increased conflict.

Bring in Outsiders   A widely used method for shaking up a stagnant unit or organization is to bring in—either by hiring from outside or by internal transfer—

individuals whose backgrounds, values, attitudes, or managerial styles differ from those of present members. Many large corporations have used this technique during the last decade in filling vacancies on their boards of directors. Women, minority group members, consumer activists, and others whose backgrounds and interests differ significantly from those of the rest of the board have been purposely selected to add a fresh perspective.

Restructure the Organization   We know that structural variables are a source of conflict. It is therefore only logical that managers look to structure as a conflict stimulation device. Centralizing decisions, realigning work groups, increasing formalization, and increasing interdependencies between units are all structural devices that disrupt the status quo and act to increase conflict levels.

devil's advocate
A person who purposely presents arguments that run counter to those proposed by the majority.

Appoint a Devil's Advocate   A **devil's advocate** is a person who purposely presents arguments that run counter to those proposed by the majority or against current practices. He or she plays the role of the critic, even to the point of arguing against positions with which he or she actually agrees.

A devil's advocate acts as a check against groupthink and practices that have no better justification than "that's the way we've always done it around here." When thoughtfully listened to, the advocate can improve the quality of group decision making. On the other hand, others in the group often view advocates as time wasters, and their appointment is almost certain to delay any decision process.

Negotiation Skills

We know that lawyers and car salesmen spend a lot of their time negotiating. But so, too, do managers. They have to negotiate salaries for incoming employees, cut deals with superiors, work out differences with associates, and resolve conflicts with subordinates.

negotiation
A process in which two or more parties exchange goods or services and attempt to agree upon the exchange rate for them.

For our purposes, we'll define **negotiation** as a process in which two or more parties exchange goods or services and attempt to agree upon the exchange rate for them.[54] Additionally, we'll use the terms *negotiation* and *bargaining* interchangeably.

Bargaining Strategies

There are two general approaches to negotiation—*distributive bargaining* and *integrative bargaining*.[55] These are compared in Table 18–3.

TABLE 18-3 Distributive versus Integrative Bargaining

Bargaining Characteristic	Distributive Bargaining	Integrative Bargaining
Available resources	Fixed amount of resources to be divided	Variable amount of resources to be divided
Primary motivations	I win, you lose	I win, you win
Primary interests	Opposed to each other	Convergent or congruent with each other
Focus of relationships	Short-term	Long-term

Source: Based on R.J. Lewicki and J.A. Litterer, *Negotiation* (Homewood, IL: Irwin, 1985), p. 280.

This tourist in Panama is practicing distributive bargaining when haggling over price with a street vendor.

distributive bargaining
Negotiations that seek to divide up a fixed amount of resources: a win-lose situation.

Distributive bargaining   You see a used car advertised for sale in the newspaper. It appears to be just what you've been looking for. You go out to see the car. It's great and you want it. The owner tells you the asking price. You don't want to pay that much. The two of you then negotiate over the price. The negotiating process you are engaging in is called **distributive bargaining.** Its most identifying feature is that it operates under zero-sum conditions. That is, any gain I make is at your expense, and vice versa. Referring back to the used car example, every dollar you can get the seller to cut from the car's price is a dollar you save. Conversely, every dollar more he or she can get from you comes at your expense. Thus the essence of distributive bargaining is negotiating over who gets what share of a fixed pie.

Probably the most widely cited example of distributive bargaining is in labor-management negotiations over wages. Typically, labor's representatives come to the bargaining table determined to get as much money as possible out of management. Because every cent more that labor negotiates increases management's costs, each party bargains aggressively and treats the other as an opponent who must be defeated.

Figure 18-4 depicts the distributive bargaining strategy. Parties A and B represent the two negotiators. Each has a *target point* that defines what he or she would like to achieve. Each also has a *resistance point,* which marks the lowest outcome that is acceptable—the point below which he or she would break off negotiations rather than accept a less favorable settlement. The area between their resistance points is the settlement range. As long as there is some overlap in their aspiration ranges, there exists a settlement area where each one's aspirations can be met.

When engaged in distributive bargaining, your tactics should focus on trying to get your opponent to agree to your specific target point or to get as close to it as possible. Examples of such tactics are persuading your opponent of the impossibility of getting to his or her target point and the advisability of accepting a settlement near yours; arguing that your target is fair, while your opponent's isn't; and attempting to get your opponent to feel emotionally generous toward you and thus accept an outcome close to your target point.

Integrative bargaining   A sales representative for a women's sportswear manufacturer has just closed a $15,000 order from a small clothing retailer. The sales rep calls in the order to her firm's credit department. She is told that the firm can't approve credit to this customer because of a past slow-pay record. The next day, the sales rep and the firm's credit manager meet to discuss the problem. The sales rep doesn't want to lose the business. Neither does the credit manager, but he also doesn't want to get

FIGURE 18-4
Staking Out the Bargaining Zone
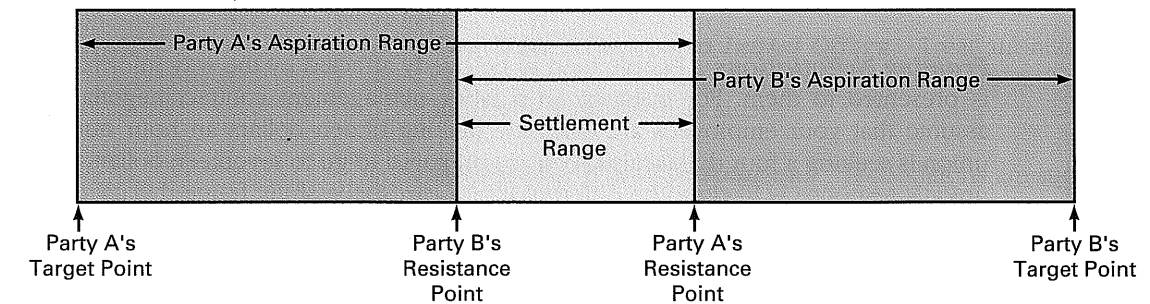
integrative bargaining
Negotiation that seeks one or more settlements that can create a win-win solution.

stuck with an uncollectable debt. The two openly review their options. After considerable discussion, they agree on a solution that meets both their needs: The credit manager will approve the sale, but the clothing store's owner will provide a bank guarantee that will assure payment if the bill isn't paid within sixty days.

The sales–credit negotiation is an example of **integrative bargaining**. In contrast to distributive bargaining, integrative problem solving operates under the assumption that there is at least one settlement that can create a win–win solution.

In general, integrative bargaining is preferable to distributive bargaining. Why? Because the former builds long-term relationships and facilitates working together in the future. It bonds negotiators and allows each to leave the bargaining table feeling that he or she has achieved a victory. Distributive bargaining, on the other hand, leaves one party a loser. It tends to build animosities and deepen divisions between people who have to work together on an ongoing basis.

Why, then, don't we see more integrative bargaining in organizations? The answer lies in the conditions necessary for this type of negotiation to succeed. These conditions include openness with information and frankness between parties; a sensitivity by each party to the other's needs; the ability to trust one another; and a willingness by both parties to maintain flexibility.[56] Because many organizational cultures and intra-organizational relationships are not characterized by openness, trust, and flexibility, it isn't surprising that negotiations often take on a win-at-any-cost dynamic.

Decision-Making Biases That Hinder Effective Negotiations

Recent research has identified a set of seven decision-making biases that blind people to opportunities and prevent individuals from getting as much as possible out of a negotiation.[57]

Irrational Escalation of Commitment   People tend to continue a previously selected course of action beyond what rational analysis would recommend. Such misdirected persistence can lead to wasting a great deal of time, energy, and money. Time and money already invested are "sunk costs." They *cannot* be recovered and should *not* be considered when selecting future courses of action.

The Mythical Fixed Pie   Bargainers assume that their gain must come at the expense of the other party. As noted with integrative bargaining, that needn't be the case. There are often win–win solutions. But assuming a zero-sum game means missed opportunities for trade-offs that could benefit both sides.

Anchoring and Adjustments   People often have a tendency to anchor their judgments upon irrelevant information, such as an initial offer. Many factors influence the initial positions people take when entering a negotiation. These factors are often

meaningless. Effective negotiators don't let an initial anchor minimize the amount of information and the depth of thinking they use to evaluate a situation, and don't give too much weight to their opponent's initial offer too early in the negotiation.

Framing Negotiations People tend to be overly affected by the way information is presented to them. For instance, in a labor–management contract negotiation, assume that your employees are currently making fifteen dollars an hour but the union is seeking a four dollar raise. You are prepared to go to seventeen dollars. The union's response is likely to be different if you can successfully frame this as a two dollar an hour gain (in comparison to the current wage) rather than a two dollar an hour loss (when compared against the union's demand).

Availability of Information Negotiators often rely too much on readily available information, while ignoring more relevant data. Facts or events that people have encountered more often are usually easy to remember—they're more "available" in their memories. It's also easier to remember or imagine more vivid events. Information that is easily recalled because it's familiar or vivid may be interpreted as being reliable when it's not. Thus effective negotiators learn to distinguish what's emotionally familiar to them from what's reliable and relevant.

The Winner's Curse In most negotiations, one side (usually the seller) has much better information than the other. Yet people in a negotiation tend to act as if their opponent is inactive and ignore the valuable information that can be learned by thinking about the other side's decisions. The "winner's curse" reflects the regret one often feels after closing a negotiation. Your opponent has accepted your offer, which might suggest that you offered too much. You can reduce the "curse" by gaining as much information as possible and putting yourself in your opponent's shoes.

Overconfidence Many of the previous biases can combine to inflate a person's confidence in his or her judgment and choices. When people hold certain beliefs and expectations, they tend to ignore contradictory information. The result is that negotiators tend to be overconfident. This, in turn, lessens the incentive to compromise. Considering the suggestions of qualified advisers and seeking objective assessment about your position from a neutral party are two ways to temper this tendency.

Developing Effective Negotiation Skills

The essence of effective negotiation can be summarized in the following six recommendations.[58]

Research Your Opponent Acquire as much information as you can about your opponent's interests and goals. What constituencies must he or she appease? What is his or her strategy? This will help you better to understand your opponent's behavior, to predict his or her responses to your offers, and to frame solutions in terms of his or her interests.

Begin with a Positive Overture Research shows that concessions tend to be reciprocated and lead to agreements. As a result, begin bargaining with a positive overture—perhaps a small concession—and then reciprocate your opponent's concessions.

Address Problems, Not Personalities Concentrate on the negotiation issues, not on the personal characteristics of your opponent. When negotiations get tough, avoid the tendency to attack your opponent. It's your opponent's ideas or position that you

disagree with, not him or her personally. Separate the people from the problem, and don't personalize differences.

Pay Little Attention to Initial Offers Treat an initial offer as merely a point of departure. Everyone has to have an initial position. They tend to be extreme and idealistic. Treat them as such.

Emphasize Win–Win Solutions If conditions are supportive, look for an integrative solution. Frame options in terms of your opponent's interests and look for solutions that can allow your opponent, as well as yourself, to declare a victory.

Be Open to Accepting Third-Party Assistance When stalemates are reached, consider the use of a neutral third party. *Mediators* can help parties come to an agreement, but they don't impose a settlement. *Arbitrators* hear both sides of this dispute, then impose a solution. *Conciliators* are more informal, and act as a communication conduit, passing information between the parties, interpreting messages, and clarifying misunderstandings.

Summary

This summary is organized by the chapter-opening learning objectives found on page 525.

1. Communication is the transference and understanding of meaning. It is important because everything a manager does—decision making, planning, leading, and all other activities—require that information be communicated.

2. The communication process begins with a communication source (a sender) who has a message to convey. The message is converted to symbolic form (encoding) and passed by way of a channel to the receiver, who decodes the message. To ensure accuracy, the receiver should provide the sender with feedback as a check on whether understanding has been achieved.

3. Some techniques for overcoming communication barriers include using feedback, simplifying language, listening actively, constraining emotions, and watching nonverbal cues.

4. Behaviors related to effective active listening are making eye contact, exhibiting affirmative nods and appropriate facial expressions, avoiding distracting actions or gestures, asking questions, paraphrasing, avoiding interruption of the speaker, not overtalking, and making smooth transitions between the roles of speaker and listener.

5. Behaviors related to providing effective feedback are focusing on specific behaviors; keeping feedback impersonal, goal-oriented, and well-timed; ensuring understanding; and directing negative feedback toward behavior that the recipient can control.

6. Contingency factors guide managers in determining the degree to which authority should be delegated. These factors include the size of the organization (larger organizations are associated with increased delegation), the importance of the duty or decision (the more important a duty or decision is, the less likely it is to be delegated), task complexity (the more complex the task is, the more likely it is that decisions about the task will be delegated), organizational culture (confidence and trust in subordinates are associated with delegation), and qualities of subordinates (delegation requires subordinates with the skills, abilities, and motivation to accept authority and act on it).

7. Behaviors related to effective delegating are clarifying the assignment, specifying the subordinate's range of discretion, allowing the subordinate to participate,

informing others that delegation has occurred, and establishing feedback controls.

8. The "hot stove" rule proposes that effective disciplining should be equivalent to touching a hot stove. The response should be immediate, there should be ample warning, and enforcement of rules should be consistent and impersonal.

9. Behaviors related to effective disciplining are confronting the employee in a calm, objective, and serious manner; stating the problem specifically; keeping the discussion impersonal; allowing the employee to explain his or her position; maintaining control of the discussion; obtaining agreement on how mistakes can be prevented in the future; and selecting disciplinary action progressively, considering mitigating circumstances.

10. The steps to be followed in analyzing and resolving conflict situations begin by finding out your underlying conflict-handling style. Then select only conflicts that are worth the effort and that can be managed. Third, evaluate the conflict players. Fourth, assess the source of the conflict. Finally, choose the conflict-resolution option that best reflects your style and the situation.

11. A manager might want to stimulate conflict if his or her unit suffers from apathy, stagnation, a lack of new ideas, or unresponsiveness to change.

12. Distributive bargaining creates a win–lose situation because the object of negotiation is treated as fixed in amount. Integrative bargaining treats available resources as variable, and hence creates the potential for win–win solutions.

Review Questions

1. Why isn't *effective communication* synonymous with *agreement?*
2. Where in the communication process is distortion likely to occur?
3. What are the most popular communication methods used by people in organizations?
4. What are the four essential requirements for active listening?
5. What qualities would characterize an effective disciplinary program?
6. Contrast the traditional, human relations, and interactionist views of conflict.
7. What are the five primary conflict-resolution techniques?
8. Describe seven decision-making biases that hinder effective negotiation.
9. What can a manager do if he or she wants to be a more effective negotiator?

Discussion Questions

1. "Ineffective communication is the fault of the sender." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Support your position.
2. Why are effective interpersonal skills so important to a manager's success?
3. Using what you've learned about listening in this chapter, are you a good listener? Where are you deficient? How could you improve your listening skills? Be specific.
4. What view of conflict—traditional, human relations, or interactionalist—do you think most managers have? Do you think this view is appropriate?
5. Assume you found an apartment that you wanted to rent and the ad had said: "$450/month negotiable." What could you do to improve the likelihood that you would negotiate the lowest possible price?
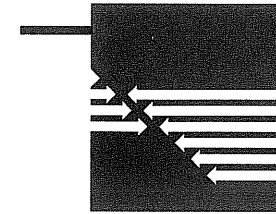
SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Conflict-Handling Style Questionnaire

Indicate how often you do the following when you differ with someone.

When I Differ With Someone:	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom
1. I explore our differences, not backing down, but not imposing my view either.	☐	☐	☐
2. I disagree openly, then invite more discussion about our differences.	☐	☐	☐
3. I look for a mutually satisfactory solution.	☐	☐	☐
4. Rather than let the other person make a decision without my input, I make sure I am heard and also that I hear the other out.	☐	☐	☐
5. I agree to a middle ground rather than look for a completely satisfying solution.	☐	☐	☐
6. I admit I am half wrong rather than explore our differences.	☐	☐	☐
7. I have a reputation for meeting a person halfway.	☐	☐	☐
8. I expect to get out about half of what I really want to say.	☐	☐	☐
9. I give in totally rather than try to change another's opinion.	☐	☐	☐
10. I put aside any controversial aspects of an issue.	☐	☐	☐
11. I agree early on, rather than argue about a point.	☐	☐	☐
12. I give in as soon as the other party gets emotional about an issue.	☐	☐	☐
13. I try to win the other person over.	☐	☐	☐
14. I work to come out victorious, no matter what.	☐	☐	☐
15. I never back away from a good argument.	☐	☐	☐
16. I would rather win than end up compromising.	☐	☐	☐