

Ethics in Action: Real-World Communication Challenges

Developed for use with *Business Communication Today*, 16th Edition

These ten challenges are arranged in textbook chapter order. Each connects to *Business Communication Today*, 16th Edition and encourages you to think through ethical choices and develop professional reasoning skills for real communication dilemmas.

1 AI and Attribution: Who Really Wrote It? (Connects with Chapter 1: Understanding Business Communication)

Scenario: An intern uses ChatGPT to write most of a client report without disclosing it. Should AI contributions be acknowledged?

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: What constitutes authorship when AI assists? How can disclosure maintain credibility?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.

2 Confidentiality in Collaboration: The Leaked Draft (Connects with Chapter 2: Collaboration, Interpersonal Communication, and Business Etiquette)

Scenario: A teammate shares a confidential draft with an outsider for feedback. Helpful or harmful?

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: How can open collaboration coexist with confidentiality?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.

3▣ AI Bias and Representation: The Unseen Consequences (Connects with Chapter 3: Communicating Across Cultures)

Scenario: A firm's AI hiring tool filters out diverse candidates unintentionally. Who's accountable?

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: How can communicators detect and correct AI bias?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.

4▣ Cross-Cultural Missteps: The Lost in Translation Message (Connects with Chapter 3: Communicating Across Cultures)

Scenario: A campaign's humor offends international audiences. How should the team respond?

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: How can global communicators ensure messages respect diverse audiences?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.

5▣ Tone Under Pressure: The Heated Email Response (Connects with Chapter 5: Writing Business Messages)

Scenario: A project manager replies harshly to a colleague's mistake in a company-wide thread. How can professionalism and empathy coexist under stress?

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: What principles from Chapter 5 could guide tone adjustments? How can timing and empathy prevent escalation?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.

6 Privacy vs. Transparency: Monitoring the Workforce (Connects with Chapter 6: Designing Digital and Print Messages)

Scenario: An employer installs AI tools to track staff messages for productivity. Necessary oversight or overreach?

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: How should leaders balance trust and accountability?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.

7 Social Media and Transparency: The Hidden Sponsorship (Connects with Chapter 8: Social Media)

Scenario: A marketing associate posts a product review without revealing employment ties. It's true—but is it ethical?

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: Is factual accuracy enough without full context? How might this affect stakeholder trust?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.

8▣ Visual Manipulation: The Chart That Misleads (Connects with Chapter 9: Visual Media)

Scenario: A team changes a graph's scale to exaggerate progress. Persuasive or deceptive?

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: How do visuals influence perception? Where is the line between persuasion and deception?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.

9▣ Persuasion and Pressure: The Overpromised Proposal (Connects with Chapter 12: Writing Persuasive Messages)

Scenario: A salesperson shortens delivery times to win a bid. When do optimism and dishonesty diverge?

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: Can persuasion remain ethical if accuracy is sacrificed?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.

☐ The Ghostwriter Dilemma: Writing for the Boss (Connects with Chapter 14: Planning Reports and Proposals)

Scenario: You're asked to draft an article expressing opinions you disagree with under your manager's name.

Your Challenge:

How would you respond or resolve this situation while maintaining ethical and professional standards?

Think About It:

Ask: When does ghostwriting cross an ethical line?

Apply It:

Write a brief reflection or discuss with a partner how your communication choices demonstrate integrity.