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GLOBAL  
EDITION

# Human Relations

## *Interpersonal Job-Oriented Skills*

TWELFTH EDITION

Andrew J. DuBrin



ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON

# Interpersonal Skills for the Digital World

Trevor worked as a product designer for Sensor Products, based in Portland, Oregon. The company designs and manufactures electronic controls used in automobiles, trucks, and related vehicles. His wife, Rita, an executive assistant, had to relocate back to Boston because her mother and father were in poor health. So, Trevor and Rita made the decision to move to an apartment in Boston.

Rita felt confident she could find employment in Boston, but Trevor did not want to leave his position as a senior product designer. With his reputation as a talented and dedicated worker, top-level manager at Sensor agreed to let Trevor work from home, yet spend about three days per month in Portland.



## LEARNING Objectives

After reading and studying this chapter and doing the exercises, you should be able to:

1. Describe interpersonal skills related to one-on-one interactions in the digital world.
2. Describe interpersonal skills related to social networking.
3. Describe interpersonal skills related to working with small audiences with respect to digital devices.

After several weeks of working from home in their cramped Boston apartment, Trevor began to feel uncomfortable. "I was going stir crazy," he said. "I enjoy my technical work, but I'm also a people person. Much of my career success stems from my enjoyment of interacting with people. Doing my designs on a computer, and interacting with colleagues through e-mail, is not enough for me."

After some careful thought, Trevor modified his idea of working from home. He found a place called Galaxy Towers just 15 minutes from his apartment in Boston, where he was able to share office space, have his own desk, free Internet, a conference room, and free coffee and tea for \$325 per month. Trevor would become what is now called a *co-worker*. His company agreed to pay the bill to keep Trevor happy and productive.

Trevor was now able to interact with other workers on occasion, even if they were working for different companies. As Trevor puts it, "Just shooting the breeze with intelligent, working adults stimulates by thinking. Our dog Lila is wonderful, but she doesn't provide the kind of warm, human presence that I need to be at my professional best. Also, I can even brainstorm a bit with a few of the other tenants at Galaxy."<sup>(1)</sup>

The story about the senior product designer illustrates one of the ways in which interpersonal skills figure into the digital age. Trevor's ability to interact positively with others stimulates his own thinking—making him productive—and also contributes to his job satisfaction. In this chapter, we examine the interpersonal skill aspects of working in the digital age, an often-neglected aspect of making good use of the communication and information technology surrounding us in the workplace. We organize this information into two broad categories. First, we describe interpersonal skills for using digital devices in one-on-one interaction. Second, we examine the interpersonal skill aspects of using communication technology for social networking and small audiences.

To begin thinking through interpersonal skills in relation to the digital world, you are invited to take Self-Assessment Quiz 5-1. The statements in the quiz cover many of the behaviors relevant to digitally based interactions.

## INTERPERSONAL SKILLS FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

As with interpersonal skills in general, interactions with people one at a time create the majority of opportunities for displaying interpersonal skills related to the digital age. In this section, we describe four such settings or scenarios in which the communication is typically (not always) directed toward one person: cell phones and text messaging; e-mail messages and instant messaging; webcam job interviews; and the interpersonal aspect of multitasking.

## The Interpersonal Skills for the Digital World Checklist

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). Even if your reaction to a particular statement is "duh," remember that all the statements reflect incidents of real behavior.

Statement	Mostly True	Mostly False
1. I get really upset if I send a coworker an instant message (IM), and I do not receive an answer within five minutes.	_____	_____
2. While being interviewed for a job, I receive and send text messages to a work associate or friend.	_____	_____
3. While working in a group, I regularly check my e-mail and text messages.	_____	_____
4. I often check Web sites such as ESPN, Facebook, Twitter, or home shopping channels on my laptop while at a meeting.	_____	_____
5. I often eat while talking on my cell phone.	_____	_____
6. I typically check my e-mail, text messages, or a Web site while talking on my cell phone.	_____	_____
7. If I made a webcam presentation for work purposes, I would make sure that my grooming was at its best.	_____	_____
8. I would bring a pet such as a cat, dog, or parrot along to a webcam conference for business purposes.	_____	_____
9. If I were giving a presentation at a business banquet, I would keep my personal digital assistant in my hand.	_____	_____
10. I keep my bottle of water in my hand at all times where making a PowerPoint presentation.	_____	_____
11. When making a PowerPoint presentation, I use the information on the slide as headlines for talking points rather than reading the slides to the audience.	_____	_____
12. If I attended a two-hour videoconference, I would see no problem in leaving the room from time to time just for a break.	_____	_____
13. I have posted, or would be willing to post, some outrageous videos of myself on Facebook, such as driving a vehicle with a bottle of beer in my hand.	_____	_____
14. I use, or would use, a social networking site to really blast a company whose product proved to be faulty.	_____	_____
15. For me, social networking sites are a useful place to post nasty things about people I do not like.	_____	_____
16. Older workers who are not savvy about information technology deserve nicknames like "Mr. Depends," or "Ms. Dinosaur."	_____	_____
17. I laugh when I see somebody doing something as old-fashioned as reading a newspaper.	_____	_____
18. I have received compliments about my ability to explain how to use technology to another worker.	_____	_____
19. I am patient and polite when a tech support person cannot resolve my technology problem right away.	_____	_____
20. I have sent hand-written thank-you notes to people even if they use e-mail and text messaging.	_____	_____

**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 the digital world.

- |                 |                 |                 |                  |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Mostly false | 4. Mostly false | 7. Mostly true  | 10. Mostly false |
| 2. Mostly false | 5. Mostly false | 8. Mostly false | 11. Mostly true  |
| 3. Mostly false | 6. Mostly false | 9. Mostly false | 12. Mostly false |

- |                  |                  |                  |                 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 13. Mostly false | 15. Mostly false | 17. Mostly false | 19. Mostly true |
| 14. Mostly false | 16. Mostly false | 18. Mostly true  | 20. Mostly true |

15–20 If your answers are an accurate reflection of your behavior, you have better than average interpersonal skills related specifically to digital technology.

6–14 If your answers are an accurate reflection of your behavior, you have average interpersonal skills related specifically to digital technology.

1–5 If your answers are an accurate reflection of your behavior, you have let the use of digital technology interfere with having good interpersonal skills. You need to think through carefully how you can blend the use of communication technology with solid human relations skills.

## Cell Phones and Text Messaging

Cell phones have become such an integrated part of life both on and off the job that many photographs in magazines and newspapers of business people show them using their phone. Television advertisements also often depict workers using a cell phone even when the advertisement is not for phones. In the business section of most cities, it appears that approximately two-thirds of the people in business attire are using a cell phone, smart phones, and personal digital assistants included. Cell phones, including using them to send text messages, therefore represent an enormous opportunity for displaying good, as well as poor, interpersonal skills.

**Positive Interpersonal Skills While Using Cell Phones.** The many positive behaviors possible when using cell phones for one-on-one interaction usually are a question of doing the opposite of negative behaviors. The behaviors in the following list illustrate how positive interpersonal skills can be demonstrated while using cell phones and text messaging during one-on-one interactions.<sup>[2]</sup>

1. **Use a standard ringtone instead of a loud, unusual tone.** In this way if your phone rings in the presence of a work associate, your behavior will not provoke surprise or laughter.
2. **Inform the caller that you are receiving his or her call on a cell phone.** If you let the caller know that you are on a cell phone, the call will not be surprised when the reception fades in and out, or when you are interrupted by honking horn, or other background noises including conversations of people walking by.
3. **Inform work associates ahead of time if you are waiting for a call from a medical professional or in reference to an urgent home situation.** Assume, for example, that you and a coworker are discussing a customer problem. Let your coworker know that your conversation might be interrupted by the type of urgent call just described. In this way, accepting a call will not be interpreted as rudeness.
4. **Ask your work associate if he or she would like you to access an item of work-related information using your smart phone.** Assume that sales rep Ashley is talking with customer Todd, and Todd wants to know if her company would have a large quantity of a specific product in stock. Ashley would be displaying good interpersonal skills by saying, "Todd, would you like me to access this information on my iPhone? It will take just a minute." Todd will inevitably agree, and he will also understand why Ashley is using her iPhone in the middle of their conversation.
5. **Inform your coworker that you are shutting off your cell phone or smart phone during your conversation.** Because so many people do not think to, or refuse to, turn off their cell phone or smart phone, you can gain some psychological capital by mentioning your courteous behavior. You tell your work associate, "Our meeting is important, so just one second. I want to turn off my cell phone and put it out of view."
6. **For business purposes, use a fully functioning phone and stay current with your cell phone bill.** You will appear much more professional to work associates when your cell phone call is not interrupted by a disappearing voice or reception much

like you are in heavy traffic or a shower. Keeping current with your bill avoid the unprofessional image created by a message that your phone number is “temporarily out of service” or your inability to send an outgoing message.

7. When making calls from outside the office, search for a relatively quiet environment so that your message will be clearer, and you will not have to ask the receiver to repeat information. Even in a busy environment like an airport, it is possible to find a relatively quiet alcove from which to make a call. The interpersonal skill link here is that you appear more professional when your communication is relatively free of environmental noise.
8. If absolutely necessary to take a cell phone call while interacting with a work associate, excuse yourself and move at least 15 feet away to process the call. Work associates who are themselves polite will appreciate your display of polite behavior.
9. When you are the driver of the vehicle, explain to your work associate that for safety’s sake you are putting your cell phone away. Point out that just as you would not be the driver when you are drunk, you will not use your cell phone for voice communication or text messaging while you are driving. Although many coworkers might think you are eccentric, the data are convincing about the dangers of cell phone use while driving. On balance, your concern for the safety of your passenger will be interpreted as a positive interpersonal skill.
10. When at work, make any cell phone calls on break, and away for your assigned physical location, such as outside the building or in an employee lounge (but not in the restroom!) Blocking your personal calls and making them outside your assigned work area shows you have enough interpersonal skill to care about the need of other workers for a tranquil work environment.

**Negative Interpersonal Skills While Using Cell Phones.** The dissatisfaction with, and anger toward, people who abuse cell phones in the workplace continues to appear in articles, books, blogs, and letters to the editor. All this negativity, however, must be placed in the proper context. If the person with whom you are interacting does not perceive a particular use of the cell phone as rudeness, then it is not rude. For example, if your coworker smiles at you while you receive a phone call in his or her presence, you are probably not being perceived as displaying negative interpersonal behavior. Following is a list of frequent cell phone and text messaging behaviors that many (not all) people will interpret as rudeness and insensitivity. As a result, the person engaging in the act will be perceived as showing negative interpersonal skill.<sup>[3]</sup>

1. **Accepting a call during a work conversation.** You communicate the fact that your coworker or other work associate is less important than the caller when you allow a call to interrupt your conversation. Some people interpret making a call as even more insensitive than receiving a call, but both behaviors are dismissive of the importance of the work associate with whom you are interacting. Customers are likely to be irritated even more so than coworkers if you interrupt your conversation to accept or make a phone call. CEOs who use their cell phones while talking to other workers are likely to be perceived as power abusers, and therefore as arrogant. In short, by accepting a cell phone call in the presence of others, you diminish the status of the person who is physically present—hardly an impressive interpersonal skill.
2. **Wearing a cell phone earpiece in the presence of a coworker when not on the phone.** Wearing an earpiece while interacting with a coworker suggests that you do not intend to remain fully engaged in your conversation. Also, when wearing a phone earpiece, the person in your physical presence is never sure if you are listening to another call at the same time. Building rapport with a work associate includes making him or her feel important. The fact that you appear to be ready to connect to the outside world trivializes that person.
3. **Making frequent personal calls on your phone in earshot of coworkers.** A major complaint of people who work in cubicles is that someone in an adjoining cubicle

spends much of the day making calls loudly on a cell phone. The same practice would be possible on a landline phone, but many people perceive using their cell phone for personal calls as more justified than using the office phone. Loud, personal calls made throughout the day suggest lack of consideration for others, as well as a low work ethic and an unwillingness to contribute a fair share of work.

4. **Talking loudly and shouting on the cell phone.** Whether in one-on-one interactions, or in the middle of a group of work associates, talking loudly and shouting on the cell phone is widely disliked. Particularly annoying for many people is the compulsion many cell phone shouters have to repeatedly say "Okay" in an especially loud voice. Talking so loudly on the cell phone suggests insensitivity to the feelings of others as well as being egocentric.
5. **Eating while making a phone call.** Eating with the mouth open in a restaurant is a major violation of etiquette. Equally annoying and disgusting to many receivers of these messages is the sender eating while talking. Although the practice of eating while talking on the phone is widespread, its vulgarity to many people is not diminished, and will not be tolerated by many customers. On display is the negative interpersonal skill of poor etiquette.
6. **Constant handling or looking at the cell phone even when not in use.** Many workers have become so dependent on their cell phones and personal digital assistants that they handle them during conversations, as well as keeping the phone in constant view. Workers have also been observed placing their cell phones on their laps while speaking with others. One manager frequently polishes his chrome covered smart phone while talking to subordinates.

The physical attachments just mentioned all suggest the negative trait of being so dependent on a physical device that it interferes with concentrating on others. The constant physical or visual contact with the cell phone also has the negative impact of making the worker appear immature. An explanation offered for the physical attachment so many people have to their cell phones is that the phones have become "electronic pets." A technology reporter observed, "You constantly see people taking their little pets out and stroking the scroll wheel, coddling them basically petting them."<sup>[4]</sup>

7. **Driving a work associate while under the influence of a cell phone including text messaging.** A positive interpersonal skill is not using your cell phone while driving a vehicle in which a work associate is present. A negative interpersonal skill is doing the opposite, even if you live in a state, province, or country where cell phone use is permitted for drivers. A study published in a British medical journal reported that talking on the cell phone while driving quadruples your risk of being in an accident.<sup>[5]</sup> Many work associates will accept driving while using a cell phone, including sending text messages, as typical and appropriate behavior. Yet, others will interpret your behavior as a propensity to engage in senseless risks.
8. **Accepting and sending phone messages from rest rooms.** A widely reported form of cell phone rudeness is sending and receiving cell phone calls from public rest rooms. Many receivers of these calls who hear the water running from the faucets or toilets flushing will be appalled and disgusted. The restroom cell phone user therefore be perceived as insensitive and lacking in social graces—both quite negative interpersonal skills.

Skill-Building Exercise 5-1 gives you an opportunity to practice a core skill with the use of a cell phone and text messaging in the office.

## E-Mail Messages and Instant Messaging

E-mail messages and instant messages (IMs) provide another opportunity for displaying positive as well as negative interpersonal skills linked to the digital age. Many people believe that formality and careful use of language can be neglected when sending messages by e-mail, instant messaging, and when sending text messages. Remember, however, that



## The Important Message

Two coworkers are discussing a joint assignment about preparing a spreadsheet related to product returns. The analysis needs to be completed by 5 p.m. One student plays the role of the worker who is intently focusing on the task. Another student plays the role of the worker who feels the cell phone attached to his or her belt vibrate. The worker notices a text message from the bank indicat-

ing that five checks have bounced, which appears to be a bank mistake. The worker with the text message does not want to be totally rude, yet this is an urgent problem. Run the role-play for about four minutes. Observers might provide feedback on the quality of the interpersonal skills displayed in dealing with this text message challenge.

the way in which any message is sent tells something about the sender. E-mail messages should be proofread, should be sent only when necessary, and generally should be no longer than one screen—not including attachments. Although many e-mail users rely on a strikingly informal and casual writing style, such informality for business correspondence is poor etiquette. For example, avoid confirming a meeting with your CEO in these words: “C U LTR, 4 sure.” ☺ Overloading the company system with attachments containing space-consuming graphics is often considered rude. Text messaging, because of its limited space, can be more casual than other electronic messages.

An e-mail etiquette problem with legal implications is that company e-mail messages are the property of the company, not the sender. So avoid sending through e-mail insulting, vulgar, or inflammatory comments because even deleted e-mail messages can be retrieved. Be careful not to forward an e-mail message that has negative comments about the recipient. For example, a customer service representative sent an e-mail to a customer attempting to resolve a complaint. However, instead of beginning with a fresh e-mail, the representative included an e-mail from her boss that said, “Give this idiot what she wants to get her off our back.” The customer later sued the company, and then agreed to a small financial settlement.

Instant messaging has created new challenges for e-mail etiquette. Because instant messaging allows you to intrude on coworkers anytime—and them to drop in on you—the opportunities to be rude multiply. Managers should not intrude upon workers through instant messaging unless it is urgent. Think before you send, and make sure the message has real value to the recipient. Suggest politely to “buddies” who are taking up too much of your time with messages that they contact you after work.

Many companies are shifting from extensive use of e-mail to having some of the written communication among people placed on intranets, and internal Web sites similar to Facebook. For example, you can inform all your work associates at once that you are going on a business trip for three days and will not be able to respond to their messages. (Of course, this is a good way to invite criminals to burglarize your home.) All of the comments about the polite use of language apply to these replacement technologies for e-mail.

Figure 5-1 summarizes a large amount of information about etiquette related to e-mails and instant messaging. Following this accumulated wisdom will enhance your interpersonal skills linked to the digital age.

## Webcam Job Interviews

Yet 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. On occasion, a hiring manager or human resource representative will request that an interview be conducted by webcam. The job candidate might have a webcam, or use one owned by a friend or the college placement office. (Skype is the leading webcam system.) A challenge in being interviewed via a webcam is that some job candidates do not come across as strongly as they believe.

As webcam technology continues to improve, and more managers are familiar with the technique, the number of these computer-based interviews is likely to increase. Some companies use webcam interviews to reduce travel costs, and this type of interview provides more data than a phone call. Christa Foley, recruiting manager at Zappos.com, says,

**FIGURE 5-1 E-Mail and Messaging Etiquette**

Observing the following tips will enhance your e-mail etiquette and electronic communication effectiveness, as well as enhancing your interpersonal skills.

**Address and sign your e-mail messages.** Many people neglect to mention a person's name in an e-mail, or sign their own name. Giving your e-mail a personal touch is a useful interpersonal micro-skill.

**Keep it simple.** Each message should have only one piece of information or request for action so that it's easier for the receiver to respond. However, avoid sending an e-mail with an attachment without some type of greeting or explanation. Do not allow e-mail threads longer than a couple of pages. E-mail messages longer than one screen often are filed instead of read. Brief e-mails messages show compassion for the recipient's workload.

**Include an action step.** Clearly outline what type of reply you're looking for as well as any applicable deadlines.

**Use the subject line to your advantage.** Generic terms such as "details" or "reminder" do not describe the contents of your message or whether it's time sensitive. So the receiver may delay opening it. "Came in Under Budget" illustrates a specific (and joyful) title. Do not forward a long chain of e-mails without changing the subject; otherwise, you might have a confusing subject line, such as "RE: FW: RE: FW: RE: FW."

**Take care in writing e-mails.** Clearly organize your thoughts to avoid sending e-mails with confusing, incomplete, or missing information. Use business writing style and check carefully for grammatical and typographical errors. (Also, generally avoid the trend to refer to spell "i" in lowercase.) When in doubt use traditional formatting rather than bright colors and unusual fonts because many people prefer standard formatting.

**Inform receivers when sending e-mails from a mobile device.** If you use a BlackBerry or comparable device, include a tagline informing people that you are using such a device that will help explain your terseness. Without explanation, you might project an image of rudeness or limited writing skill.

**Be considerate.** Use "please" and "thank you" even in brief messages. Part of being considerate, or at least polite, is to begin your e-mail with a warm salutation, such "Hello Gina," rather than jumping into the subject with no greeting. Avoid profane or harsh language. Another way of being considerate is to send e-mails only when necessary, to help combat information overload. Sending copies to only recipients who need or want the information is part of being considerate. (Note that some people use that notation "cc" for copies, which really refers to carbon copy. "Copy" is more precise because you are sending an electronic copy.)

**Don't include confidential information.** The problem is that e-mail is occasionally forwarded to unintended recipients. If your message is in any way sensitive or confidential, set up a meeting or leave a voice mail in which you request confidentiality. Also, avoid including gossip including negative rumors on e-mail messages because the subject of the gossip could voice a major complaint.

**Do not use e-mail to blast a coworker, and send copies to others.** Criticizing another person with e-mail is equivalent to blasting him or her during a large meeting.

**Ask before sending huge attachments.** Do not clog e-mail systems without permission.

**Encourage questions and demands for clarification.** E-mail functions best when it is interactive, so ask receivers to send along questions they might have about your message, including any requests for clarification.

**Consider the timing of e-mail messages.** An e-mail that makes a major request should be sent earlier in the day so that the person has time to process the request. Good news can be sent almost anytime. For some recipients, bad news is best sent early in the day so that they can ask for your support in dealing with the problem. However, very bad news (such as being laid off) is best delivered in person. Some people prefer to receive bad news later in the day so that it will not interrupt their entire workday.

**Avoid keeping a personal e-mail account on the job unless welcomed by management.** An estimated one-quarter of e-mails received at work are for personal purposes.

*(Continued)*

FIGURE 5-1 Continued

To resist the temptation of spending too much time with personal e-mails, it is best not to have a personal e-mail account, such as Gmail, on the office computer. You will appear more professional if you avoid the temptation to spend a lot of work time sending and receiving personal e-mail and instant messages.

**Minimize "BIF" messages on evening and weekends.** In today's demanding workplace, it is easy to send "before I forget" messages in the evening, on weekends, and during holidays. Some people will regard you as insensitive to their lifestyle if you badger them outside of regular working hours with e-mail messages. Save your urgent messages for the next workday—unless an immediate exchange of information is essential.

Instant messaging requires a few additional considerations for practicing good electronic etiquette:

**Use instant messaging sparingly because it is interruptive.** An instant messaging is likely to interrupt a person's concentration on an important task, so it should be sent infrequently. Be careful not to send an instant message to a coworker who you know is working on an analytical task. However, if the company culture encourages the use of instant messaging, you display good interpersonal skill by going with the flow.

**Don't be Big Brother.** Some bosses use instant messaging to check up on others, to make sure that they are seated at their computer. Never intrude on workers unless it is urgent.

**Lay down the instant messaging law.** Make sure that your message has some real value to the recipient before jumping right in front of someone's face. Instant messaging is much like walking into someone's office or cubicle without an appointment or without knocking.

**Take it offline.** When someone on your buddy list becomes too chatty, don't vent your frustration. By phone, in-person, or through regular e-mail, explain tactfully that you do not have time for processing so many instant messages. Suggest that the two of you might get together for lunch or coffee soon.

**Set limits to avoid frustration.** To avoid constant interruptions, use a polite custom status message, such as "I will be dealing with customers today until 4:40."

*Source:* "Communicating Electronically: What Every Manager Needs to Know," *Communication Solutions*, Sample Issue, 2008, p. 2; Heinz Tschabitscher, "The Ten Most Important Rules of Email Etiquette," [http://email.about.com/cs/netiquettetips/tp/core\\_netiquette.htm](http://email.about.com/cs/netiquettetips/tp/core_netiquette.htm), accessed September 9, 2003; Monte Enbysk, "Bosses: 10 Tips for Better E-mails," *Microsoft Small Business Center*, [www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/resources/technology/communications/bosses\\_10](http://www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness/resources/technology/communications/bosses_10), 2006; Nancy Flynn, "50% of Bosses Ban Personal E-mail Accounts," *Workplace Communication Examiner* ([www.examiner.com](http://www.examiner.com)), July 28, 2009; "5 Tactics to Curb E-Mail Overload," *Manager's Edge*, June 2008, p. 6.

"If you see facial expressions and body language, you have a different sense of what a person is saying."<sup>[6]</sup> After candidates are interviewed by webcam, the strongest ones are typically invited for an in-person visit to the company.

Above all, a webcam interview is still an interview; so review the interview suggestions in Chapter 17 to appear at your best. In addition, keep in mind the following positive suggestions, all of which imply mistakes to avoid at the same time.<sup>[7]</sup>

1. **Use even lighting.** As with all forms of photography, lighting is a big part of making a successful webcam appearance. A bright light behind you is particularly poor because your face will be in shadow. Lighting bounced off the ceiling works the best for a soft, even image, yet side-lighting will often suffice. Do not place a bright light on the computer in front of you to avoid too much glare on your face, particularly if you are light skinned.
2. **Wear appropriate clothing.** Dress as if you were having an in-person interview, and minimize the color white because it comes across poorly on computer screens. Loud patterns are also distracting. Unless otherwise directed, it is best to wear a

business suit or dress. Investigate what type of clothing job applicants typically wear. For example, if you were applying for a management training position at Home Depot, business casual dress might be appropriate.

3. **Do your best to appear relaxed and not overly stressed.** Light exercise and a shower about 30 minutes before the interview will help give you a refreshed look. Use your favorite stress reduction technique shortly before the webcam interview. Familiarity with the webcam technology will help you feel relaxed.
4. **Use or create an uncluttered area free of personal belongings, pets, and television sets.** Although your living quarters may be the locale of your interview, you still want to simulate the appearance of a professional office. Tidy up the interview area, and move away as much clutter as possible. Background noise, including a ringing telephone or a television set turned on, would detract from a professional image.
5. **Sit tall with good posture, and stay at approximately the same distance from the computer screen that you do for most of your computer work.** The worst mistake posture error webcam interviewees typically make is to move the head within a few inches of the screen. A close-up shot of this nature distorts the face and looks a little bizarre to most interviewers.
6. **Rehearse so that you will be better able to implement the previous five suggestions.** Collaborate with someone in your network of contacts to interview each other on webcam. The rehearsal will familiarize you with the technology, and you can also get feedback on the adequacy of the lighting, and how natural and positive you appeared. As was often said in the early days of photography, "Smile, you're on camera."

A fundamental reason that rehearsal for a webcam interview is important is that people have a tendency to overrate the image they project on video. A webcam image is, of course, a variation of a video image. Karen Friedman, a video presentation trainer, has this to say about the importance of getting an accurate feedback on the video image you project:

People will tell you that they're perceived as dynamic, engaging, and interesting, with full command of the material. And when they see themselves on videotape or DVD and it's a rude awakening, because they see how other people really see them. You can pick up odd mannerisms you're not aware of. You may have the words down and the verbal techniques, but your body language might give away that you're nervous or unsure of yourself.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Interpersonal Aspects of Multitasking

Multitasking has two meanings, and the difference is of major significance for interpersonal relationships. One meaning of multitasking is that you have two or more projects that you are working on, but you do not work on these projects at the same time. For example, today a person might be responsible for investigating customer complaints as well as purchasing new furniture for the office. In the morning she works on the complaints, and in the afternoon she negotiates a furniture purchase. The other type of multitasking creates more potential interpersonal problems. With this type of multitasking, the person does two or more things simultaneously, such as visiting an office-furniture Web site while talking on the phone with a dissatisfied customer.

Chapter 16 deals with the productivity problems often associated with multitasking. Also, the discussion of cell phone use described the insensitivity of accepting and sending calls while talking to another person (a frequent type of multitasking). Here we explain how multitasking might have (a) a positive influence on interpersonal relationships and (b) a negative influence on interpersonal skills.

**Multitasking and Positive Interpersonal Skills.** In some situations, performing two tasks at once can enhance interpersonal skills because you are helping another person. Imagine that Sally asks Fernando for help in inserting accents into Spanish words, such

### Multitasking

(a) Having two or more projects that you are working on, but you do not work on these projects at the same time. (b) Doing two or more tasks simultaneously.

“ Your multitasking skills are second to none. You process information at lightening speed and have the organizational skills to manage multiple projects at once. Rising to the top under pressure while managing many different initiatives will set you apart from the crowd.”

—Brandi Blades, vice president of marketing at Gen Y talent acquisition agency Brill Street + Company, talking about how young professionals can use their youth to advantage during the job hunt and in the workplace.<sup>[9]</sup>

as wanting to convert “carino” into “cariño” (with caring). Fernando sits down next to Sally at her computer, and says, “Watch me Sally. I’m moving my hand over to the Num Lock keyboard. With a finger on my left hand, I press Alt. Then with a finger on my right hand, I press 0241 in sequence. See, we have an ñ. Next, I will show you how to use the character map that will get you all the Spanish accents you will ever need.”

Fernando is indeed doing two tasks at once—manipulating the keyboard and talking to Sally. If he had not multitasked, he would not have been a good tutor. Fernando is also not being rude because he has Sally’s implicit permission to multitask. A lot of coaching and tutoring requires multitasking of the nature just described.

The scenario of Sally and Fernando illustrates another key principle of using multitasking to enhance interpersonal skills. When two people are holding a conversation for purposes of joint problem solving, multitasking will sometimes enhance the problem solving, thereby creating a stronger interpersonal relationship. Visualize Mike and Tammy driving together on a business trip. Mike is driving, and his vehicle is not equipped with a GPS. Mike says to Tammy, “I think we may have missed the Liberty Road exit on this highway. It would be a nightmare to exit and find the way back. What should we do?”

“Hold on Mike,” says Tammy. I’ll access the GPS app on my BlackBerry and get us centered in a minute.” Fifty seconds later, Tammy says to Mike while still looking at the screen on her BlackBerry “We’re good. The Liberty Road exit is 5.6 miles down the road. We’ll make a right turn off the exit ramp.”

**Multitasking and Negative Interpersonal Skills.** The major negative interpersonal skill aspect of multitasking is that it trivializes the person with whom you are interacting, as described with cell phone abuse. Imagine you are listening to a coworker who is describing a proposed solution to a problem. You shift your gaze to your computer so that you can seek who just “poked” you on Facebook. This immediately sends the message that your “poker” is more important at the moment than your coworker who wanted to discuss a legitimate work problem.

Another negative interpersonal skill associated with multitasking is more subtle. When you respond to an electronic interruption, such as an instant message or an e-mail alert, your attention is sapped for more time than it takes to read the message. You have to recover from the interruption and refocus your attention on your work associate. While you are in the recovery mode, perhaps even 30 seconds, you are paying less than full attention to the other person.<sup>[10]</sup> And this inattentiveness is obvious by the blank stare on your face, or recovery murmurs such as “yeah, yeah.”

## BACK TO THE OPENING CASE

Trevor, the senior product designer, appears to have found the right balance between engaging in highly analytical tasks using his computer and interacting with other people. You will recall that he felt isolated working alone in a small apartment. By renting communal office space, he had enough interaction with people to help

him feel attached to the workforce. Although Trevor does not spend loads of time with his co-renters, he finds the interaction with a mix of people to be intellectually stimulating.



## Harassment of Others

A negative consequence of communication technology in the workplace is that it is easier to harass coworkers than in the analog age. To harass coworkers in the past, it was necessary to say nasty things to them in person, telephone them in a menacing way, write them threatening notes, or send them upsetting words on paper or photographs. The Internet including e-mail and the Web has made it much easier to harass people.

Creating a hostile environment by displaying pornography to coworkers who do not want to see it has become one of the most frequent forms of harassment. Aside from being rude, sexual harassment through pornography has frequently been ruled as illegal.

A representative example is that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals in New York State consistently has ruled that “the mere presence of pornography in a workplace can alter the ‘status’ of women and may be objective proof of a hostile environment.”<sup>[11]</sup> (A hostile environment is one of the two forms of sexual harassment as described in Chapter 9.)

An employee can be accused of hostile environment harassment by simply leaving open a porn site on his or her desktop. Sending coworkers sexually oriented jokes by e-mail can result in similar accusations. If you work for a company that distributes adult films, pornography would be part of your job, and you therefore might be excluded from the harassment accusation.

Harassment can also deal with a person’s race or ethnicity, such as making insulting comments, or jokes about a person’s race. Age is another demographic factor that could possibly lead to a person being harassed, such as continuous joking by e-mail that a senior worker was suffering from Alzheimer’s disease.

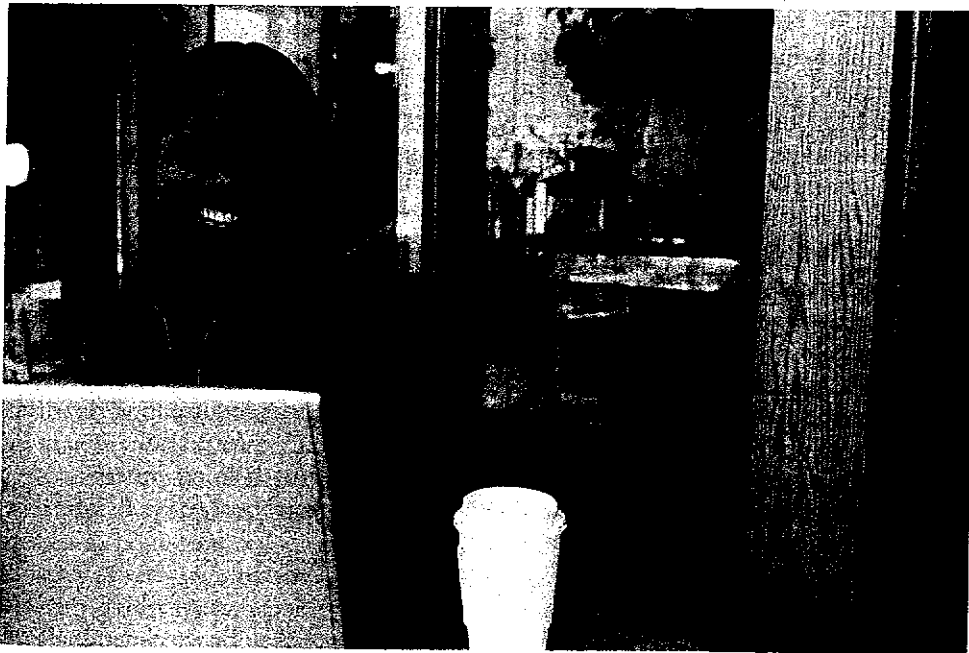
Harassing others through communication technology is a negative interpersonal skill. A possible positive twist would be that the person who abstains 100 percent from any computer-related actions that could be interpreted as harassment is demonstrating a positive interpersonal skill. A behavioral specific would be to delete without opening an advertisement for adult videos that made its way past the company spam filter.

## **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING AND SMALL AUDIENCES**

Interpersonal skills related to the digital age are also demonstrated while interacting with large numbers of people, as well as groups. Among these settings are social networking by Internet; using laptop and netbook computers, and smart phones during a meeting; making electronic presentations; videoconferencing; telecommuting; and preserving your online reputation. You will notice that a couple of these settings could be focused more on an individual than a large number of people or a group. For example, you might be sending a message on a social networking site to one person, and while telecommuting you might be interacting with one person.

### **Social Networking by Internet**

Almost infinite knowledge exists about social networking, including its technology, application for building a personal network, and marketing.<sup>[12]</sup> Included in this abundance of



information is how Twitter and Facebook have completely transformed the way we live, and how e-mail has now become obsolete because of social networking sites. Our aim here is to simply list a few of the positive and negative interpersonal skills associated with the use of social networking sites.

**Positive Interpersonal Skills and Social Networking.** The use of Twitter, Facebook, and the like provides the serious worker with several opportunities for displaying positive interpersonal skills, as follows:

1. **Demonstrate your loyalty by posting gracious comments about your employer.** Social networking sites include a heavy component of being mini-blogs, and therefore present an open forum for your ideas about the company. You can demonstrate empathy and compassion for the mission of your company by commenting on an action taken by the company that you perceive as positive. An example: "I'm proud to work for the Jeep division of Fiat/Chrysler. My wife and our three children were caught in a snow storm. I put my Cherokee into four-wheel drive and made it through the storm until we could find a motel. There were dozens of overturned vehicles, but we made it to safety. The vehicle stabilization feature is really functional."
2. **Display your compassion for people in need.** Post on the company social networking site, and also a public site, that you want to help people in need in some specific way. For example, you might state that you have bunch of clothing that you want to give to a needy family in any way associated with the company. Or, explain that you have developed your language tutoring skills and that you are willing to help for free any person who needs help in learning to read. Compassion might be considered a value, but it also translates into a skill in terms of helping people.
3. **Demonstrate professional-level communication skills.** When making entries on Twitter in particular, many people feel compelled to write carelessly, foolishly, and viciously. Demonstrate your professionalism by writing in a style suited for a printed newspaper or a term paper. Remember that many influential people regard written communication skills as a subset of interpersonal skills.
4. **Pay deserved compliments to company personnel.** The ability to compliment others in a sensible way is an advanced interpersonal skill. Complimenting a person in private may be useful, but public compliments are welcome also. An example of a Facebook post of this nature: "I want everybody to know that Tom Barnes, our facilities manager, spearheaded the planting of a garden on the office building roof. We are saving the planet, one petunia at a time."
5. **Establish meaningful contact with workers far and wide.** The major purpose of social networking is to develop valuable contacts with many people with whom it would be difficult to maintain person-to-person or phone contact. Selective use of the social networking sites enables you to relate, at least on a written level, to a variety of people in your fields. You might be able to enhance your cross-cultural skills by interacting with professionals in different countries. (LinkedIn is particularly good for this purpose because so many of its members have a professional intent.)
6. **Display a desire to help others grow and develop.** Social networking sites afford an easy opportunity to point others toward helpful information, such as referring friends to useful Web sites and books. You can also alert people to dangers, such as a new scam related to the sale of gold. Although the same type of alerts can be accomplished by e-mail, social networking sites do not require long distribution lists. By pointing people in the direction of useful information, you will be demonstrating part of a useful interpersonal skill of helping others grow and develop. Instead of just writing about yourself on your post, include information that will help others.

**Negative Interpersonal Skills and Social Networking.** Social networking provides a setting for displaying negative as well as positive interpersonal skills. In general, all of the

positive opportunities mentioned above could be reversed to become negative. For example, instead of helping others grow and develop with postings on your site or their site, you slam and demean these people. Several adolescent suicides have been reported that appeared to have been triggered by being insulted on a teen-oriented social networking site. The following list presents a few ways in which negative interpersonal skills are sometimes displayed on social networking sites.

1. **Using social networking sites to eliminate face-to-face interactions with work associates.** As with e-mail, social networking sites provide an opportunity to avoid face-to-face interaction with coworkers, managers, and customers. However, the temptation is even greater with social networking sites because they tout the concept of being “friends” with people on your list of electronic contacts. A person might think consciously or subconsciously, “If my customer is already my friend, why should I have to talk to or personally visit him? Our relationship is already good.” If all relationships could be built and maintained electronically, you would not need to be studying human relations.
2. **Posting confidential or derogatory information about your employer.** In the words of technology writer Bridget Carey, “Employees need to realize some conversations are privileged. Just because you’re in a meeting about a new product, or worse, layoffs, doesn’t mean you should be broadcasting to the world.”<sup>[13]</sup> Posting negative information and insults about your employer demonstrates even lower emotional intelligence. Nasty comments about the employer, even if deserved, are often made out of uncontrolled anger. Hundreds of employees have been fired because of making inflammatory comments on social networking sites about their employers. Poor interpersonal skill is also displayed by joining a social networking group dedicated to destroying the reputation of your employer.
3. **Posting derogatory information and photos about a coworker.** Social networking site administrators generally do not edit posts, so anybody registered on the site can post dreadful comments about another person as a mean prank or a deliberate effort to ruin the target’s reputation. YouTube can serve a similar evil purpose. Some of these negative posts reflect backstabbing because another person encourages you to engage in embarrassing behavior. He or she may quote you, or posts a photo or video of you engaged in outrageous behavior.
4. **Engaging in social networking at inappropriate times.** Many “Tweeters” in particular are so habituated to visiting their favorite social networking site that they do so at inappropriate times, such as during work. Several NFL teams, including the Miami Dolphins, had to clamp down on players tweeting during practice. Many office workers access their social networking sites during meetings. The interpersonal skill deficiency of accessing a social network site for nonbusiness purposes during working hours is that it reflects insensitivity and immaturity. (Print-related distractions would also be unwelcome, such as doing crossword puzzles during a football practice or in a meeting.)

## Laptop and Personal Digital Assistant Use during Meetings

Whether the use of laptop and netbook computers as well as personal digital assistants (smart phones) during meetings enhances your interpersonal skills depends on company custom and why you are using your computer. Some companies welcome computer use during meetings; while in other companies, such practice is considered distracting and inconsiderate. Laptops are widely used during meetings at the business process consulting company, Accenture.

At Ford Motor Company, CEO Alan Mulally is adamant about meetings not being interrupted by people using their BlackBerry or laptop computer—as well as the interruption of side conversations.<sup>[14]</sup> Another example of a company intent on boosting the productivity of meetings by banning digital devices is Adaptive Path, a design firm in San Francisco. Meeting participants must leave their laptops on their desks, and they must place mobile phones on a counter or in a box.<sup>[15]</sup>



**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, also with 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 to very good. 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.

The practice of consulting a smart phone during a meeting has the potential to annoy, therefore detracting from the image of the smart phone user. An example is Joel L. Klein, the New York City schools chancellor. He has gained such a negative reputation for checking his BlackBerry during meetings that some parents joke that they might be better off sending him an e-mail message.<sup>[16]</sup>

As with cell phones, when laptop computers and smart phones are used at meetings to facilitate information gathering, and with permission, they can enhance interpersonal skills. If you contribute to the purpose of the meeting, and are not being rude or interruptive, you are displaying good interpersonal skill. Imagine you are present at a marketing meeting of a swimsuit designer and manufacturer. The head of marketing says, "We have been thinking of finding a distributor in Alaska, but I wonder what percentage of Alaskans own a swim suit." You say, "If you would like, give me five minutes to search the Internet for a factual answer to your question." Particularly if you find a plausible answer, you will be perceived as constructive.

The etiquette aspect of laptops, netbooks, and smart phones at meetings has created a spirited debate. People with traditional attitudes about etiquette say the use of smart phones at meetings is as gauche as ordering out for pizza. In contrast, techno-evangelists insist that to ignore real-time text messages invites peril because so many people demand an immediate response to their e-mail messages.<sup>[17]</sup> Again, to avoid being perceived as gauche (rude), follow the corporate culture. Skill-Building Exercise 5-2 deals with this issue.

**Interpersonal Aspects of Presentation Technology**

Presentation technology has become almost synonymous with PowerPoint and other computer graphics. 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.

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 would be reading detailed slides to the audience, not maintaining eye contact, and continuous fiddling with your equipment thereby ignoring participants at the meeting.

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.

### 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 if it requires using a 10 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  | 5. Mostly false | 9. Mostly true  |
| 2. Mostly false | 6. Mostly false | 10. Mostly true |
| 3. Mostly false | 7. Mostly true  |                 |
| 4. Mostly false | 8. 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.

### Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing places extra demands on making a good first impression, as well as demonstrating good interpersonal skills. Keep the following considerations in mind for creating a good impression and demonstrating sensitivity to the situation at a videoconference:<sup>[18]</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. 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 because 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.
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 case 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>[19]</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>[20]</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. 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>[21]</sup> High maintenance employees who need frequent praise and attention are much better suited for working in a traditional office than working from home.<sup>[22]</sup>

### **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, the 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>[23]</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>[24]</sup>

A positive interpersonal and cognitive skill is therefore to avoid having embarrassing information or photographs linked to you accessible through search engines. Your reputation can also be damaged by posting extreme viewpoints on Web because these extreme viewpoints might be unwelcome by employers who want to void 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 by a hard copy or by online, provide a link to your profile.<sup>[25]</sup> Also, alert the 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 asking or hiring a service for such purposes.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT QUIZZES IN OVERVIEW

Self-Assessment Quiz 5-1 gave you an opportunity to take an overview of how politely and sensibly you use information and communication technology with respect to dealing with others. Self-Assessment Quiz 5-2 focuses your digitally related interpersonal skills on making presentations with technology. The two quizzes supplement each other, with the second quiz being a special case of the other. In general, your standing on both quizzes should be close.

# Concept Review and Reinforcement

## Key Term

multitasking 103

## 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. Cell phones and text messaging represent an enormous opportunity for displaying good, as well as poor, interpersonal skills. An example of positive skill would be 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 would be 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, and (3) demonstrating professional-level communication skills.

Negative interpersonal skills associated with social networking include (a) using social networking sites to eliminate face-to-face interactions with work associates, (2) posting confident or derogatory information about your employer, and (3) engaging in social networking at inappropriate times.

Whether the use of laptop and notebook computers, as well as smart phones, during meetings enhances your interpersonal skills depends on company custom and why you are using your computer. When laptop computers and smart phones are used at meetings to facilitate information gathering, and 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 would be continuous fiddling with the equipment, thereby ignoring the audience.

Videoconferencing places extra demands on creating a good first impression, as well as demonstrating good interpersonal skill. A positive skill would be to speak in crisp, conversational tones, and paying 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.

## Questions for Discussion and Review

1. You and a coworker are having a work-related conversation, seated on a bench outside the office building during lunch break. Your friend's cell phone rings; he notices from the number that the boss is calling, so he answers the call immediately. Explain whether or not your friend's answering the call is appropriate.
2. Assume that you send an instant message to the company CEO stating that you enjoy working for the company. Explain whether you think the CEO is obliged to respond immediately, or at all, to your message.
3. What should a person who is invited for a webcam job interview do if he or she does not feel telegenic (photogenic on TV) to perform well in such an interview?
4. Suppose you are interacting with an executive in your company who interrupts the conversation several times to make and receive calls on his or her smart phone. Explain whether you would reciprocate by making your own calls during your interaction with the executive.
5. What might you be able to do in the next several days to demonstrate on Facebook or Twitter a positive aspect of your interpersonal skills?
6. Imagine that you are attending an in-person meeting as your favorite sports team is playing a championship game in a different time zone. Explain whether you would take a quick peak at the score from time to time on your smart phone during the meeting.
7. Give an example of a one of the best displays of interpersonal skills you have seen in a PowerPoint presentation by one of your professors.
8. Explain why when a politician such as the president of the United States, the prime minister of Canada, or a U. S. senator makes an address to the public, he or she never uses PowerPoint.
9. How might a person who telecommutes four days a week demonstrate to management that he or she has good interpersonal skills?
10. What could you possibly do to use YouTube to demonstrate to others that you have good interpersonal skills?

## The Web Corner

[www.akdrt.com/cell.html](http://www.akdrt.com/cell.html)

(Avoiding cell phone rudeness.)

[aol.com/video-detail](http://aol.com/video-detail)

(Presenting yourself well during a videoconference.)

[www.onlinereputationmanager.com](http://www.onlinereputationmanager.com)

(Developing a good online reputation.)

### Internet Skill Builder: Interpersonal Skills of a Technology Executive

Think of a well-known information technology executive, such as Steve Jobs at Apple Corp or Marissa Mayer at

Google, Inc. Arrive at a judgment about his or her interpersonal skills through video research on the Internet. For example, you might find a brief video of your target executive on YouTube, Hulu, or Facebook. Based on this small sample of behavior, reach any conclusion you can about the technology executive's interpersonal skills. Two traits to judge would be rudeness and insensitivity to people because some well-known technology executives have the reputation of treating others poorly. Forget about the opinion of others—you are the judge in this assignment.

# Developing Your Human Relations Skills

## Interpersonal Relations Case 5.1

### *Unveiled on Facebook*

Lisa works as tech support field representative in the digital printer division of a telecommunications company. The digital printers manufactured and sold by the company are designed for large, commercial printing companies. The starting price for these sophisticated and complex machines is \$400,000. In addition to the machines, the company sells service contracts that include field visits by a tech support representative. These visits are necessary when there is a problem with the machine that cannot be resolved by telephone or computer to computer.

Lisa's company is located in Cleveland, Ohio. During a February cold spell in Cleveland, a major customer located in Miami was having trouble with a new digital printer. The problem could not be resolved by phone or through computer diagnostics, so Lisa was sent down to Miami. After Lisa arrived, she estimated that the job would take three days to accomplish.

At the end of the second day, Lisa received an urgent call from Barry, her boss, who told her to return home as quickly as possible because a customer in Chicago needed her expertise to solve a problem with its giant printing press. Lisa thought that because she had done such a great job in fixing the Miami printing press, she deserved a day of vacation in Florida. So she explained to Barry that the customer needed one more day of hands-on support. As a result, she would be back to the office one day later than planned.

The next morning Lisa headed to South Beach in Miami along with two contacts she had made at the cus-

tom. One of the customer employees, Jessica, brought along a camcorder because in her words, "I love to have souvenirs of good times." Without Lisa granting permission, Jessica then posted a video of her frolicking in the water at South Beach. She also sent a message to the Facebook account of Lisa's boss, alerting him to "check out my new video."

When Lisa arrived back in the office, Barry confronted her about the video and asked, "Explain to me clearly how you were helping our customer with their problem while you were in the water at South Beach. Our company cannot tolerate liars."

Lisa replied, "I was thinking about the customer's problem while I was at South Beach. Besides, after all that hard work I needed a little rest and relaxation."

### Case Questions

1. What does this case have to do with interpersonal skills?
2. What would you advise Lisa to do so that she can resolve her problem with her employer? (You might want to glance at Chapter 9, which includes a discussion of conflict resolution.)
3. What advice would you offer Jessica, Lisa's work associate who posted a video of her on Facebook?
4. If you were Barry, how would you handle this situation of Lisa having taken a day off to visit South Beach?

## Interpersonal Relations Role-Play

### *Dealing with the Surprise Video on Facebook*

The case just presented provides the storyline and the scenario for this role-play. One student plays the role of Lisa who wants to defend herself with respect to the extra day off she took. She might also want to defend herself with

respect to the Facebook video. Another student plays the role of Barry who is angry with Lisa, yet he is an ardent Facebook fan. Barry also recognizes that the company badly needs Lisa because of her technical expertise. Run the role-play for about seven minutes. Observers might provide feedback as to how well the issue of the Facebook unveiling has been resolved.

## Interpersonal Relations Case 5.2

### Kevin, the Twitter Guy

Kevin, a real estate agent, specializing in low-priced homes in Detroit, Michigan, is an avid Twitter user. He spends approximately two hours per day checking out his followers and the people he is following. Kevin posts about six tweets a day with the hope of building his reputation as an intelligent professional, as well as obtaining referrals of potential homebuyers. The contents of 10 tweets Kevin posted last month are presented next.

The Detroit Lions might be good this season. Owning a home in downtown is a good investment. <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.

My buddies love my barbecues. Get in touch to buy a house. <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.

Looks like I have pink eye today. Send along your home-hunting friends. <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.

I tried one of those electronic cigarettes. No thanks. Home ownership is a great investment. <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.

My niece sent me a Valentine's Day card saying she loves me. <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.

6. Just advised my folks to get a reverse mortgage. I told them home ownership is good. <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.
7. Keep an eye on your BMI (body mass index). Did you know that I sell houses? <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.
8. I may need a new transmission on my SUV. I'm waiting for a referral from you guys. <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.
9. It's hot and my AC in the SUV is down. Home ownership is the American Dream. <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.
10. Did you know that Domino's has made its pizzas spicier and tastier? Pizza goes great with a house. <http://www.kevin@MetroRealty.com>.

### Case Questions

1. How well is Kevin doing in terms of projecting the image of an intelligent professional?
2. What advice might you give to Kevin so that his tweeting might lead to more referrals?
3. To what extent is Kevin just wasting time with his Twitter activity?