

Communicating in the Workplace



“Communication is a major and essential part of business.”

Overview

- The importance of communication in business
- Current challenges
- Three main categories of business communication
- Formal and informal communication networks
- Business communication as a form of problem solving
- The contexts for each act of business communication
- The business communication process

The Importance of Communication Skills

- Ninety-four percent of over 2,000 surveyed executives ranked “communicating well” as the most important skill for success.

--NFI Research

- Companies included in BusinessWeek’s list of best places to work cited communication skills the most important trait in a job candidate—more desirable than any other trait besides college major.

--BusinessWeek

Even More Evidence of Importance

- Employers surveyed for the Job Outlook 2009 cited communication skills along with related traits such as a strong work ethic, ability to work in a team, and initiative as highly prized qualities in job applicants.

--National Association of Colleges and Employers

- Recruiters who assessed MBA programs gave “communication and interpersonal skills” more ratings of “very important” than any other attribute.

--The Wall Street Journal

Current Challenges for Business Communicators

- Ongoing development of new information technologies
- Increasingly global nature of business
- Growing diversity in the workplace and in types of workplaces

Main Forms of Communication in Business

- Operational
 - Internal
 - External
- Personal

The screenshot displays the John Deere Online intranet portal. At the top, the John Deere logo and name are visible. Below the navigation bar, the page is divided into several sections:

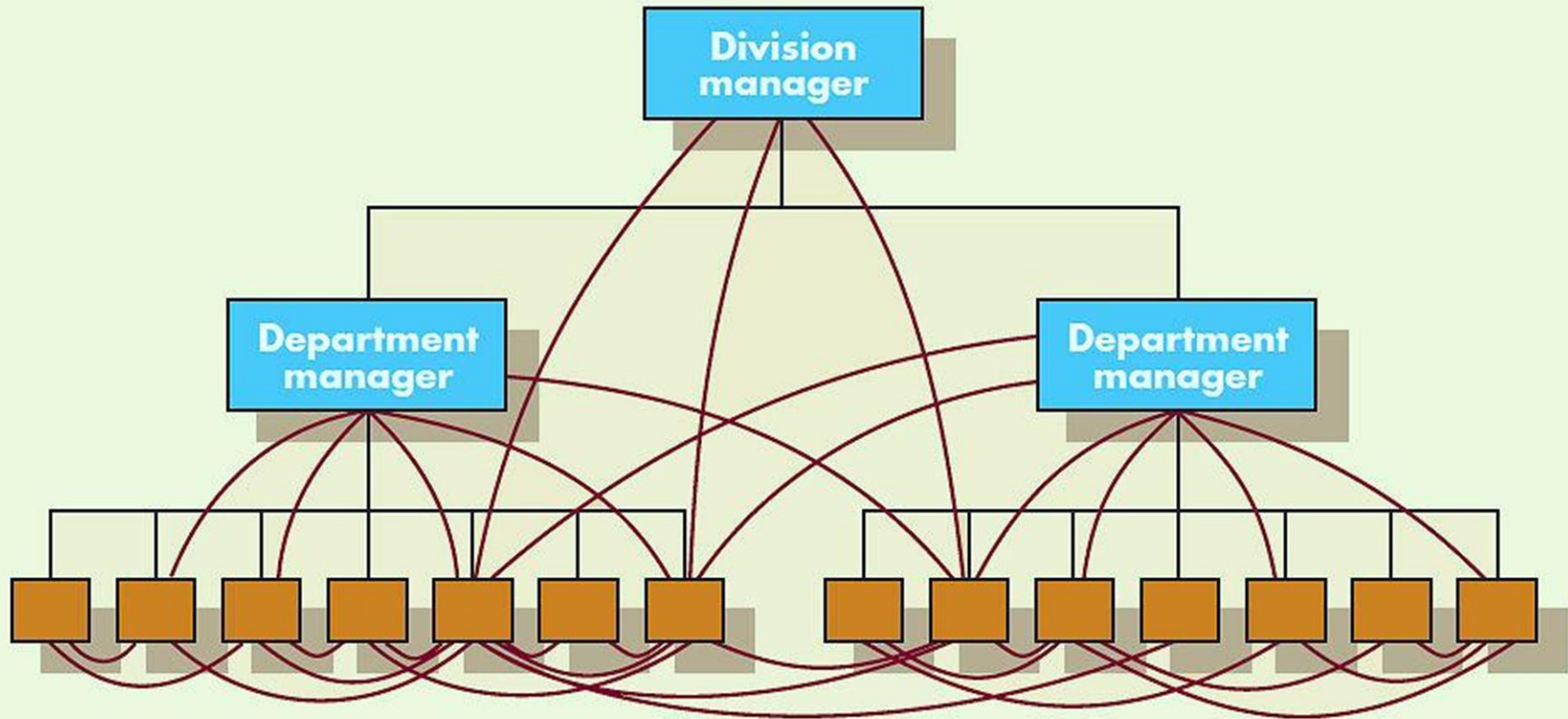
- Market Info:** Updated 01/20/2009 12:27 PM EST (Delayed at least 20 min.). It lists various market indices such as DE Last, HI/Low, Volume, S2-WK High/Low, DJIA, S&P 500, NASDAQ, and NYSE.
- Enterprise News:** The main section features an article titled "Highlighting Women in Operational Leadership" dated Jan. 16. The article discusses the importance of diverse groups in bringing different skills and viewpoints to the table. A sub-section titled "What's a John Deere Journal Online Report?" explains that it is a communications channel for presenting content on the intranet.
- Senior Management:** A profile for Jim Israel, President, is shown with a photo and a "Biography" link.
- Quick Links:** A sidebar on the left contains links to "401(k) Options", "AOL Services", "Archives", "Art Collection", "Aviation", "Business Intelligence", "Business Objects", "Compliance Hotline", and "Company Profile".
- USCAP Releases "Blueprint for Legislative Action":** A news item dated Jan. 15, discussing the U.S. Climate Action Partnership's framework for legislation to address climate change.

Companies often use portals or Intranets, such as this one at John Deere to communication with their employees.
Courtesy of Deere & Co.

Communication Networks

- Formal Network
 - Well-established, usually along operational lines
 - Depends on certain established forms or “genres” in the company
 - Planned and managed
- Informal Network
 - Complex
 - Ever changing

The Communication Networks in a Division of a Small Manufacturing Company



Black lines = Formal network

Red lines = Informal network (at a moment in time, for they change often)

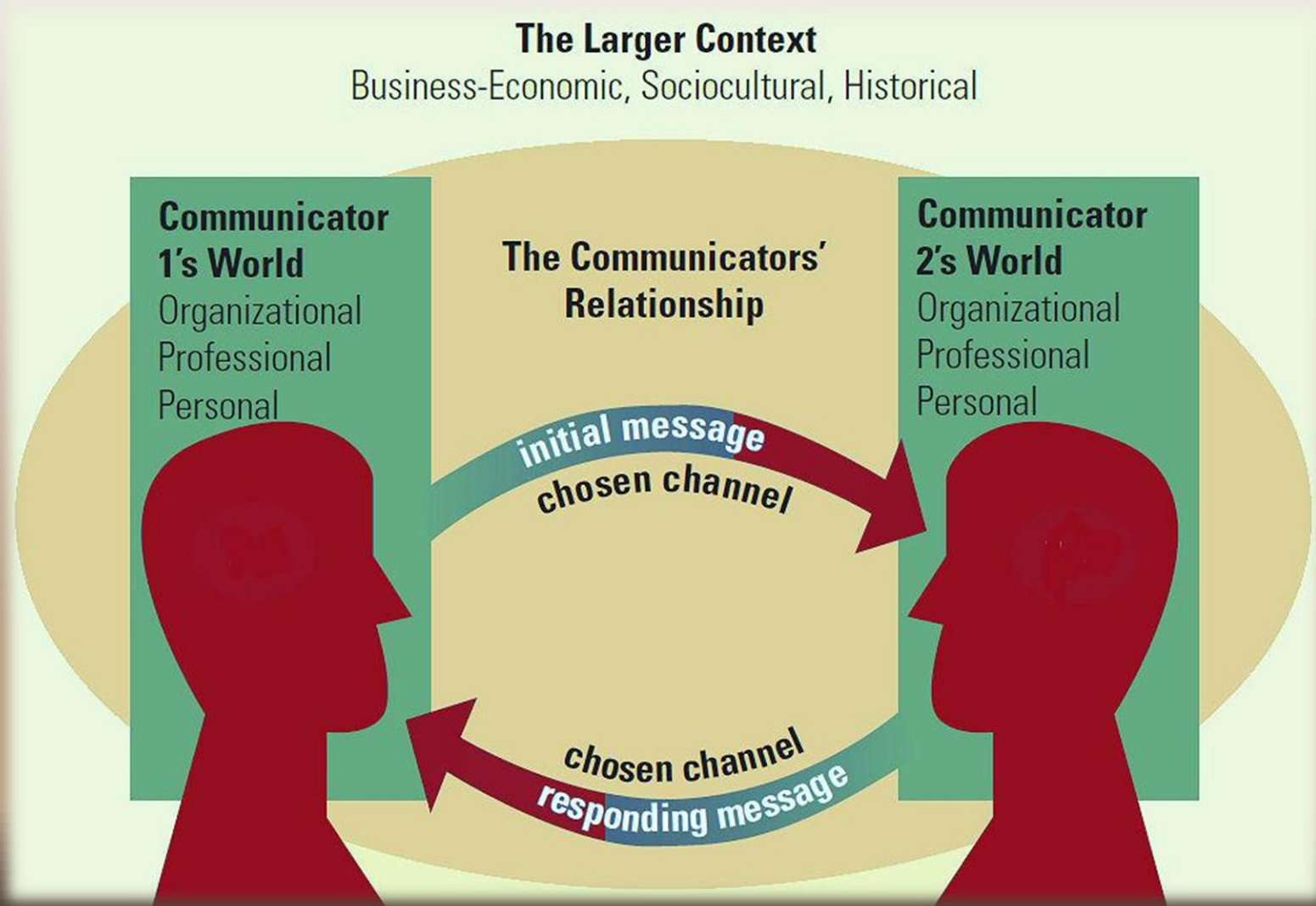
Factors Affecting the Communication in a Business

- Nature of the business
- Operating plan
- Business environment
- Geographic dispersion
- People
- Company culture

Business Communication as Problem Solving

- Problems are simply a gap between where you are and where you want to be.
- Problems range from the well defined to the ill defined.
 - Well defined problems can be solved by formulas
 - Most business-communication problems are ill-defined problems requiring analyzing a unique configuration of factors to arrive at a somewhat unique solution.

The Business Communication Process



The Contexts for Communication

- The larger context
 - Business-economic
 - Sociocultural
 - Historical
- The relationship of the communicators
- The communicators' particular contexts
 - Organizational
 - Professional
 - Personal

The Bottom Line

A man in a dark suit and a woman in a light-colored blazer are shaking hands in a modern office setting. The man is looking up at the woman with a smile. The background features large windows and architectural elements.

“The goal of business communication is to create a shared understanding of business situations that will enable people to work successfully together.”