Chapter 7
Short Workplace Messages and Digital Media

Answers to Chapter Review Questions

1. What is cloud computing, and how is it changing business? (Obj. 1)

   Answers will vary; see page 169. *Cloud computing* describes the storing and accessing of data and software applications in remote network clusters called *clouds*. Information and software programs are not stored locally on computer hard drives or other memory devices, but rather, on remote servers online. In many businesses, desktop computers, once the mainstay of the office, are becoming obsolete. They are being replaced with ever-smaller laptops, smartphones, tablets, and other amazingly compact and powerful mobile devices. Virtual private networks (VPNs) offer secure access to an organization’s information from any location in the world that provides an Internet connection.

2. List and concisely describe at least six electronic communication channels used most commonly by businesspeople today. (Objs. 1‒5)

   Answers will vary; see entire chapter.
   • **E-mail**: The channel of choice in business today, gradually replacing paper memos and letters in many instances.
   • **Instant messaging**: More interactive and immediate than e-mail; users chat in real time by logging on to an IM service.
   • **Text messaging**: Very brief messages sent from cellular phones using SMS protocol.
   • **Podcasts**: Digital media files, either audio or video, that can be streamed or downloaded on demand.
   • **Blogs**: Websites containing public journal entries, or posts, with feedback added by readers.
   • **Wikis**: Public or private websites enabling users to collaboratively create, post, edit, and access information; helpful for project management.

3. List and briefly describe the four parts of typical e-mails. (Obj. 1)

   Answers will vary; see page 171. Typical e-mails have four parts: (a) an informative subject line that summarizes the message; (b) an opening that reveals the main idea immediately; (c) a body that explains and justifies the main idea; and (d) a closing that presents action information, summarizes the message, or offers a closing thought.

4. How can you use instant messaging and texting safely on the job? (Obj. 2)

   Answers will vary; see page 179.
   a. Adhere to company policies at all times: “netiquette” rules, code of conduct, ethics guidelines, and harassment and discrimination policies.
   b. Don’t use IM or text messages to disclose sensitive information: financial, company, customer, employee, or executive data.
c. Steer clear of harassment and discriminatory content against classes protected by law (race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, and disability).
d. Be vigilant about the appropriateness of photos, videos, and art that you link to or forward.
e. As with e-mail, don’t say anything that would damage your reputation or that of your organization.
f. Don’t text or IM while driving a car. Pull over if you must read or send a message.
g. Organize your contact lists to separate business contacts from family and friends.
h. Avoid unnecessary chitchat, and know when to say goodbye. If personal messaging is allowed, keep it to a minimum.
i. Keep your presence status up to date so that people trying to reach you don’t waste their time. Make yourself unavailable when you need to meet a deadline.
j. Beware of jargon, slang, and abbreviations that, although they may reduce keystrokes, can be confusing and appear unprofessional.
k. Use good grammar and proper spelling.

Before using instant messaging on the job, check with your supervisor. Follow any company policy rules regarding its use. Don’t send anything you would not want published. Use it as a professional business tool, not as a time to chat casually with friends.

5. How can you show professionalism and respect for your receivers in writing business IM messages and texts? (Obj. 2)

Answers will vary; see page 179. As mentioned before, beware of jargon, slang, and abbreviations that, although they may reduce keystrokes, may be confusing and appear unprofessional. Respect your receivers by using good grammar and proper spelling and by proofreading carefully. Keep your presence status up to date so that people trying to reach you don’t waste their time.

6. How do organizations use podcasts, and how are they accessed? (Obj. 3)

Answers will vary; see page 181. Businesses have embraced podcasting for audio and video messages that do not require a live presence yet offer a friendly human face. A bank may demonstrate transparency by addressing topics that customers care about. A tech firm may train its sales force by employing podcasting. Real estate properties can often be viewed by podcast. Because they can broadcast repetitive information that does not require interaction, podcasts can replace costlier live teleconferences. Podcasts are featured on media websites and company portals or shared on blogs and social networking sites, often with links to YouTube and Vimeo. They can usually be streamed or downloaded as media files.

7. What is a wiki, and what are its advantages to businesses? (Obj. 3)

Answers will vary; see page 181. A wiki is a Web-based tool that employs easy-to-use collaborative software to allow multiple users to create documents that can be edited by tapping into the same technology that runs the well-known online encyclopedia Wikipedia. Wikis are a valuable collaboration and project management tool that can be used across time zones and vast geographic distances.
8. Explain why companies use blogs. (Obj. 4)

Answers will vary; see page 182. Companies use blogs to keep customers, suppliers, and employees informed and to interact with them. Through blog entries, companies can potentially reach a far-flung, vast audience. Blogs can also elicit unbiased consumer feedback faster and more cheaply than such staples of consumer research as focus groups and surveys.

9. How do businesses try to tap the vast potential of social networking? (Obj. 5)

Answers will vary; see page 188. Large businesses are using the social Web as well as internal networks behind corporate firewalls. In 2012, about 28 percent of Fortune 500 companies were blogging. About 60 percent of Fortune 500 companies are now on Facebook, and roughly the same percentage of companies have corporate Twitter accounts. Internally, large firms are adopting the Facebook model because employees intuitively understand its functions. Social networks connect dispersed employees and match those with similar skills. Social media also help companies to invite customer input, called crowdsourcing.

10. Name a few of the potential risks that social networking sites may pose to business. (Obj. 5)

Answers will vary; see page 189. Managers fear productivity losses, compromised trade secrets, the wrath of large Internet audiences, and embarrassment over inappropriate and damaging employee posts.

Answers to Critical Thinking Questions

1. Journalist Bob Garfield, author of The Chaos Scenario, is concerned that privacy is increasingly a rare commodity in our hyperconnected world. He argues: “Google searches, Foursquare check-ins and even basic browsing leave a practically neon trail. And on Facebook, we trade privacy for a sense of community; we fear Big Brother, but we tell lots of ‘little brothers’ everything.” Discuss what seem to be contradictory sentiments. Are you concerned about disclosing personal matters online?

Answers will vary; see entire chapter. Like many contemporaries, Garfield seems ambivalent about social media and concerned about waning privacy. He draws an analogy to George Orwell’s famous novel 1984 about tyranny and totalitarian ideologies. Big Brother is a reference to the revered party leader in the novel who exercises nearly absolute control of citizens, and has become synonymous with constant and omnipresent government surveillance, even mind control.

The analogy seems to imply that we fear obvious invasions of privacy that we can see, but we do not seem to notice how willingly we disclose personal information online, where the danger may be less evident. Garfield rightly observes that our online presence leaves traces and our whereabouts can be tracked, not only by the people in our circles. The trade-off, he
seems to be saying, is giving up privacy for a semblance of community online. By saying “a sense of” community, Garfield seems to suggest that the community may be more imagined than real. Students will be unlikely to worry in the abstract. However, if they are confronted with the prospect of snooping recruiters, some of whom have even resorted to demanding login information to access applicants’ Facebook accounts, they might be disturbed, after all. Likewise, students will be able to relate to the risk of inappropriate images appearing online and outside their control.

2. In her book Alone Together, MIT professor Sherry Turkle argues that increasing dependence on technology leads to a consequent diminution in personal connections. "Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities. And as it turns out, we are very vulnerable indeed. We are lonely but fearful of intimacy. Digital connections . . . may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship." Do you agree that technology diminishes personal relationships rather than bringing us closer together? Do social media fool us into thinking that we are connected when in reality we bear none of the commitments and burdens of true friendship?

Answers will vary; see entire chapter. Sherry Turkle, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, seems to argue that technology estranges us from each other instead of connecting us and bringing us closer together. In fact, she states, technology may make us feel connected with others, but the companionship is merely illusory or very superficial. It remains to be seen whether students recognize that social media indeed seem to have reduced face-to-face and even telephone contact, while paradoxically linking us to long-neglected friends, acquaintances, and distant relatives. Millennials prefer texting and IM to speaking on the telephone and even e-mail. Discerning students might acknowledge that they are not really “friends” with the hundreds of contacts on their Facebook pages, and even less able to keep up with what each is doing. Students could also be prompted to consider the common sight of young people meeting face to face, yet each texting away or chatting with someone who is clearly not present. Some plug in their earbuds, listening to their music and tuning out the world around them in the presence of flesh-and-blood peers.

3. How could IM be useful in your career field? Does IM produce a permanent record? Do you think that common abbreviations such as lol and imho and all-lowercase writing are acceptable in text messages for business? Will the use of shorthand abbreviations as well as creative spelling negatively affect writing skills? (Obj. 2)

Answers will vary; see pages 178–180. Students should be able to generate ideas on how instant messaging will be useful in their career fields. Yes, IM does produce a permanent record. Any IM conversation transmitted electronically establishes a digital record. Many IM users also regularly save their messages. In regard to abbreviations, remember that business messages—even instant messages—may be shared with others. Don't include abbreviations that are unprofessional and confusing. They do not save time if someone has to stop and think about what they mean. The last question of whether shorthand abbreviations and creative spelling will affect the writing of workers should generate interesting student observations.
4. Tweeting, texting, and quickie e-mailing all may foster sloppy messages. Author Mark Garvey argued, “In business, in education, in the arts, in any writing that takes place outside the linguistic cul-de-sac of our close friends and relatives, writers are expected to reach for certain standards of clarity, concision and care.” What did Garvey mean? Do you agree? (Objs. 1, 2)

Answers will vary; see pages 169–180. Garvey is talking about the difference between messages to friends and serious writing. Do you agree that there are two kinds of writing? Which kind is appropriate in the workplace? How is it different from tweets and instant messages? [See Garvey, M. (2009). *Stylized: A Slightly Obsessive History of Strunk & White’s The Elements of Style*. New York: Simon & Schuster.]

5. Ethical Issue: Aside from actually paying people to act as fans on social networks and entice their friends to do so as well, some marketers employ machines to inflate the number of their fans and followers online. Writing for *PC World*, Dan Tynan describes how he discovered the activities of a so-called Facebook bot network that operates a large number of zombie accounts created in Bangladesh. Tynan had noticed that many obscure companies were suddenly experiencing wild surges in “likes.” Tynan counted about 70 other businesses and fan pages across the globe that were also flooded with suspicious “likes” from the same source. Tynan himself was able to create such a bot master with fake accounts in 10 minutes using minimal software and for under $70. Cheap software allows users to use proxies, trick Captcha programs that normally thwart bots, and add bogus friends and subscribers, Tynan writes. Why do some businesses resort to such measures? What might be the consequences of faking fans? How do you feel about companies and their brands pretending they have actual traffic on their sites?

Answers from students indicating their attitudes toward such questionable practices may vary. See entire chapter. However, social networking from a marketing standpoint is about establishing relationships between brands and customers. Relationships are based on trust. Fans of a brand want to feel that they are insiders who know more than those who do not follow the brand or company. They form communities around brands, provided that those are well managed and honest. Deceitful practices jeopardize this trust and potentially invite a backlash once the dishonesty is discovered. As for why some businesses adopt fraudulent schemes, the motivations may vary, too; however, businesses are trying to “monetize” their social media presence, and they hope that traffic will create buzz and draw more followers to their sites. Fans, they hope, will turn into leads and eventually into actual buying customers. If we ask who gets hurt, the answer is both—the customers who rely on the sites they love and trust that they are real as well as the businesses that are risking being found out as dishonest and tarnishing their reputations.
Solutions to Activities

7.1 Document for Analysis: Poor Memo Describing Social Media Brown Bag Lunch Talk

Weaknesses

- Fails to start with a direct statement of the purpose of the message.
- Opens with a trite business expression (As per your request).
- Places action information in the first paragraph instead of near the end.
- Contains two or more sentence fragments (But no mention of Facebook . . . ., Which has always allowed . . . ).
- Changes voice in many places (I would advise everyone to use a disclaimer if you have)
- Confuses advice and advise.
- Is wordy throughout and fails to convey a professional tone (My last point refers to badmouthing: Man, that’s dreaming!)
- Contains a dangling modifier (When applying for another job, the hiring manager).
- Does not arrange the ideas logically with a list showing the three main points.
- Fails to close with gratitude, an action request, and a possible deadline for response.

Revision [formatted as memo]

To: Byron Hobbes
From: Amy Thompson
Subject: My Talk About Social Media Policy

As you requested, I have prepared a short program on using social media responsibly. A summary of the program, scheduled for June 5, follows. As you know, Acton does have an Internet policy, but it was written before social media became popular. I'm hoping the following points will open a broader discussion of proper practices among our employees.

Follow Existing Company Policy. Our policy at Acton allows limited use of the Internet for personal reasons. Although the policy doesn't mention Facebook, Twitter, and other social media specifically, my recommendation is to stay away from social media on company computers. We're not being paid to check our Facebook profile, peruse News Feeds, or send tweets.

Use a Disclaimer for Your Personal Blog. If you have a personal blog or profile and you have mentioned where you work, set up a disclaimer. Even if your social media presence is purely personal, you are always representing Acton. When you offer opinions, no matter how harmless, and it's clear where you work, you need a disclaimer. Here's a possibility: The opinions expressed are mine and do not reflect those of my employer.

Be careful about negative references. Even though you think your social media sites are private and secure, don't ever criticize the company, a colleague, or a customer. Although no one from work may see your remarks, such backbiting reflects poorly on your loyalty and professionalism. If you apply for another job, hiring managers may very well see these criticisms and shun someone who is disloyal and likes to complain.
Thanks for this opportunity to talk about social media use here at Acton. If you have other points that I should cover, please let me know before May 20 so that I can include them in my June 5 talk.

[Note: Memo guide words (Date, To, From, Subject) may appear in all caps or as upper and lowercase.]

7.2 Document for Analysis: Troubling Internship Program (Obj. 1)

Weaknesses
- Fails to begin with the main idea.
- Suffers from repetition and wordiness throughout.
- Uses incorrect pronoun (alarmed my staff and (I) me; meet with the vice president and (I) me)
- Contains sentence fragment (Which made us immediately begin . . .).
- Uses redundancy (made us immediately begin . . ).
- Buries verbs (given the promise should be promised; make arrangements should be arranged; give consideration to changes should be consider changes)
- Contains dangling modifier (After reviewing our complete program, changes must be made).
- Fails to organize main points in a list for readability.
- Does not end with a clear action plan or possible deadline.

Revision

To: Joshua Turck <joshua.turck@bayside.com>
From: Sable Johnson <sable.johnson@bayside.com>
Subject: Meeting to Discuss Internship Program
Cc:
Bcc:

Based on your inquiry, I would like to meet with you and the vice president to discuss our internship program and how to make it comply with government regulations.

Your inquiry about the status of our interns caused my staff and me to look into this matter more carefully. Our lawyers told us that all interns must be considered to be employees and paid at least the minimum wage. College students are legitimate only if they receive real training. Interns are not legitimate if they do any of the following:

- Displace a regular employee.
- Complete a client's work for which we bill.
- Are promised full-time jobs at the end of the training.

Even if we have interns sign contracts saying they are willing to accept college credit in place of wages, we are not protected. In addition, they must have a structured training program.
We certainly do want a strong internship program that can provide us with superior, well-trained personnel; however, the program must meet government regulations.

Please meet with the vice president and me to discuss this matter further. Are you free the week of November 10? Let me know and I will arrange the meeting.

Sable Johnson, Director
Human Resources
[Full contact information]

7.3 Instant Messaging: Practising Your Professional IM Skills (Obj. 2)

This activity can also be accomplished with the help of Blackboard’s chat function, but Yahoo, Skype, and the other IM tools are often more versatile and sophisticated or have a more pleasant interface. It’s important that all students download the same client because not all of the software is designed to work together. Yahoo and Windows Live Messenger are compatible, however. Once students install the software on their computers, distribute their tasks. Various options can be chosen. Two or three students could role-play while the rest of the class is also logged in but only watching. The IM dialogue could be projected onto a screen where available. Students in the class could take turns responding to hypothetical business situations.

Short instructor-generated guidelines could assign specific roles; for example, playing a customer who has a question about a product. He or she will message a customer service representative who will need to improvise showing professional courtesy. Therefore, only minimal notes, scripts, or instructions should be provided.

A post-training question-and-answer session could serve as a group activity involving the whole class. The “training” could rely on the content of a chapter in this textbook or a business article that was assigned to the class. The leader—either the instructor or a student volunteer—fields questions from all logged-in participants. He or she has to maintain order and ensure turn-taking. The participants must wait their turn and ask professional, relevant questions. Other one-on-one or group scenarios are possible.

The log of the IM session can be saved and downloaded for subsequent analysis.

7.4 Reviewing Corporate Blogs (Obj. 4)

This assignment allows for a variety of activities. Students could be asked to evaluate a blog verbally or in writing—in memo form, by e-mail, or as a blog entry. Additionally, Blackboard, Facebook (see Activity 7.19), or another course management site could be used to post the student reviews for feedback and comment by the class. Just the three keywords listed in the task yield several leads guiding students to corporate blogs. They could also be encouraged to visit the corporate blogs mentioned in this chapter; for example, Bill Marriott’s outstanding platform. Very likely they will end up at TheNewPR/Wiki, which features a current CEO Blogs List. On Chief Executive.net, students will find the author’s top ten CEO blogs; on Slideshare, which in
turn is searchable, students can peruse slide decks and presentations about companies and executives who blog, allowing students to locate a suitable corporate blog.

7.5 Twitter Communication Audit (Obj. 5)

This type of tweet analysis, or “Twitter audit,” can be accomplished in various ways. Students could be tasked with examining the Twitter interactions of one particular company or several organizations in the same industry (for instance, automobile companies, airlines, and manufacturing). Alternatively, they could look for random examples of deft responses or, conversely, of samples that lack professionalism. Both are easy to spot. Students could be asked to brainstorm more appropriate responses to ones they find wanting and actually rewrite the tweets in 140 characters or fewer. As an example for class discussion, you can use this exchange between automobile company Kia Motors and a customer with a serious problem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kia Motors America</th>
<th>@Kia: With the navigation system in your all-new #KiaSorento, you can discover new adventures! bit.ly/Nzo7kj (4 Jul)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stewart</td>
<td>@CharlesStewart9: @Kia MY Kia Sorrento went up in flames after 4 months with electrical problems honour that (6 Jul)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kia Motors America</td>
<td>@Kia: @CharlesStewart9 Have you spoke with our Consumer Assistance Department? We’re very sorry to hear this. (6 Jul)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kia Motors replied to the customer’s tweet on the same day; however, the glaring grammar mistake and lack of specific help (failure to indicate the link or phone number to contact the Consumer Assistance Department) does not make this an ideal response. Students could ponder questions such as these: Can a company sufficiently address such a grave complaint in 140 characters? Can such a post following a promotion for an automobile seriously affect sales or the car maker’s image?

7.6 What? You Tweeted THAT? (Obj. 5)

Answers will vary, but here are a few possibilities:

1. **Sending hate tweets about the boss.** The difference between venting around the water cooler or over lunch to a close friend and trumpeting to the world one’s dislike for a superior could not be more obvious. Twitter messages can be forwarded (retweeted) and find their way to unintended recipients.

2. **Lying to the boss and bragging about it.** Although lying to the boss may be woefully common, broadcasting it to one’s followers on Twitter is risky. The Web and Twitter make it easy to track people, and lies have a way of emerging most unexpectedly.

3. **Romancing the boss (kissing and telling).** Even if the indiscreet Twitter user had a private profile, a contact could easily retweet the message and make it retrievable. Besides, amorous relationships between superiors and subordinates are frowned on in many companies because
they could open firms up to sexual harassment lawsuits. Also, the boss could be tracking the
tattletale on Twitter and would probably not appreciate the leaking of the affair.

4. **Announcing the desire to quit.** The wish to quit may come true, but prematurely so and not according to plan. If you hate your job, complain to your pet or vent with your friends over dinner, but don’t shout it out on Twitter. Smart workers leave a workplace on good terms, knowing that they may need references. They do not burn bridges, especially publicly.

5. **Blocking your boss.** Preventing the boss from seeing your profile is no guarantee that he or she won’t receive your hateful missives through another source. As Mark, an expert blogger, advises: “The golden rule of not getting yourself fired over ‘tweets’ is simple—just don’t vent your work and boss frustrations publicly.” [5 ways Twitter can get you fired. (2009, October 8). Retrieved from http://applicant.com/5-ways-twitter-can-get-you-fired]

### 7.7 The Dark Side: Hooked on Social Media? (Obj. 5)

Answers will vary, but most students will probably agree that they would consider it a hardship having to relinquish their cell phones even for a day. In the Maryland study, students felt that giving up their cell phones was the hardest part about being media-free for a full day. They felt less strongly about forgoing television. Some felt out of sorts as a result of not being able to listen to music all day and missed their iPods. A few selected “sound bites” from the blogs in the Maryland study hint at the tremendous change that communication technology has wrought on the Millennials:

*Email is the only kind of mail I’ve ever sent; I have received 40 texts in the last 15 minutes; I always text and drive; I have more TV channels memorized than math formulas; I only use newspapers to clean my windows.*

A related problem to explore is Internet gaming addiction, which is most prevalent in Asian countries. Several much-publicized deaths have revealed obsessive playing of World of Warcraft and other hugely popular games. The problem is serious enough that the governments of South Korea, China, and Taiwan have set up Internet addiction treatment centres.

### 7.8 Creating Fair Digital Media Policies (Obj. 5)

Many employers resign themselves to the fact that employees will spend a certain amount of time during the workday online shopping and visiting social media sites. Some have accepted that workers goof off approximately one hour a day. Although they understandably dislike this personal use of company time, they realize that Internet use is increasingly tougher to enforce. Besides, before social media came along, workers used to hover around the water cooler, sneak cigarette breaks, and so forth. Other employers take a hard-line approach. However, rigid enforcement, although justified, may cause resentment and damage morale. It has been argued that reasonable personal Web surfing may be relaxing and lead to greater motivation and
productivity. Experts such as Nancy Flynn of the ePolicy Institute suggest rigorous training of employees and clear, comprehensive media use policies.

**Arguments for allowing personal use of social media on the job:**
Depending on the job, workers take their work home and on the road. Asking them to stay away from the Internet at the office while also requiring them to work long hours away from the office seems unreasonable. Even at the office, monitoring traffic to websites, chatting, texting, Facebook visits, and e-mail has gotten harder with the rise of mobile devices. When workers rely on their personal 3G or 4G networks, employers may not know how much time is spent not working. Some positions require Internet research and professional use of some of the same media that would be affected by a wholesale ban. Some workers need to be in constant contact with suppliers, customers, and co-workers. Distinguishing between professional and personal use is therefore not always easy. Some employers give employees a lot of latitude as long as the work gets done. Other employers may block specific websites or record all keystrokes on a workplace machine. Compromise could be sought—for example, allowing personal use of communication technology on machines at work during breaks and after hours.

**Arguments against allowing personal use of social media on the job:**
Recreational activities, as well as unintentional yet careless miscues, can gobble up precious network resources and waste valuable work time. Even more important is concern over lawsuits and network security. Companies must maintain a workplace free of harassment. If employees download pornography, transmit sexually explicit jokes, or use inappropriate screen savers, the work environment can become “poisoned” and employers may be sued. Furthermore, security problems arise when employees open phishing e-mail or fall for malware when browsing the Web.