**Chapter 1 Solutions to Activities**

**1.1 Social Media Inventory (Objs. 1–4)**

The generalization that young people today are “digital natives” and as such must all be extremely tech savvy may not necessarily apply equally to all students, not even the millennials among them. Taking stock of students’ social media and technology use can be important for getting to know the class and its members’ preparedness. Assign the inventory activity to small groups or collect written responses from individuals if you fear that students might hesitate to admit that they do not fit the stereotype of the hyperconnected contemporary and do not own the latest electronic “toys,” particularly given that gadgets tend to be expensive. You may also want to ask about attitudes; how important are smartphones and staying connected with friends by texting or on Facebook to the students? Do they see any disadvantages in being connected nonstop?

**1.2 Writing Inventory (Objs. 1–3)**

Answers will vary. Some students may express the wish to write blogs instead of term papers, but according to a Pew Internet survey, young people understand the importance of excellent writing skills to their careers. They may, however, not be able to determine whether their writing instruction and amount of reading were rigorous. This activity may give you the opportunity to discuss the differences between business writing and academic writing. See how the answers in your classroom stack up to the research.

**1.3 Assessing Communication Skills Online: Evaluate Your Skills (Objs. 1–3)**

Encourage students to go to <http://www.cengagebrain.com> (click on Quizzes) and evaluate their communication skills using the interactive quiz. Reassure students that no matter what their scores, they can still succeed in your course. Encourage them to recognize their shortcomings in order to improve. After having them choose the traits they intend to work on immediately, encourage them to begin an action plan and record their progress in a journal detailing daily what they have done to improve their communication skills.

**1.4 Collaborating on the Opening Case Study (Objs. 1–5)**

This activity takes place over the entire semester. Student teams have a choice of one of the 16 three-part case studies in the textbook. Each team would fully research the company in the case study using outside resources, answer the questions presented, and prepare and deliver a group presentation about the company. This excellent long-term project would help students develop teamwork, research, writing, and presentation skills.

**1.5 Introducing Yourself (Objs. 1, 2)**

This e-mail or memo is an excellent way to assess students’ skills and, at the same time, get to know them. Don’t grade this assignment, but be sure to write a friendly comment on all papers or in all e-mail replies to demonstrate that you have an interest in them as students and as individuals. You may want to use the profile function in your institution’s learning-management system to request that students create a professional profile covering the information requested or additional information you may want to gather. This assignment may be revisited later in the term to practice professional online presence (e.g., in a LinkedIn profile) when you cover employment communication. If you are tech savvy and teach smaller classes, you may want to try introductions by tweet in 140 characters or fewer. These messages might include a tiny URL taking the recipient to a profile, website, or other virtual location.

**1.6 Small-Group Presentation: Introducing Team Members (Objs. 1, 2)**

Decide whether you wish your class to (a) interview a group member and introduce that person to the group or (b) have each class member introduce himself or herself to the entire class. Class size may help you decide. Encourage students to consider this a casual introduction. However, it is a good opportunity for students to not only learn about each other but also start to develop speaking skills in front of a group.

**1.7 Communication Skills: Employer Wish List (Obj. 1)**

Students may work in groups or individually on this project. Consider grouping them by their majors. Provide poster board and glue sticks for each group to mount their ads. If available, a computer with a projector and Internet access could display the results. You may want to have a spokesperson from each group come to the front of the classroom to report the groups’ findings.

**1.8 Writing Skills: But My Job Won’t Require Writing! (Objs. 1-3)**

**a. No one really writes anymore. They just text and send e-mails.**

Everyone writes in today’s workplace—and probably more than ever in the past. In professional workplaces, e-mail has become the most important communication channel. Texting is less important. Regardless, all messages sent in the workplace must be businesslike and effective. This means they should be clear, concise, courteous, complete, and correct. They are indeed “real” writing and will require more skill and preparation than e-mail and texting to friends. What’s more, as companies grow larger and become less cohesive, the written word becomes even more important. Because fewer people are working side by side, written messages replace face-to-face conversation. Those who can craft clear messages will be most successful.

**b. Because I'm in a technical field, I will work with numbers, not words.**

Estimates suggest that nearly 90 percent of all business messages involve written communication. Conducting business in any field—even in technical and specialized areas such as information technology, accounting, engineering, marketing, hotel management, and so forth—involves some writing. “You can have the greatest technical skills in the world, but without solid communication skills, who will know and can understand?” said Kevin Jetton, executive vice president of the Association of Information Technology Professionals. [Jacobs, P. (1998, July 6). Strong writing skills essential for success. *InfoWorld*, 86.] Moreover, when individuals are promoted, their writing tasks will increase.

**c. Secretaries will clean up my writing problems.**

In the current work world of tightened budgets and economic downturn, only a few upper-level executives still have secretaries or administrative assistants who type their messages. Most managers and executives now write their own e-mails, memos, and letters.

**d. Technical writers do most of the real writing on the job.**

Some companies employ technical writers to prepare manuals, documentation, and public documents, such as annual reports. Rarely, however, do these specialists write everyday messages (internal reports, letters, e-mails, memos) for employees.

**e. Today’s sophisticated software programs can fix any of my writing mistakes.**

Today’s style, grammar, and spell checkers are wonderful aids to business writers. They can highlight selected trouble areas and occasionally suggest revisions. What they can’t do, though, is organize and write the document and ensure its total accuracy. These tools are also not capable of catching all errors, especially commonly confused words and punctuation.

**f. I can use forms and templates for most messages.**

Books and computer programs can provide dozens of ready-made letters or pattern paragraphs for which businesspeople merely fill in the blanks. When these letters are appropriate and well written, they can be useful time-savers. Often, however, such letters are poorly written and ill suited for specific situations. Most messages demand that writers create their own original thoughts.

**1.9** **Wanted: A Jack- or Jill-of-All-Trades**

Answers will vary and may shed light on the aspirations and anxieties of the current generation of students. Although the goal is not to scare them, a realistic assessment of opportunities ought to motivate learners to capitalize on their strengths and improve their shortcomings. After all, the objective is to prepare them for a competitive, dynamic digital workplace.

**1.10 Taking the Pulse of Today’s Workforce**

The answers will vary. As in **Activity 1.9**, it may be instructive to learn about the hopes and attitudes of contemporary students. A big part of preparing young people for the workforce is to encourage an inquisitive attitude and promote a realistic outlook that will empower them to make strategic changes, if necessary, while still in college.

**1.11 Customer Service: Tech Skills Not Enough (Objs. 1–3)**

Service reps at any company must be totally familiar with its products and typical problems. On the telephone, service reps must exhibit good listening and speaking skills. In writing responses in an e-mail and even in chat and social media sessions, they need to be able to spell and write clearly and concisely. Writing well requires training and practice. A trainer should consider adding writing skills to the training classes. A trainer might also include scenarios of typical chat and social media sessions and demonstrate poor and good written responses.

**1.12 Oral or Written Communication: How Rich Must the Media Be? (Obj.4)**

a. You are returning with the senior auditor from a client visit to company headquarters, where you must attend an important department meeting. It looks as though you will be at least 15 minutes late. What are your options?

Text or e-mail, possibly call, if it’s not going to disrupt the meeting, depending on the importance of the meeting and your role in it. As a junior member of the team, you would want to call to provide immediate feedback, adjust to the audience, and deliver your message quickly. A telephone call is not as rich a medium as a face-to-face encounter, but comes closer than a text message or e-mail in conveying positive emotion and a personal approach.

b. Working at 8 a.m. in your Boston office, you need to get in touch with your counterpart at your company’s West Coast office and ask a few clarifying formatting questions about a report on which the two of you are collaborating.

Phoning is out of the question because it’s only 5 a.m. Pacific time (PST) and your questions—while time sensitive—are not urgent. If the queries are not too involved and lengthy, you could send an e-mail detailing the questions; otherwise, a brief e-mail simply requesting that your colleague call you back seems sufficient. You could phone a little later, at 8:30 or 9 a.m. PST. If you and your collaborator share an application that allows instant messaging or live chatting (Skype, Windows Live Messenger, or Yahoo Messenger), turn it on, so that you will see when your collaborator goes online. Before you do so, however, check your company’s policies on appropriate Web, e-mail, and social media use. Some businesses prohibit or limit the use of instant messaging to prevent abuse such as harassment and security risks.

c. John, the information technology vice president, must tell employees about a new company social media policy. He has two employees in mind who particularly need this information.

Policies flowing downward from management to subordinates should be written. They produce a permanent record, are economical, promote comprehension and recall, allow precise and uniform expression, and give the audience flexibility in when and how to receive the content. Although John has two employees in mind, the policy should be directed to all employees, most likely in an e-mail or intranet post.

d. As soon as possible, you need to learn from Daryle in Document Imaging whether she can make copies of a set of engineering blueprints. If she cannot, you need her advice on where you can get it done.

When you require an immediate answer, deliver the message orally, by telephone. In this instance, you may need to follow up with additional questions. If the matter is particularly urgent, a face-to-face visit may be necessary as long as it is feasible and the person’s proximity warrants it (say, in-house). Oral communication provides immediate feedback, can be adjusted to the audience, can be delivered quickly, supplies nonverbal cues, may create a warm, personal feeling, and can make a big impact. The message is traveling horizontally between coworkers.

e. As a manager in your Human Resources department, you must terminate three employees in a company-wide initiative to reduce costs.

Messages as traumatic as termination should always be delivered in person—one-on-one or with a limited number of participants. Oral communication provides immediate feedback, can be adjusted to the audience, supplies nonverbal cues, and shows greater compassion than a written message.

f. It wasn’t your fault, but an order for printed checks for a longtime customer was mishandled. The checks are not ready, and the customer is angry.

Responding to an upset customer should always be done orally, if possible. The best procedure is to first call the customer and explain what happened. Oral communication allows you to show sympathy, express apologies, and suggest possible alternate solutions. After the telephone call, it’s wise to follow up with a written message confirming what was said orally. In most cases e-mail would be the channel of choice, although in particularly grievous cases, when formality is desired, a business letter sent by mail may be more appropriate. The written message clarifies the situation, creates a permanent record, promotes comprehension and recall, and generates goodwill.

g. As chairman of the Employee Benefits Committee, you have worked with your committee for two months evaluating several health plan options. You are now ready to convey the recommendations of the committee to management.

Explaining a committee’s findings should be done in a written report traveling upward. Such a report provides a permanent record and is convenient to distribute. It provides precise and uniform expression. However, such a report lacks the richness and immediacy of oral communication and cannot be adjusted to respond to the receiver’s comments or questions. Depending on the context, a face-to-face briefing to management with visuals (slideshows) may be called for. Slide decks also provide a record, albeit a less formal one than traditional reports.

**1.13 Information Flow: What’s Good and Bad About Gossip at Work? (Obj. 5)**

Mr. Bender responded in an appropriate manner by going to the source and talking about the reason behind the gossip. Experts suggest seeking the source of malicious gossip and documenting what was learned or discussed.

Benefits of workplace gossip might include the following:

1. Managers can keep a pulse on what is happening by relying on information from employees who are known for spreading and knowing office gossip.
2. Managers can learn about morale, turnover, and productivity problems.
3. Managers can also plant news that they want spread. For example, if layoffs are approaching, managers might soften the blow by letting rumors start about future layoffs.
4. Gossip can also be helpful in building office friendships and building teamwork morale.
5. Gossip can benefit new employees who are learning office customs not covered in the official company handbook.

Negative consequences of gossip might include the following:

1. People who gossip are considered untrustworthy and may not be promoted.
2. Malicious, false gossip can create severe unhappiness and destroy careers.
3. Malicious gossip creates an ugly work environment forcing people to leave.
4. People who spend excessive amounts of time gossiping are a productivity drain on the company.
5. Companies that do not prevent malicious gossip may be sued for tolerating or condoning a hostile work environment.

**1.14 Attitudes Toward Ethics: Making Concessions on the Job (Obj. 5)**

This view is, of course, not limited to the Millennial Generation. Many workers in other age groups believe that to keep a job, they must compromise their personal ethics. But most would probably want to draw the line between harmless “white lies” on the one hand and committing fraud on the other. This is an opportunity to point out that this thin line is hard to draw and never acceptable if one subscribes to ethical theories based on principle (deontology: “lying is always wrong”). As opposed to that, consequentialist ethical theories deem an act moral as long as it produces a positive outcome.

Curtin, Gallicano, and Matthew, the authors of the study surveying Gen Y perspectives on ethics, cite research that seems to show that millennials are better than their reputation when it comes to attitudes toward ethics. In one study of 37,000 undergraduates, 39 percent said that high ethical standards were their top consideration in choosing an employer, and 79 percent wanted to work for a company that was socially responsible. A national PricewaterhouseCoopers study of millennials in 2008 yielded similar results: 88 percent wanted to work for an employer whose social responsibility values matched their own, and 92 percent indicated they would leave a company whose values did not match theirs.

**1.15 Ethical Dilemma: Applying Tools for Doing the Right Thing (Obj. 5)**

Students’ responses will vary, of course. They should apply each question from the Tools list and explain their answers in relation to the dilemma.

**1.16 Ethical Dilemma: Rival Chicken Chains Tempt Ethics in Taste Test (Obj. 5)**

Students face an ethical dilemma. Should they do what they think is right for the company and bolster its position by calling the El Pollo hot line with their praise of KFC chicken? Although it’s not illegal, is it ethical, when they know that the hot line is intended for people who are not affiliated with a rival chicken fast-food restaurant? After hearing students discuss the case, you may wish to advise them that apparently some KFC employees did call the hot line. El Pollo Loco says that its caller ID showed some calls came from KFC headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky. In responding to El Polo allegations about the calls, KFC said, “We’ve been grilling our employees to see if anyone’s done any undercover dialing. . . [but] it hasn’t been a high priority.” [Based on Jargon, J. (2009, May 9). Rival chicken chain calls out KFC, *USA Today*, p. B5]