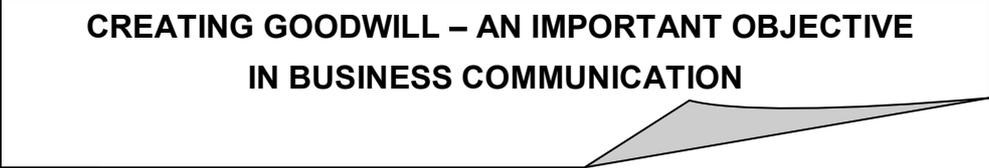
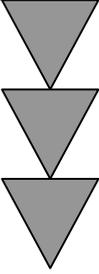


Considerations on LSP Teaching



**CREATING GOODWILL – AN IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE  
IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION**



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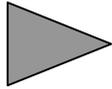
***Abstract***

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*Skilled business persons know that creating goodwill is the main objective of any business, whatever the specific objective may be: buying, selling or solving problems. How could we define good will? The Oxford Dictionary considers it as a “kindly feeling to persons”. Trying to define it, we may say that goodwill is the degree to which the receiver of the message perceives the communicator of the respective message as a likable, trustworthy and consistent person. Of course, this image shall be determined by the attitude of the communicator. Can goodwill be taught and learned? Our hope is that it can become a constant value of human behaviour by gradual, trained accumulation of knowledge and successful practice.*

**Keywords:** goodwill, empathy, personalization, supportive/defensive oriented communicator, ethical attitude, positive attitude



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## *Introduction*

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To create goodwill is not as simple as one might think, and the person interested in achieving it, should firstly know its specificity, and its characteristics. Thus, goodwill should:

1. be a sincere feeling coming from within; a false attitude, pretended goodwill are easily detected in communication;
2. imply an honest attitude towards the business, towards the relationship established with the business partner(s);
3. communicate the message in a natural way, as it is a direct consequence of sincerity and honesty;
4. be appropriate to the individual, the situation or the topic debated;
5. be expressed in a balanced way; as either too much or too little of it could spoil the whole attempt of creating it;
6. take time; it is a process developed along more than one situation of communication.

It is important to point out that by the appropriate expression of good will individuals can establish an image of themselves and, of course, of the organisation they represent. If the image is professional and positive, payoffs can be substantial.

We have said that one of the characteristics of goodwill, maybe the most important one, is that of being a process; in covering this process there are more requirements to fulfil, each of them equally important.

1. One requirement is to be tactful; meaning that when they convey their message communicators must put themselves in the other person's shoes. Messages that show empathy for one person's situation help a lot in creating goodwill.

Here are some examples of tactful phrases, communicating understanding of the other person's situation:

“I am sure that you have considered all the possibilities”

“We feel that the decision you have made must have been a difficult one”

“We quite understand your problem and will allow you to cancel our contract if ...”

There are sometimes cases when communicators consider directness of the message of the utmost importance because a person can at the same time be tactful and express their point very clearly. In such cases, tactless situations should be avoided. For example, instead of saying “You will regret the decision made”, it is better to use a phrase like “We are certain that you have paid careful attention to your decision”, or instead of “It is obvious that the points in our letter were not taken into consideration” to say “As we have already pointed out in our letter of ... we consider ... “.

2. Another requirement is to be personal in your approach. The more one can individualize the message, the more effective communication will be. There are some ways of personalizing communication:
  - a) To use the partner’s name at some point in communication – in the middle or at the end of the message. The danger here is to overdo it to the point that it might be perceived as mechanical or insincere; on the other hand relationships are sometimes, by nature, more formal and such an approach would be inappropriate.
  - b) Personalization can also be achieved through more informal wording in the salutation and closing lines. So instead of using “Dear Sir”, which is quite formal, we might write “Dear Mr. Smith”, or even “Dear Jim” and instead of “Yours faithfully” or “Very truly yours”, we can use “Yours sincerely”, “Regards”, “With warm regards”; these phrases are more informal and personal.
  - c) Researchers suggest that at the stage of generating and evaluating options during communication, skilled and successful communicators introduce a more personal touch by giving a clear indication of *their own feelings* regarding the possibilities under discussion.

So instead of “*Probably that would not be a good option*” it is better to use “*I personally have some doubts about that option*”; instead of “*The main strength of this aspect is ...*” one can say “*The main strength of this aspect, as we see it ...*” “*From our point of view, the main strength of this aspect is ...*”; instead of “*we should go even further than that ...*” a better form would be “*My immediate feeling is that we should go even further than that ...*” etc.

- d) Maybe a very effective way of personalising communication is to refer to something very specific or personal to the receiver. Of course, in such a situation the communicator should be extremely careful not to get too personal and overstep the boundaries of the relationship. Here is an example of a letter coming from a seller to a longstanding client; it shows an effective way of using personal approach. There are many personal references in the letter, side

by side with an effective way of personalizing it by using good opening and closing phrases.

SOUTH CENTRAL FURNITURE, LTD.  
102 TIB STREET, MAIDENHEAD, PLACERWILLE

BOB MEDWAN  
DEC 20. ...  
S.A. IMPORTERS, LTD.  
2125 GLAZER HOUSE  
DERBY

Dear Bob,

I called you yesterday in connection with your complaint regarding our wrong delivery of furniture and I learned about your promotion in the position of General Manager of your company.

My warmest congratulations!

After Christmas, I would appreciate an opportunity to meet you to discuss the possibility of continuing our business.

As regards the situation you complained about we have looked into the matter and found out that the mistake was made in the packing department. We have arranged for the right goods to be dispatched to you at once, our agent having to pick up the other consignment from you.

Meanwhile I hope that your ski vacation in North Scotland is great; in the first week of the year, I'll call you to set up a convenient time for our meeting.

With warmest greetings,  
John Gibson  
Sales Manager

3. The next requirement for creating goodwill when conveying the message is to be supportive rather than defensive oriented. The factors which determine either a supportive or a defensive orientation were identified by J. R. Gibs (1961) for group communication, and they can be easily adapted for business communication.

For defensive orientation these factors are *evaluation* (judging other individuals), *control* (trying to take over), *strategy* (engaging in manipulative/ambiguous

motives), *neutrality* (displaying no concern for the others' welfare), *superiority* (displaying a "I am better than you" type attitude), *certainty* (displaying a "know-it-all" attitude). For a supportive attitude they are: *description* (describing the situation factually without judgement), *problem orientation*, (communicating without a predetermined situation), *spontaneity* (communicating openness), *empathy* (showing sensitivity about other people's feelings), *equality* (communicating willingness to enter into participative planning with mutual trust and respect), and finally *professionalism* (communicating willingness to be flexible and to experiment with one's behaviour, attitudes etc).

Here are two examples of memos on the same problem. Analyzing them, the factors mentioned above can be easily identified.

MEMO	MEMO
To all employees From: General Manager Subject: Security of documents	To all personnel From: John Armstrong, Documents Supervisor Subject: Check in/out Procedure for Documents
<p>Management has recently discovered that some important documents are missing from the Sales Department, which is intolerable. When you were employed, a special warning was addressed to each of you about the possible consequences in case of mishandling or even worse, missing documents.</p> <p>We want to remind you that those caught not checking the document out or in, may be dismissed at once.</p> <p>A general checking of documents existing in all departments will be done starting tomorrow by Jay Smith and Ana Reed.</p> <p>We are sure of your cooperation; possible questions will be clarified by superiors.</p>	<p>A situation has appeared in the Sales Department which requires your co-operation to avoid it from being repeated in any department of our company in the future; some original documents are missing, possibly mishandled by the employees.</p> <p>You were told when employed that original documents must be paid special attention to, be signed in and out each time they are used, and returned immediately after.</p> <p>In order to account for the documents used, Jay Smith and Ann Reed have been appointed to assist the procedure.</p> <p>Any additional suggestions from you and sustained co-operation are welcome in order to make this process efficient and smooth.</p>
<b>Defensive communication</b>	<b>Supportive communication</b>

4. Another important requirement is **to be honest** with the message communicated; an ethical attitude is necessary when deciding what to include and what to eliminate or omit in business communication. Half-truth, white lies and exaggerations might get short-time profit, but in the long run reality will come out, the communicator's credibility and with it the profit of the company will go away for ever. So, a company advertising the miraculous quality of a product – for example some cosmetics washing out the wrinkles – will lose the trust of its customers when it becomes obvious that the product doesn't work; in such cases the image of the company will be destroyed for other products as well, products which might happen to be good and competitive.

Therefore, the earnest communicators who have built their own reputation by communicating honest and sincere messages have much to gain in the long run: they succeed in creating goodwill.

5. **To be positive** in the communicative approach is the next requirement to be mentioned for creating goodwill in business communication. This is an important requirement, and the communicators should know that they must emphasize the positive side of the message instead of focussing on the negative consequences of a situation, event etc. Here are some examples of negative versus positive approaches of the same situation.

*Negative:*

- As you did not deliver the documents in due time it is impossible for us to effect payment.
- Persons under 21 are not admitted for an interview with our company
- We cannot give you an answer to your complaint as you did not send us any proof of the situation described.

*Positive:*

- As soon as we receive the documents delivered by you, payment will be effected without delay.
- Persons over 21 are admitted for an interview with our company
- We shall give you an answer to your complaint when we receive proof of the situation described.

A positive tone in communication can be also created by eliminating negative language such as "no", "never", "cannot", "will not", "don't", "regret", "fall", etc.

6. Last but not least other requirements to be taken into consideration in creating goodwill are **to be prompt** with your answer and **to act according to your words**. So, a prompt written response to a client's letter or an immediate return phone call can do a lot to enhance goodwill; at the same time the nice good words must be supported by real action.

We may say that goodwill created by communication brings important results to the company; it determines among others, a professional image about the company, improves credibility of the company, improves relationship with customers, clients, among the employees etc, and finally increases sales and profits in the short or long run.

From the methodological point of view we consider that the business students can be taught how to create goodwill in communication during the language seminars.

A summary of an experiment carried out with 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of the Faculty of International Business and Economics, the Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, is presented below:

We suggest the following stages:

1. Introduction of the six requirements (method: debate).
2. Presentation of cases: letters, memos, parts of contracts etc (method: case study).
3. Analysis of the cases by teams of three or four students (method: case analysis).
4. Presentation of opinions; students make presentations regarding the positive/negative messages contained in communication (method: brainstorming).
5. Ideas production concerning possible improvement of the message (method: idem).
6. Ideas summarizing regarding the case analysis; they are written on the blackboard.
7. Message written (letters, memos etc) including the requirements studied; work in teams (method: Phillip 6/6).

Evaluation of the product (method: idem).

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