Chapter 2

Contemporary Issues in Business Communication

CONTEMPORARY
BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION
SCOT OBER

7TH EDITION
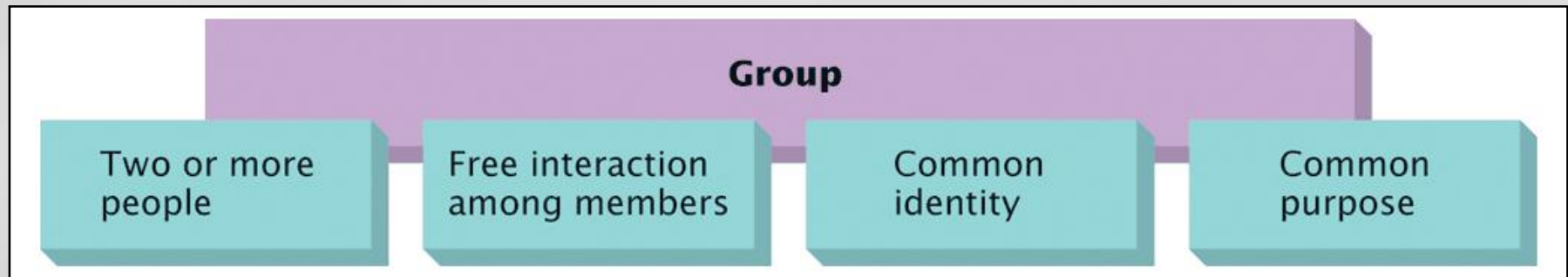
Contemporary issues
in business communication

- Communicating in work teams
- Communicating in diverse communities
- Communicating ethically
- Communicating via e-mail

Can conflict be *constructive?*

- Makes us more aware of problems
- Encourages change
- Makes life more interesting
- Increases the quality of the decision making
- Helps us understand ourselves better
- Increases our self-confidence

What does it take to make a group?

Group

| Two or more people | Free interaction among members | Common identity | Common purpose |

Source: Kreitner, *Student Achievement Series: Foundations of Management*, © 2008 by Houghton Mifflin Company, p. 315.
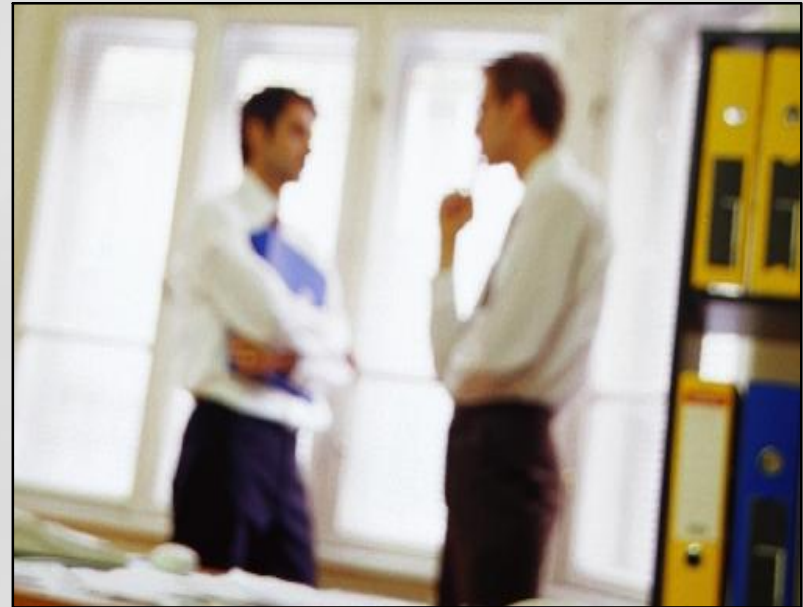
Initial group goals

- Get to know one another.
- Work out decision-making issues.
- Set ground rules.

Giving constructive feedback

- Need for feedback
- Positive and negative
- How to give

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How to give feedback

- Be descriptive.
- Don't use labels.
- Don't exaggerate.
- Speak for yourself.
- Use "I" statements.

Group discussion question

Assume you have been assigned responsibility for a mature, high-achieving confident team. Which of the following approaches would you use and why?

1. Let the group know that you are in charge.

2. Introduce new ideas of your own.

3. Give them space and make yourself available if needed.

Source: Adapted from: www.businessballs.com, accessed 10/1/07. Check Quizballs 10, Basic management and business quiz (with answers).

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Suggested answer

- Select approach 3.
    - A mature, high-achieving confident team can virtually run itself.
    - Micro-managing or interfering with team efforts does nothing to build team confidence, can be upsetting, and is a waste of your time.
    - Your priority is to understand the team so that you can help them to develop.

Team writing

- Assign tasks and develop a schedule.
- Meet regularly.
- Draft the document.
- Revise the draft.

Commenting on peer writing

- Read first for meaning.
- Assume the role of reader—not teacher.
- Point out the good *and* the bad.
- Use "I" language.
- Comment sparingly.

Commenting on peer writing *(cont'd)*

- Emphasize the writer for positive comments; emphasize the text for negative comments.

- Involve the writer.
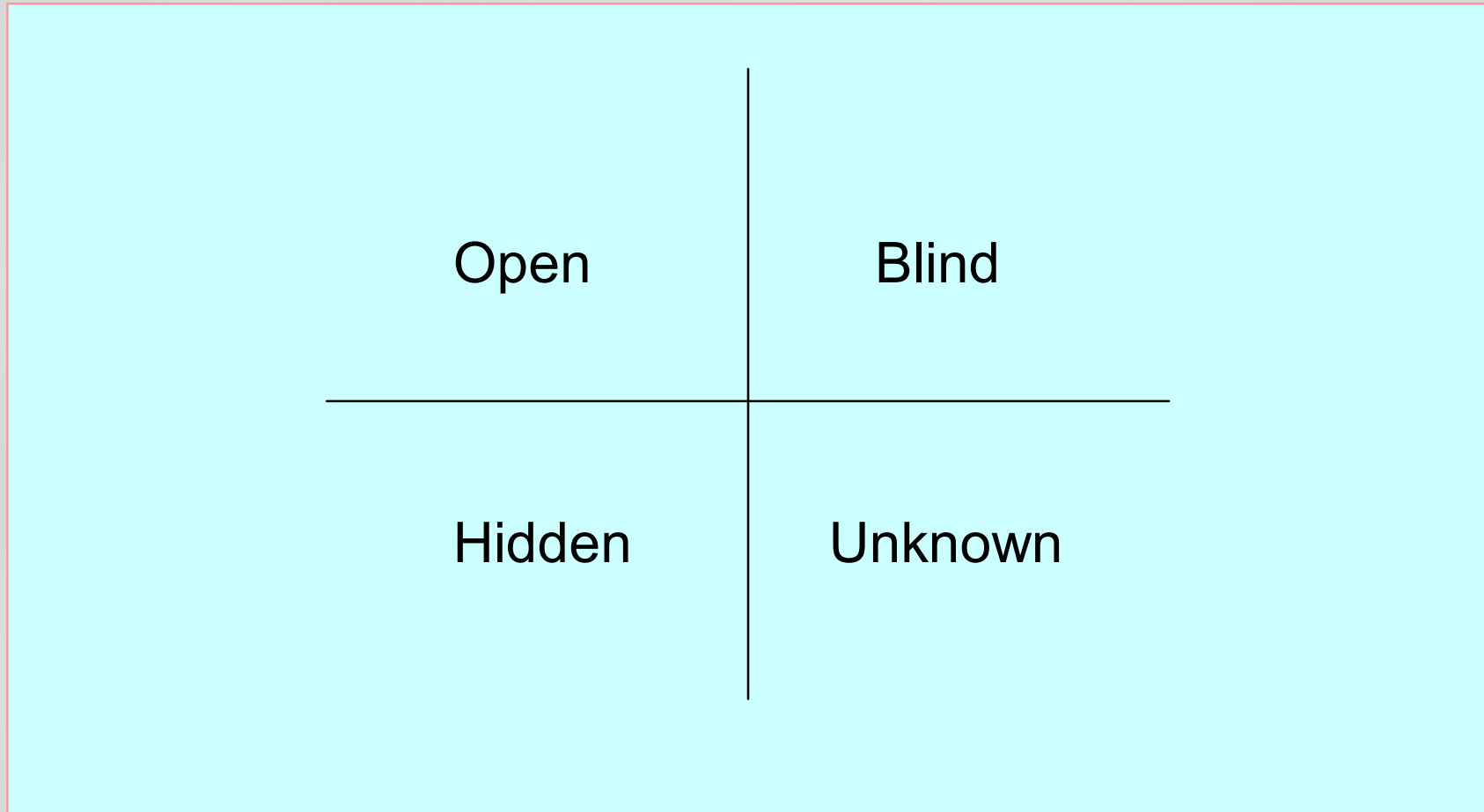
- Don't take over the text.

The Johari Window

- Your willingness or unwillingness to engage is self-disclosure, and listen to feedback, has a lot to do with your understanding of yourself and others' understanding of you.

The Four Panes of the Johari Window

Open	Blind
Hidden	Unknown

Open area

- Represents the "public" or "awareness" area and contains information that both you and others know

- Information that you don't mind admitting

- Gets bigger over time as relationships mature

- A productive relationship is related to the amount of mutually held information

- Building a relationship involves expanding this area

Blind area

- Information about yourself that others know but you are not yet aware

- Others may see you differently than you see yourself

- Effective relations strive to reduce this area

- Open communication encourages people to give you feedback

Hidden area

- Information that you know that others do not
- Private feelings, needs, and past experiences that you prefer to keep to yourself
- If this area is too large, you can be perceived as lacking authenticity

Unknown area

- Information that is unknown to you and to others
- Areas of unrecognized talent, motives, or early childhood memories that influence your behavior
- Always present, never disappears
- Open communication can expose some of this area

Johari Window

- The four panes are interrelated.
- Changes to one pane impact the size of the others.
- As relationships develop, the open area should grow.

Companies receiving most of their sales from abroad

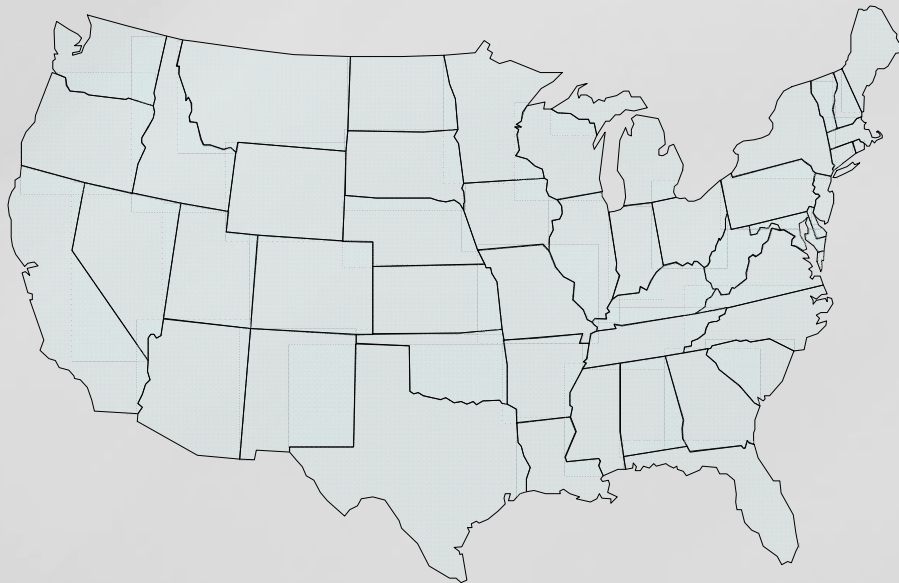| Company	% of Sales
Gillette	65
Colgate	65
IBM	59
NCR	59
Coca-Cola	54
Dow Chemical	54
Xerox	54
Caterpillar	53
Hewlett-Packard	53

When communicating across cultures

- Maintain formality.
- Show respect.
- Communicate clearly.
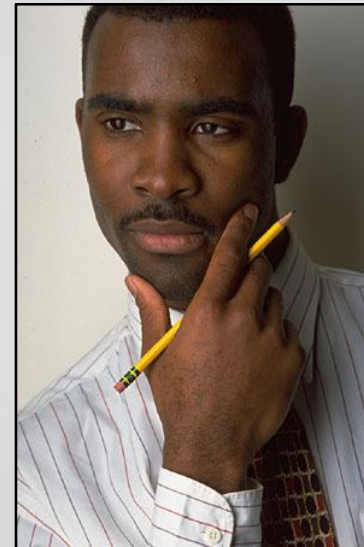- Value diversity.

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How do we differ?

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Abilities
- Other?

Types of ethics

- Professional
- Social
- Individual

Debate issue:
Can ethics be taught?

YES

Courses on business ethics can teach students how to analyze the ethical dilemmas faced by today's practicing managers. By focusing on the various factors that influence making decisions—such as individual beliefs and values, pressure from peers and managers, and opportunity—students can understand why decision makers behave as they do. Many companies and colleges are instituting ethical training programs to teach the principles of ethical decision making. As practicing managers, students can apply what they have learned to ethical dilemmas they face.

NO

Ethics cannot be taught. An individual's beliefs, values, and morals are developed long before he or she enters school or begins a career. Every person's morality is shaped by his or her social experience—family, friends, school, and church. Because of this, no ethics course can change a person's deep-rooted and long-held beliefs and values. Learning ethical principles does not guarantee that they will be used. People with strong ethical foundations are more likely to behave ethically; people without such values are more inclined to behave unethically.

Framework for ethical decisions

- Get the facts.
- Evaluate the options.
- Make the decision.
- Act on the decision.

What would you do?

- As project leader, you discover that people on your team are bypassing company-installed software that tracks and reports on help requests. This results in the understatement of the actual problems being encountered.

- Your manager's superior instructs you not to tell your manager about your findings saying that she wants to find out how well her leaders are leading. Your first loyalty is to your manager, but you are under a direct order from a superior *not* to disclose this information to him.
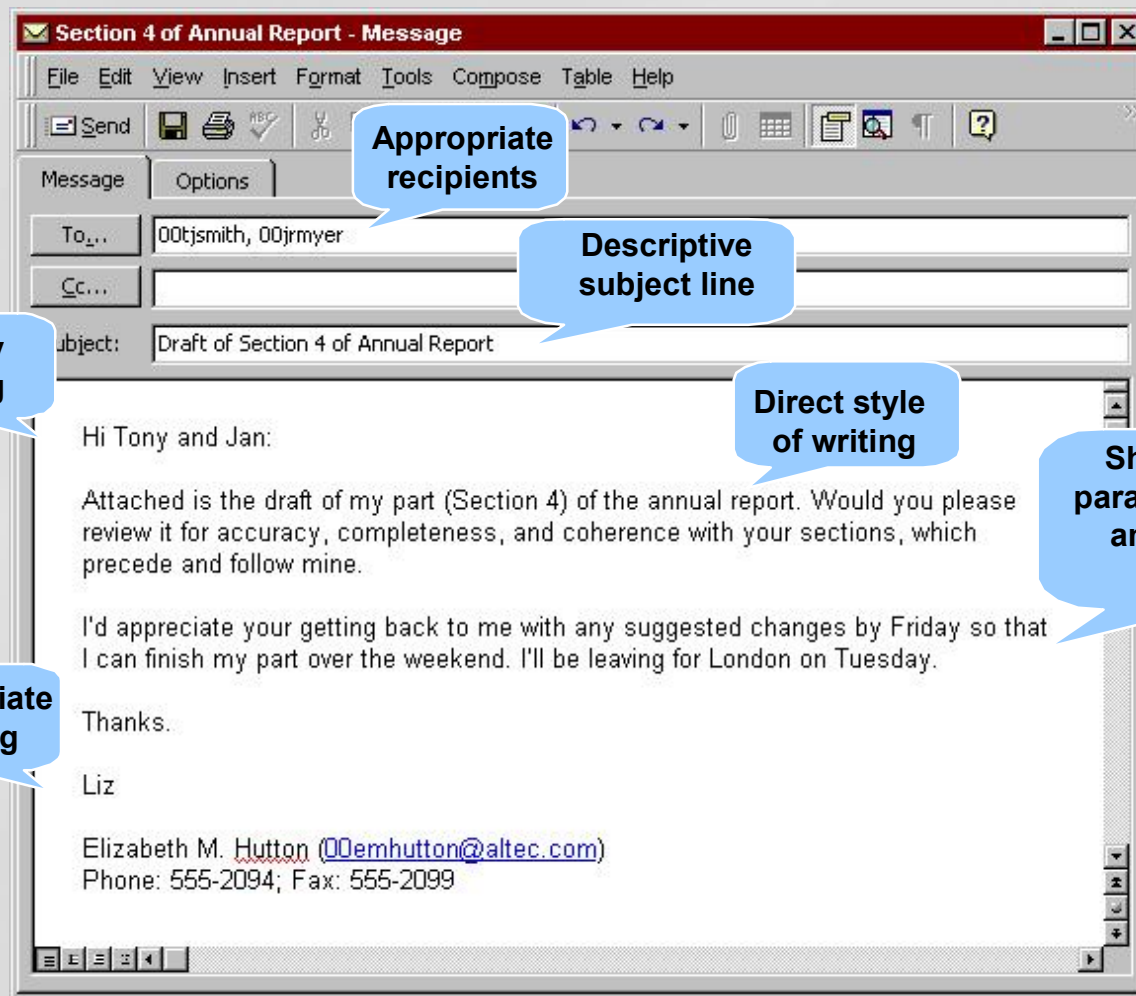
Quotes on ethics

"Never let your sense of morals get in the way of doing what's right."
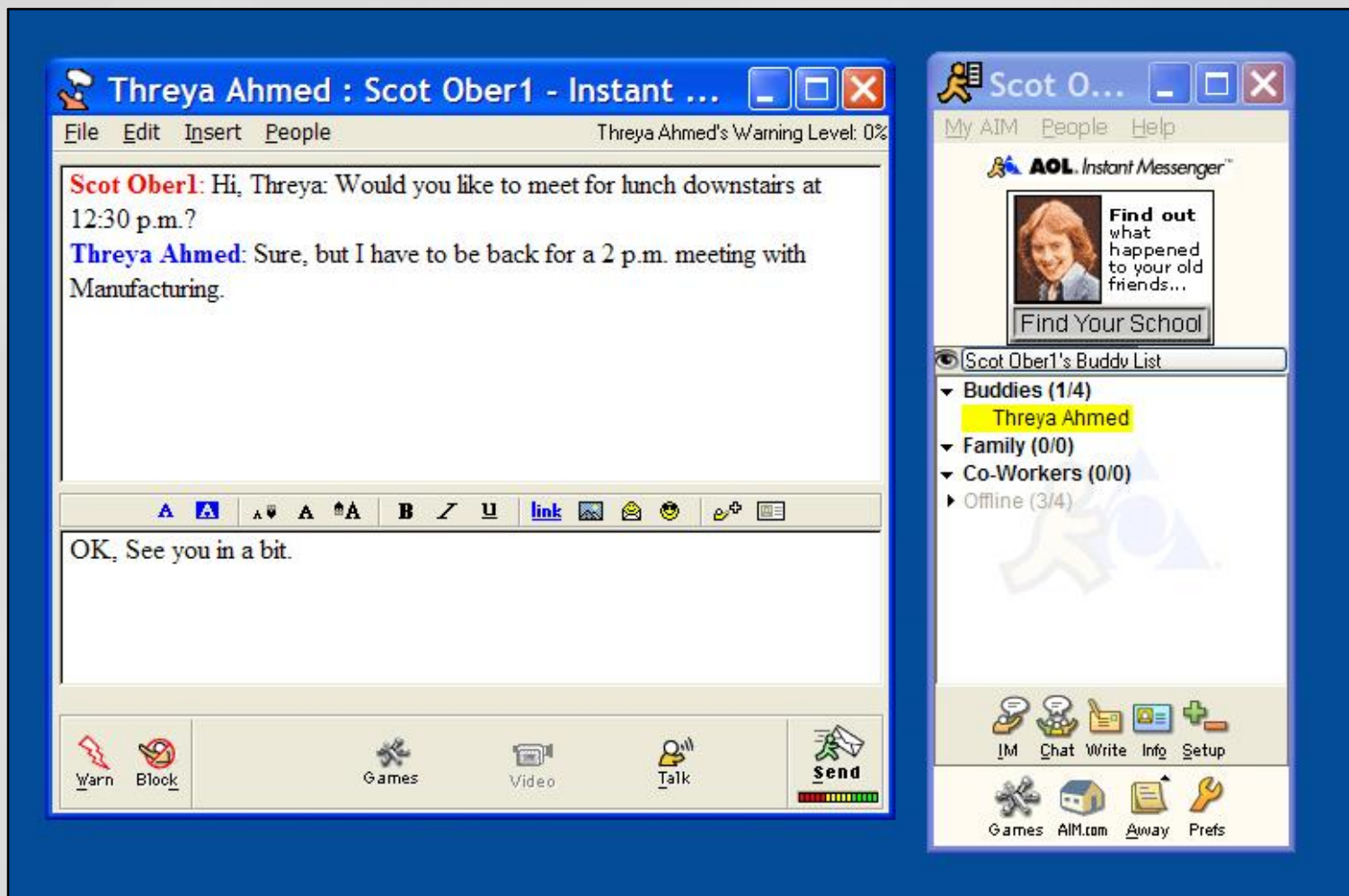
-Isaac Asimov

"You cannot make yourself feel something you do not feel, but you can make yourself do right in spite of your feelings."

--Pearl S. Buck

E-mail format

Instant messaging

Key terms

- ethics
- ethnocentrism
- groupthink
- team

What's wrong with this message?