



GLOBAL  
EDITION

# Human Relations

## *Interpersonal Job-Oriented Skills*

TWELFTH EDITION

Andrew J. DuBrin

ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON

# *To Melanie, once again*

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## SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 5-2

### Justifying Laptop Use during a Meeting

Five students play the role of a group of workers who are developing a marketing campaign for a new energy drink, Vitalize27. Ideas are flying around the meeting room. One student plays the role of a member of the group who suddenly opens a laptop computer and begins watching the screen. By mistake the audio is turned on, and the other members of the group can easily hear that the laptop user has accessed a sports channel, ESPN.com. The laptop user gets a few frowns and some stern questioning from the team leader. The student playing the role of the laptop user must present a sensible and diplomatic excuse as to why he or she was

tuned into ESPN during the meeting. Another student plays the role of the team leader, who is disappointed with the behavior he or she has observed. The other three role players might make any comments they deem to be appropriate.

Observers rate the role players on two dimensions, using a 1-to-5 scale from very poor (1) to very good (5). One dimension is “effective use of human relations techniques.” The second dimension is “acting ability.” A few observers might voluntarily provide feedback to the role players in terms of sharing their ratings and observations. The course instructor might also provide feedback.

## Interpersonal Aspects of Presentation Technology

Presentation technology has become almost synonymous with PowerPoint and other computer graphics programs. However, presentation technology also includes laptops, data projectors, remote controls, and presentation software. The use of presentation technology provides an exceptional opportunity to display interpersonal skills—good or poor. In the words of Whitey Bluestein, an advisor to technology companies, “. . . the best presentations are based on the value of the content, the skill of the delivery, and the charisma of the speaker.”<sup>[25]</sup>

The biggest challenge in using presentation technology is to maintain a human presence while still making effective use of the technology. Among the obvious indicators of good interpersonal skill during an electronic presentation are to maintain eye contact with the audience, smile, show a sense of humor, and interact with the audience. Among the potential displays of negative interpersonal skills are reading detailed slides to the audience, not maintaining eye contact, and continuous fiddling with your equipment, thereby ignoring participants at the meeting.

A practical way of maintaining a human presence is to tell a story, and use a few slides to support the story.<sup>[26]</sup> For example, a cost accountant making a PowerPoint presentation might tell a story about a pharmaceutical firm that went bankrupt because it did not carefully track how much it cost to make the drugs. The accountant might present a graph showing how costs began to outpace revenue for a drug that reduced inflammation in the joints.

All you have learned about making presentations (or public speaking) applies even though you might be tapping a key on your laptop computer while making a presentation. Self-Assessment Quiz 5-2 presents a checklist of behaviors that summarizes major points of demonstrating effective interpersonal skills during a presentation. Many people who are watching you make a presentation will be making judgments about your interpersonal and cognitive skills. One reason is that the digitized workplace has decreased other opportunities, such as visits to your work area, to form judgments about you.

## Videoconferencing and Telepresence

Videoconferencing and teleconferencing place extra demands on making a good first impression and demonstrating good interpersonal skills. Telepresence is an advanced form of videoconferencing that comes closer to simulating a face-to-face meeting. Some telepresence meetings are set up in studios with a bank of high-definition screens and cameras. Others telepresence meetings are accomplished through robots containing the necessary electronics. Images are presented on giant screens, much like high-end television receivers. Keep the following considerations in mind for creating a good impression and demonstrating sensitivity to the situation at a videoconference:<sup>[27]</sup>

1. **Choose your clothing carefully.** Some participants expect the screen to display only their upper torso, and therefore wear business attire above the waist and perhaps shorts and sports shoes below. Busy patterns do not look good on camera.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT QUIZ 5-2

### The Presentation Technology Checklist of Interpersonal Behaviors

**Directions:** Indicate whether each of the following statements is mostly true or mostly false as it applies to you (or would apply to you if you were in the situation indicated by the statement).

Statement Number	Mostly True	Mostly False
1. I make frequent eye contact with as many members of the audience as feasible.	_____	_____
2. I like to present a large number of slides in rapid sequence just to dazzle the audience.	_____	_____
3. I tend to get irritated if a member of the audience disagrees with one of my points.	_____	_____
4. I will often attempt to loosen up the audience by telling a joke related to nationality, age, or hair color.	_____	_____
5. I attempt to pack as much information onto a slide as possible, even it requires using a 10-point font.	_____	_____
6. If somebody in the audience complains about not being able to hear me, I like to retort with a negative comment like, "Have you had your hearing checked lately?"	_____	_____
7. I smile frequently during my presentation.	_____	_____
8. I explain to the members of the audience that they can revisit my presentation on a specific Web site, or that I am willing to send them an e-mail attachment of the presentation.	_____	_____
9. At the end of the presentation, I will typically thank the audience for having watched.	_____	_____
10. I will ask the audience an open-ended question such as, "What questions do you have?" rather than a close-ended question like, "Any questions?"	_____	_____

**Scoring and Interpretation:** Give yourself one point (+1) for each statement you gave in agreement with the keyed answer. The keyed answer indicates a positive interpersonal skill for presentation technology.

1. Mostly true	4. Mostly false	7. Mostly true	10. Mostly true
2. Mostly false	5. Mostly false	8. Mostly true	
3. Mostly false	6. Mostly false	9. Mostly true	

**9–10:** You have good skills related to the interpersonal aspects of presentation technology.

**1–8:** You have much room for improvement in terms of your skills related to the interpersonal aspects of presentation technology.

Clothing may be more superficial than interpersonal skill, but your choice of clothing reflects on your judgment and how seriously you take the conference.

- 2. Speak in crisp, conversational tones, and pay close attention.** Maintain eye contact with live participants and remote viewers; this is an important interpersonal skill, as it is with presentation technologies. Getting up to leave the room looks particularly bad on camera.
- 3. Never forget the powerful reach of the video camera.** Behavior such as falling asleep or rolling the eyes in response to an executive's suggestions are readily seen by associates in the same and other locations. Such behavior is likely to be interpreted as indicative of immaturity. It is also important to stay within reach of camcorders in both videoconferencing and telepresence. A recurring problem is that when a person stands to stretch or simply to pause from sitting down, the person may appear headless—hardly a way to establish rapport with people at other sites.
- 4. Avoid culturally insensitive gestures.** For example, large hand and body motions make many Asians uncomfortable. Also, extreme behaviors sometimes appear magnified on video camera, although they might be less distracting in person.

5. **Decrease nervousness about video interviews by rehearsing.** Use a camcorder to see how you appear and sound during a practice interview, engaging the help of a friend. Solicit his or her feedback about your performance. Appearing relaxed during a videoconference helps you project the important interpersonal skill of being self-confident.

## Interpersonal Skills Linked to Telecommuting

As illustrated in the chapter introduction, people who work from home face challenges to their interpersonal skills related to communication. Telecommuters can communicate abundantly via electronic devices, but they miss out on the face-to-face interactions so vital for dealing with complex problems. Another communication problem telecommuters face is feeling isolated from activities at the main office and missing out on the encouragement and recognition that take place in face-to-face encounters. (Of course, many telecommuters prefer to avoid such contact.) Many telecommuters have another communications problem: Because they have very little face-to-face communication with key people in the organization, they believe that they are passed over for promotion. Most telecommuters spend some time in the traditional office, yet they miss the day-by-day contact.

Another communication problem with telecommuting is that it lacks a solid human connection. As one telecommuting marketing consultant put it, face time is critical for building empathy. “It’s a human connection. It takes time, and human beings need visual cues, the symbols of being together and caring for one another.”<sup>[28]</sup> To combat the problem of isolation, most companies schedule some face time with remote workers perhaps every few months. At a minimum, a supervisor might phone the teleworkers at least once a week, or hold a monthly videoconference.<sup>[29]</sup>

To display positive interpersonal skills as a worker from home or other remote location, the individual should make good use of the limited face-to-face contact he or she has with other workers. Display warmth toward and interest in work associates. Staying in touch online with a human relations twist is also important. Occasionally asking how the other person is doing is helpful, as is an occasional question about the person’s interests or family life. Co-working (using shared office space) places extra demands on being cordial and friendly because the other people who rent co-working space came there in part for the opportunity to interact with other remote workers.<sup>[30]</sup> Also, because the space is so cramped, negative behaviors such as shouting on the phone and swearing in frustration should be minimized.

Many telecommuters are asked to attend an occasional company meeting. On these occasions, it is important to display high enthusiasm. To keep interpersonal skills sharp, it is good to interact with store associates and service workers such as the postal service and package delivery workers. The designer described at the chapter outset kept his interpersonal skills in use by interacting with other workers sharing the same office space.

Successful telecommuters also need the interpersonal skill of being able to work well without supervision. You also need to be able to work well in isolation, and not be dependent on frequent interaction with coworkers or a supervisor.<sup>[31]</sup> High-maintenance employees who need frequent praise and attention are much better suited for working in a traditional office than working from home.

## Avoiding Damage to Your Online Reputation

Postings on the Internet, including newspaper articles, blogs, and video Web sites, can rapidly broadcast favorable or unfavorable data about your interpersonal skills and judgment. Based largely on the Internet, much more information about a person’s private life has become public. Some aspects of your personal life therefore affect your professional reputation. If an Internet blog contends that a given individual was an accessory to an armed robbery, that person’s job might become in jeopardy.<sup>[32]</sup>

Matt Zimmerman, senior staff attorney for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, explains the importance of having a squeaky clean reputation in these terms: “Now we have this giant megaphone of the Internet, where every little whisper about someone shows up in Google.”<sup>[33]</sup>

A positive interpersonal and cognitive skill is therefore to avoid having embarrassing information or photographs linked to you accessible through search engines. A Career-Builder survey found that 65 percent of the employers surveyed said they visited social media to investigate whether a given job candidate presents himself or herself professionally.<sup>[34]</sup> Many career-minded people who are concerned that a photograph of them posted on the Internet might damage their reputation are using a mobile application that deletes the photo within ten seconds. Such software is not designed for desktop computers.<sup>[35]</sup>

Your reputation can also be damaged by posting extreme viewpoints on the Web because these extreme viewpoints might be unwelcome by employers who want to avoid offending customers or potential customers. Two examples of extreme viewpoints are stating that (a) all people who wear fur coats should be physically attacked, and (b) all investment bankers who earn more than \$2 million in an annual bonus should be sent to jail.

Another aspect of your online reputation is that you might need to distance yourself from others who share your name. If you have a LinkedIn or Facebook profile, insert a clear photo of yourself. During a job search, when you send your résumé either as a hard copy by mail or via the Internet, provide a link to your profile. Also, alert present or prospective employers if someone with the same name as yours has a negative online presence. A challenge in terms of job hunting is that an Internet search has become part of the employer's background investigation. Negative information about oneself on the Web can sometimes be removed by request or by hiring a service for such purposes.

# Concept Review and Reinforcement

## Key Terms

multitasking 133

nomophobia 134

## Summary

Effective interpersonal skills help make good use of the communication and information technology surrounding us in the workplace. Interactions with people one at a time create the majority of opportunities for displaying interpersonal skills related to the digital age. Smartphones, cell phones, and text messaging represent an enormous opportunity for displaying good, as well as poor, interpersonal skills. An example of a positive skill is to ask your work associate if he or she would like you to access an item of work-related information using your cell phone. An example of a negative skill is work-related driving under the influence of a cell phone, including text messaging.

E-mail messages and instant messaging (IM) provide another opportunity for displaying positive as well as negative interpersonal skills related to the digital age. The way in which a message is sent, positive or negative, tells something about the sender. Figure 5-1 summarizes a large amount of information about etiquette related to e-mail and instant messaging.

Another interpersonal skill useful in the digital age is to perform well during a webcam interview. Performing well in such an interview combines interpersonal skills with those related to communication technology. In some situations, performing two tasks at once can enhance interpersonal skills because you are helping another person, as is often done in coaching and tutoring. The major negative interpersonal skill aspect of multitasking is that it trivializes the person with whom you are interacting.

A negative consequence of communication technology in the workplace is that it is easier to harass coworkers than in the analog age. Creating a hostile environment by displaying pornography to workers who do not want to see it has become one of the most frequent forms of harassment.

Positive interpersonal skills associated with social networking include (1) demonstrating your loyalty by posting gracious comments about your employer, (2) displaying

your compassion for people in need, (3) demonstrating professional-level communication skills, and (4) demonstrating a willingness to collaborate with others.

Negative interpersonal skills associated with social networking include (a) using social networking sites to eliminate face-to-face interactions with work associates, (2) posting confidential or derogatory information about your employer, (3) engaging in social networking at inappropriate times, and (4) bragging too much about being an “online celebrity.”

Whether the use of laptop and notebook computers as well as smartphones during meetings enhances your interpersonal skills depends on company custom and why you are using your computer. When laptop computers and smartphones are used at meetings to facilitate information gathering (with permission), they can enhance interpersonal skills.

The biggest challenge in using presentation technology is to maintain a human presence while still making effective use of the technology. An example of a positive interpersonal skill is maintaining eye contact with the audience; a negative skill is continuous fiddling with the equipment, thereby ignoring the audience.

Videoconferencing and telepresence place extra demands on creating a good first impression and demonstrating good interpersonal skills. A positive skill is to speak in crisp, conversational tones and pay close attention. People who work from home face challenges to their interpersonal skills related to communication. To display positive interpersonal skills, the worker from home should make good use of the limited face-to-face contact he or she has with other workers.

Protecting your online reputation is a skill. A positive interpersonal and cognitive skill is therefore to avoid having embarrassing information and photographs linked to you accessible through search engines. Many employers search social media sites to observe if a job candidate presents himself or herself professionally.