

Dear Instructor:

We're writing to share with you fascinating stories about recent college graduates from across the country whom we've met during the past few months. Their experiences with newer tools of communication are so interesting, we thought you'd like to hear about them.

For example, Meg Stivison writes a blog for a small historical society, the Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms in Cary, North Carolina. She also set up a group for the museum on Flickr, a photo-sharing and social networking site, so members can submit photos and put them on the Internet. Adam Haver of Salt Lake City, Utah, writes a blog for SendOutCards.com, a greeting card company, to keep distributors up to date about its products.

Aga Westfall of The Santy Agency, an advertising firm in Phoenix, Arizona, uses the Twitter microblogging tool for research and networking. Twitter enthusiasts, a group that includes employees at Southwest Airlines, H&R Block, Starbucks, and thousands of smaller companies, have now sent over one billion messages using the service.

Melissa Popp, who is employed by Best Buy in Dover, Delaware, uses YouTube, the popular video content site used by more than 70 million people a month in the U.S., to educate her customers about their purchases of electronic products. Eric Binfet, who now works in the insurance industry in Minnesota, used his creative and technical skills to write and produce the winning video in a Dairy Queen employee contest. The video did such a great job of showcasing some important new branding elements that the store owner pitched it to corporate as a potential commercial.

Matt Nederlander of Pompano Beach, Florida, just launched a new advertising agency that allows anyone to create a concept for a commercial, post it on YouTube, and get paid based upon how many people view it. Jerrold Thompson of Clinton, Washington, just launched In My Life Video, a service that produces personal autobiographies. The skills he honed in class helped him write the copy for his website and a script for a promotional video he posted on YouTube.

Philip Beach of Portland, Oregon, owner of a Home Video Studio photography franchise, uses the social networking site Facebook, with more than 50 million members, to communicate with other franchise owners and to keep up to date with their businesses and lives. He also uses it to market his business and to educate prospective clients about his services.

Mathew Mayer of Oakland, California, is an e-learning developer who has just written and produced a series of podcasts (digital audio files that can be heard on a computer or a music player, such as an iPod) for Roche, the pharmaceutical company, for distributing technical sales material.

Theodore Rubin of Atlanta, Georgia, who works for Career Connection, uses RSS newsfeeds to receive updates from vendors; to get the latest news from his favorite newspapers, magazines, and web news sites; and to track the continuous results from his searches on Google News. (If you are one of the growing number of instructors now using newsfeeds to make out-of-class announcements and to send assignments to students, you already know how powerful this convenient technology can be.)

Liz Wise works for Drillspot.com, a tools and hardware website based in Boulder, Colorado. She and her co-workers use a wiki (the group writing technology now used by 44% of all U.S. companies and included in a number of collaboration tools, including Microsoft's), to communicate between departments to avoid everyday meetings and to use as a repository of instructions for tasks and procedures. As a company photographer, Liz writes about products that she has photographed and released to the website's catalog. All employees subscribe to an RSS newsfeed that lets them know what new items and pages have been added to the catalog. Interdepartmental communication at the company is done by instant messaging, a medium that now surpasses e-mail in volume.

As these examples demonstrate, electronic communication is now commonplace even in medium- and small-sized organizations and in both metropolitan and rural areas. Clearly, business communication is changing. Is your text keeping up to date?

Most textbooks have been incredibly slow in adapting to this digital age. If your current textbook doesn't provide instruction about the types of electronic communication described in these examples, it doesn't support your mission to help students prepare to meet employer expectations. Using an up-to-date text that is more relevant to today's media-savvy students, many of whom are already using these tools at work, will also lead to greater respect for your course by students, colleagues, and your college's administration.

The checklist on the following page, "How Does Your Business Communication Textbook Measure Up?," can help you decide if your current text is keeping up with the fundamental changes in the way businesses now communicate. If the checklist suggests your book is behind the times, you can easily close the gap by going to <http://businesscommunicationblog.com> and requesting an examination copy of one or more of the texts on the upper left-hand side of the page.

Are you unsure as to the most appropriate textbook for your course? If so, please see the chart that's posted on our website, "How These Texts Compare," at <http://businesscommunicationblog.com/pdfs/Bovee-Thilldifferences.pdf>.

All the best,

Court Bovée
John Thill

P.S. Check out Real-Time Updates at <http://real-timeupdates.com>, the only service offered to instructors and students for keeping their books perpetually up to date.

Also, be sure to look at "Instructor Media" in the right-hand column on the homepage for each book. More than 175 items are offered exclusively to instructors to enhance teaching and to reinforce learning.

**Preparing Students for Today's Workplace:
How Does Your Business Communication Textbook Measure Up?**

Does your current text have these essential features to help students develop the electronic media skills that virtually all employers now expect them to possess?

	Yes	No
1. A dedicated chapter on electronic communication		
2. A discussion of corporate blogs with annotated examples		
3. A discussion of instant messaging with one or more model documents		
4. A discussion and illustration of a wiki, with hands-on experience using a real, live wiki editor on the text's website		
5. A discussion of podcasting, including a sample podcast on the book's website for students to critique		
6. A discussion of writing for the web along with webpage examples		
7. End-of-chapter cases and exercises that involve students in blogging, instant messaging, text messaging, wikis, and podcasting		
8. Interactive "Document Makeovers" that reinforce important concepts in every chapter		
9. A discussion and illustration of e-portfolios and their role in career planning		
10. A discussion and presentation of web-based meetings		
11. A sample PDF document showing on-screen commenting features		
12. Description and illustration of shared online workspaces		
13. An illustration of an interview simulator		
14. Discussion and illustration of RSS newsfeeds		
15. Discussion and illustration of social networking sites, including their growing importance in career management and both internal and external business communication		

Scoring

15 points = Modern, relevant text that prepares students for the demands of today's workplace

13 points = Good text

11 points = Fair text

9 points or less = Hopelessly out-of-date text that reflects business communication practices of the last century, not the electronic media environment of the 21st century. Switching immediately to a text scoring 15 points will help your students succeed in this difficult economy.

Note: Each Bovée/Thill text scores 15 points.