



Media and Messages:

Building a Foundation of Communication Skills



Acknowledgements

Ford Motor Company

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COURSE 1: **Building Foundations**

How do people dream up new products? How are products made and marketed to customers? How do people communicate their ideas and knowledge in the workplace? How has the workplace changed in the United States over time? What will it be like when you're ready to enter the workforce?

Building Foundations introduces you to the worlds of business, product development, and manufacturing, and helps you develop skills—important for both college and the workplace—that you'll use throughout the rest of the Ford PAS curriculum. In Module 1, you'll work in teams to solve problems related to inventing, developing, and producing products like soft drinks and bicycles. In Module 2, you'll develop important communication skills as you take on the roles of employees of different departments at a fictional fast-food company called Quick 'n Tastee. In Module 3, you'll interview people in the workforce today and use historical documents to understand how and why the workplace has changed over time. You'll develop your research skills in order to create an exhibit for a class Web site that describes the lives of people working during different periods of U.S. history.

Module 1

From Concept to Consumer: Building a Foundation in Problem-Solving

Module 2

Media and Messages: Building a Foundation of Communication Skills

Module 3

People at Work: Building a Foundation of Research Skills



MODULE 2: Media and Messages

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Module Overview

What is your favorite fast-food restaurant? Why do you like it? Many people like fast-food restaurants because the food doesn't cost much and you can get something to eat quickly. Imagine that you own a fast-food restaurant. For the first several years, your restaurant is quite popular. People especially like the big, juicy burgers and tasty shoestring fries you serve. But times change, and people become more interested in eating healthful foods. Sales begin to fall at your restaurant. What do you do?

In Module 2, *Media and Messages*, you'll tackle this question when you take on the role of an employee at a fast-food company called Quick 'n Tastee. The company is considering expanding its menu to appeal to a wider range of customers.

Throughout *Media and Messages*, you'll face several communication challenges associated with the company's new venture. For example, you'll work with a team to select three food products to add to Quick 'n Tastee's menu and use persuasive speaking skills to explain your choices effectively. You'll also develop and present an advertising campaign in Microsoft® PowerPoint® for Quick 'n Tastee's new product line. By the end of this module, you'll understand the importance of knowing your audience and your purpose when you are speaking or writing. You'll know how to communicate so that your audience gets the message and the purpose is clear.



ACTIVITY 1:

What's the Message?

INTRODUCTION

What's the message? This is the question you'll encounter as you begin your exploration of communication. In this activity, you'll watch a television commercial and learn about some of the techniques used to communicate messages and persuade audiences. You'll also find out how to keep a Media Log to record your observations of advertisements and learn helpful methods to expand your note-taking skills, both in listening and reading for information.

Learning Goals

- ▶ Use various note-taking techniques to summarize the main ideas in informational text.
- ▶ Identify a variety of persuasive techniques in verbal and visual communications.

FOR YOUR GLOSSARY

Communication
Communications

Feedback
Media

Paraphrasing
Persuasive speaking

TV COMMERCIAL MESSAGES

Media and Messages is about becoming more aware of and improving your communication skills. Consider the meaning of the word “communication.” **Communication** is the exchange of information, messages, or ideas. One meaning of the word **communications** is the means or media for transmitting messages. Telephones, television, books, person-to-person discussions, DVDs, the Internet—these are all means of communication.

Let’s look at how information is transmitted and how effectively messages are communicated in a television commercial. Watch the commercial and consider the following questions:

1. What’s the message?
2. Who is it intended for? How do you know?

Then think about how persuasive the commercial is. Advertisers use specific techniques to persuade consumers to purchase products or services. Read about the kinds of persuasive techniques in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1: Persuasive Techniques

Persuasive Technique	Nature of Message
Bandwagon	Don't be left out. Everyone has this; so should you.
Best Quality	Why settle for less when you can have the best?
Best Value	You get more for your money with the product.
Celebrity Endorsement	A famous person uses the product or service.
Financing Plans	A great deal, available only for a short time!
Homestyle	The product is simple and basic—nothing fancy—for "regular" folks.
Negative Advertising	Another company's product is much worse than ours. (Usually the second-rate product is not directly named—the viewer recognizes it through indirect clues.)
New and Improved	All new! Better than ever!
Repetition	The name of the product is repeated more than four times. Think you'll remember it?
Scientific "Evidence"	Research has been done to prove the superiority of the product, or a knowledgeable expert recommends it. For example, "Four out of five dentists recommend this toothpaste."
Testimonial	A personal story shows how much the product helped someone.
Traditional	The product has been around forever, so it must be great.

Watch the commercial again and consider whether any of these techniques are used. Where have you seen or heard some of these techniques in other commercials? This list does not include every persuasive technique. Can you think of other techniques that are not listed?

MEDIA LOG GUIDELINES

Throughout this module, you'll record information about advertisements in one form of media—television, magazine, newspaper, or the Web. The word **media** is a plural form of medium, which means a publication or broadcast that carries advertising, or a mode of artistic expression or communication.

Part of your notebook will become a Media Log, in which you make entries about advertisements in one form of media. You'll become a "specialist" in this form of media by selecting and evaluating 10 advertisements in the form you are assigned. For example, if you are assigned newspapers as your form of media, you will select and evaluate at least 10 newspaper advertisements throughout the course of the module.



For each advertisement, track the following information in your Media Log.

What to Include in Each Media Log Entry	
1. Date of the advertisement	
2. Featured product	
3. Description or summary of the advertisement content	
4. Description and name of advertisement location (For example, is the ad on the back page of Time magazine? Is the commercial broadcast before the evening news begins? In the middle? At the end?)	
5. Logo and slogan	
6. Description of the advertisement audience and how you can tell	
7. How the advertisement communicates its message (for example, words, images, sound, color, or a combination)	
8. Techniques used to persuade the consumer (Refer to Table 1.1.)	
9. Your personal response to this ad	
10. How the ad gets your attention	
11. (For television ads) Time of day the advertisement is aired and its length	
Additional Media Log Tips	
1. Include images or actual ads to make your log entries more meaningful to you in the future.	
2. For print, note the appearance of text on the page and the size of the ads.	
3. For television, record the commercials if possible so that you can view them multiple times.	

Your goal is to learn how to use this form of media most effectively to communicate information. You'll apply your expertise in Activity 6, when you work with a team to develop an advertising campaign for Quick 'n Tastee, the fast-food company that wants to expand its menu. Before the end of this session, note the medium that you'll research in your Media Log.

HOMEWORK 1.1

Select one print advertisement to bring to class. This advertisement may be used to evaluate persuasive techniques in print advertisements.

NOTEWORTHY IDEAS

Communication, as you know, is the exchange of information, messages, or ideas. While it takes skill to effectively convey messages through speaking, writing, or other media, it also requires skill to effectively receive and interpret messages. If you've ever talked with a friend about a movie or about a book you've read, you know that people often interpret messages very differently. People's interests, opinions, and learning styles all affect the way they process information and interpret various messages. In this module, you'll get a chance to look at the different ways that you and your classmates interpret the same messages and the different tools that you use to help process and remember information.

One tool that people use to help them process information that they've heard or read is note-taking. Note-taking might include writing a to-do list, jotting down your friend's cell phone number on a scrap of paper, listing the main points of a class lecture in your notebook, and outlining the major events in John Adams's life. But usually we don't give much thought to the ways that we might take notes more efficiently. For example, when you take notes about a class lecture or a textbook chapter, do you write notes in your own words instead of writing exactly what you hear or read? Do you draw pictures to help you remember things?



Throughout this module, you'll take on the roles of different employees of the fast-food company Quick 'n Tastee. In order to help Quick 'n Tastee succeed in its new ventures, you'll need to take notes and record such information as the company's goals, as well as your team's decisions and proposals. You are about to hear from Quick 'n Tastee's director of business development about the company's history and current plans for a new menu.

As you listen to the presentation, take notes about the following information:

1. Quick 'n Tastee's company history
2. The company's new business plan
3. Yamayama's role in Quick 'n Tastee's new business plan
4. Any other information that might be useful to a new employee

Remember that you are not writing down the entire presentation; rather, you should take notes that will help you as a new employee. After you take notes, work with your team to compare the content of your notes and the strategies you used to take notes. Answer the following questions as you develop a list of note-taking tips to give another group of students:

1. What do you think is the purpose of taking notes? Does it differ for different people?
2. What is challenging about taking notes about a presentation?
3. What strategies help you take notes?
4. Did the different people on your team select different content to take notes about? If so, what do you think was the reason for these differences?
5. Did people use different strategies for taking notes? Did you learn anything new from looking at your teammates' notes?

After hearing about Quick 'n Tastee, read **Team Communication Techniques** and take notes about it. You'll use these communication techniques as you work in teams for the Quick 'n Tastee Company. If you take good notes, they will help you apply the techniques throughout the module.

HOMEWORK 1.2

Finish reading and taking notes about **Team Communication Techniques**. In your notebook, list which note-taking skills you see as your strengths and which you need to focus on improving.

Think about the people with whom you communicate regularly. How are your listening skills? Over the next few days, pay attention to your attitude toward the person who is speaking, your attitude about the topic of conversation, and what you know about the topic of conversation. How do all of these factors affect how you listen? Write your observations in your notebook. Provide details to support your comments.

DID YOU KNOW?

You may not be surprised to know that businesspeople spend more of their communication time speaking than they do writing or reading. But did you know that businesspeople spend most of their communication time listening? As much as 45 to 55 percent of all workplace communication is listening! With an increasingly diverse workforce, developing listening skills is necessary to promote understanding and teamwork.

Team Communication Techniques

In today's workplace, employees very often work in teams to accomplish complex tasks. Creating a team environment in which everyone contributes and respects one another is important. When team members are aware of specific techniques to communicate effectively, team meetings are more productive and more enjoyable. While team members use many techniques to achieve success, this reading focuses on techniques to use when speaking persuasively, listening actively, and giving and receiving feedback.

Persuasive Speaking

As a team member, you'll need to develop your skill in **persuasive speaking**, using oral language convincingly to communicate a point of view. You'll need to communicate your interests in a way that builds on the interests of other people involved in the discussion. For example, imagine that you are part of a team evaluating product choices for a toy manufacturer. The team consists of a manager who used to be a teacher, a financial analyst, and yourself, a mechanical engineer. Each member of the team likes a different toy for a different reason. You really like one toy's clever design. How can you convince the rest of your team to go with your toy choice? You might start by saying what is good about the toy from your point of view—its clever design. Then you might appeal to your teammates' points of view. For example, you might mention the educational elements of the toy to win the support of the former teacher, or explain that investing in the machinery needed to assemble the toy can lower the costs of producing other toy designs that the factory manufactures, which might convince the financial analyst that your choice is a good one.

Active Listening

Active listening means participating in a discussion while you are "just" listening. Active listeners use specific techniques to show they are listening and help the speaker communicate more clearly. Each technique may be used for specific reasons. Some techniques of active listening are described here, including supporting and encouraging, paraphrasing, summarizing, and inquiring. Learn and practice these techniques. They work!

In the United States, people tend to focus on a person's speaking ability as the most important characteristic of an excellent communicator. Although a person's speaking skills are the easiest to observe, good listening skills are highly appreciated in the workplace.

Supporting and Encouraging

Supporting a speaker involves both body language and speech. Making eye contact, gently nodding your head, and sitting up and slightly leaning forward show the speaker that you are paying attention. In a small

team you may verbally encourage the speaker with brief comments, such as "Uh-huh," "I see," and "Yes." This verbal feedback is so important in Japan that in a telephone conversation it is expected that the listener will continually make these comments. Otherwise the speaker can't tell whether the person is listening and may stop and ask, "Are you listening?" Encouraging a speaker does not mean that you agree with what the speaker is saying. It shows that you are interested in what the speaker has to say.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is restating in your own words what you think someone has said. Paraphrasing is a valuable skill to use in team meetings—it lets team members know that you are trying to understand them and that you value what they have to say. Normally we tend to ask questions such as, "What do you mean?" When you paraphrase, you open up the discussion, allowing people to clarify and expand on their thinking.

The following types of beginning phrases communicate that you are paraphrasing:

- In other words, . . .
- You're suggesting . . .
- If I understand you correctly, you think . . .

Begin paraphrasing in a friendly and sincere way by focusing on the person's ideas rather than what you think.

Summarizing

After several people have shared their viewpoints, it helps to move a team discussion forward by summarizing the major issues, concerns, or decisions. For example, you might say, "The main issue seems to be that we're wondering whether everyone will love Japanese fast food as much as we do." Summarizing this way allows people to refocus, especially if the discussion has become sidetracked. Summarizing a discussion can also help people who tend to focus on details to see the "big picture."

Probing and Inquiring

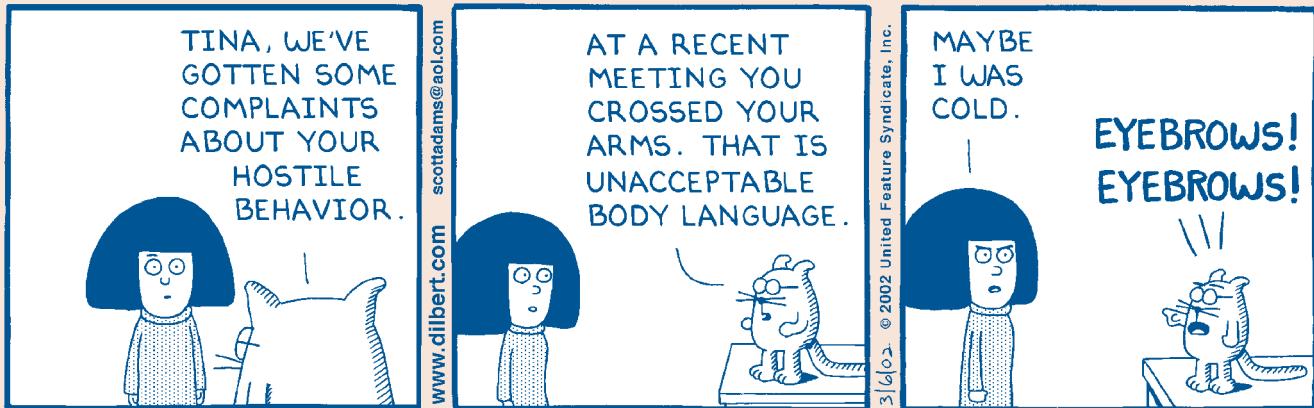
A good listener needs to know how to probe further to clarify a team member's thinking. "Tell me more about that" may be all you need to say. Sometimes you may need to ask questions to better understand what a team member is saying. For example, a team member might speak in general terms that are unclear to the rest of the team, such as, "I think Japanese food is good." To better understand the speaker's thinking, you could inquire, "What do you think are the benefits of Japanese food for Quick 'n Tasty?" If team members are "big picture" thinkers, this type of inquiry helps focus the team on specifics.

Body Language

Many people forget that eye contact and body language are important parts of communicating well. If you're listening actively, your body language should show that you're interested in what the speaker is saying. To

show the speaker that you're listening, it's a good idea to frequently make direct eye contact with the person who's talking. You should avoid body language or postures that make it look like you're bored or angry.

DILBERT by Scott Adams



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Feedback

A productive team needs to have team members who are respectful of one another. Successful team communication involves being aware of your teammates—their thinking and their feelings. Giving and receiving **feedback**, information you relay to someone about what that person has just said or written, requires thoughtful, positive interaction between team members. Becoming familiar with specific skills and techniques will improve your ability to give and receive feedback in team meetings as well as in other situations.

Giving Feedback

Good feedback is information that is helpful to the receiver. It is specific, descriptive, and focuses on the area(s) in which the speaker has asked for a response. For example, if a team member is practicing a presentation, you may be asked to focus on how effective your teammate's body language and voice are in communicating the content. If a person asks for feedback in a general way, be sure to ask what type of information will be most helpful. When giving feedback, make sure that the language you use is constructive (promoting improvement or development) rather than judgmental (harshly critical). For example, "I think your enthusiasm for the new Quick 'n Tastee menu is clear. I would also like to hear more information about the new menu." This feedback is both respectful and helpful to the receiver. In this example, the feedback begins with "I think . . ." This communicates to the receiver of the feedback, "This is my opinion and it's okay if you don't agree with me."

Receiving Feedback

Receiving feedback is difficult for many people, but responding well to feedback is an essential skill in the workplace. Being open to hearing other people's opinions about your ideas, presentations, or writing allows

team members to give more helpful feedback. There are particular strategies you can use to receive feedback well. Beforehand, be clear about the type of feedback you want. If you are doing a presentation and are especially concerned about your body language and voice, let team members know your concerns. Also, if someone's feedback is confusing, ask the person for more of an explanation.

Resist the urge to defend your action or work. If you feel the need to explain your reason for an action, do so in a way that allows for more interaction. For example, "So it was not enough information for you when I listed all the new menu items?" This will help you get more specific feedback. Finally, as you think about the feedback, you may consider the knowledge of the person who is giving the feedback. Does this person know a lot about the topic? You do not have to agree with all the feedback, but you should seriously think about it. Most importantly, respond to feedback afterward by thanking the person and acknowledging how or whether the feedback has been helpful.

