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BBA | Semester III | UK3VACMGT201

Skills for Managers

Course Code: UK3VACMGT201 • Module 3 Notes

Module 3: Listening, Speaking, and Professional Etiquette

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1. Conversational Mastery, Small Talk, and Persuasive Rhetoric

Professional success in management is intensely conversational. While technical data provides the substance of business analysis, conversational mastery provides the social lubrication that builds executive trust, unlocks informal organizational networks, and persuades stakeholders. Skilled managers master the transition from casual social dialogue to focused commercial negotiations.

The Architecture of the 30-Second Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch represents a concise, compelling executive summary designed to spark interest in a product, venture, or personal professional capability within the duration of a brief elevator ride (approximately 30 to 45 seconds). A high-impact pitch follows a disciplined five-step architecture:

1. **The Hook (5 Seconds):** An arresting opening statistic, provocative diagnostic question, or contrarian insight that immediately commands executive attention.
2. **The Problem Statement (10 Seconds):** Identifying a painful, costly, or inefficient operational bottleneck confronting the target industry or client.
3. **The Solution & Value Proposition (10 Seconds):** Articulating your unique commercial innovation, showing exactly how it eliminates the problem faster, cheaper, or with superior precision.
4. **Evidence & Traction (5 Seconds):** Citing a verified metric, pilot client result, or credential that substantiates commercial credibility.
5. **The Call to Action (5 Seconds):** Proposing a concrete, low-friction next step (e.g., *"May I exchange business cards to schedule a 15-minute briefing this Thursday?"*).

Aristotle's Rhetorical Triumvirate: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

Formulated in classical Greek philosophy and foundational to contemporary managerial persuasion, Aristotle established that persuasion is achieved through three concurrent appeals:

- **Ethos (Credibility and Moral Character):** Establishing authority, domain competence, transparency, and reputation. Audiences must perceive the manager as trustworthy and qualified before accepting their propositions.
- **Pathos (Emotional Connection and Empathy):** Connecting with the audience's core values, aspirations, anxieties, and human hopes through compelling storytelling, relatable case studies, and evocative metaphors.
- **Logos (Logical Reasoning and Empirical Evidence):** Anchoring propositions in sound rational arguments, verified market data, financial models, and cause-and-effect demonstrations.

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A presentation possessing only Logos is dry and boring; one possessing only Pathos feels manipulative; an argument harmonizing Ethos, Pathos, and Logos achieves irresistible persuasive force.

2. Corporate Etiquette, Netiquette, and Dress Codes

Professional etiquette represents the codified system of social conventions, polite behaviors, and ethical decors that govern respectful interactions in commercial environments:

Corporate Dining and Table Manners

Business dining is a frequent venue for high-stakes executive interviews, client relationship building, and merger celebrations. Corporate table manners adhere to established international standards:

- **Table Place Setting Architecture:** Remembering the simple spatial acronym **BMW**: **B**read plate on the left, **M**eal plate in the center, **W**ater and wine glasses on the right. Silverware is utilized from the outside inward as courses progress.
- **Napkin Protocol:** Unfold the napkin and place it across the lap immediately upon being seated. If stepping away temporarily, place the napkin loosely on the chair seat; at the conclusion of the meal, place it neatly on the left of the place setting.
- **Dining Pace and Dialogue:** The host signals the commencement of dining. Never speak with food in the mouth; cut food into manageable single-bite portions; refrain from ordering messy or complicated dishes during business discussions.

Modern Corporate Dress Codes

Dress Code Category	Standard Attire Components (Men)	Standard Attire Components (Women)	Appropriate Professional Settings
Business Formal / Boardroom	Tailored dark navy or charcoal wool suit, crisp white dress shirt, conservative silk tie, polished black leather Oxford shoes.	Tailored pantsuit or skirt suit in neutral dark tones, formal silk blouse, closed-toe leather pumps, minimal jewelry.	Board meetings, court appearances, international diplomatic summits, IPO roadshows.
Business Professional	Coordinated blazer and trousers, dress shirt, conservative tie, leather dress shoes.	Professional tailored sheath dress with jacket, tailored trousers with structured blouse, modest heels or flats.	Client presentations, banking operations, high-level corporate negotiations, job interviews.
Business Casual	Tailored chinos or dress trousers, collared polo or button-down shirt, blazer optional, leather loafers; tie omitted.	Tailored slacks, pencil skirts, elegant knitwear, structured blouses, smart leather flats or low wedges.	Daily corporate office environments, internal department meetings, professional conferences.

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Dress Code Category	Standard Attire Components (Men)	Standard Attire Components (Women)	Appropriate Professional Settings
Smart Casual	Dark, clean denim jeans without distressing, tailored blazer, high-quality collared shirt or fine-gauge crew-neck sweater.	Tailored dark jeans, stylish blazer, sophisticated top, fashionable loafers or ankle boots.	Tech startups, creative agency client retreats, casual Friday social gatherings.

3. Group Discussions (GD) and Selection Interviews

In campus placements and corporate talent acquisitions, the **Group Discussion (GD)** serves as a mass diagnostic simulation to evaluate candidates' communication, leadership, and teamwork competencies under pressure:

Functional Roles and Intervention Strategies in Group Discussions

Successful candidates demonstrate versatility by adopting constructive functional roles:

- **The Initiator:** Opens the discussion with clear definitions, context setting, and structural frameworks. High risk, high reward; initiating requires authoritative domain knowledge.
- **The Moderator / Facilitator:** Steers discussions back on track when participants deviate into trivial tangents; encourages silent members to contribute while politely reigning in aggressive monopolizers.
- **The Clarifier / Elaborator:** Takes raw, fragmented ideas articulated by peers, clarifies underlying nuances, and reinforces them with concrete industry data.
- **The Synthesizer / Summarizer:** Synthesizes divergent viewpoints into a balanced, cohesive consensus summary in the closing minutes, demonstrating high cognitive processing and active listening.

The STAR Methodology for Competency-Based Interviews

In behavioral job interviews, hiring directors evaluate past behavior as the best predictor of future performance. Candidates answer competency questions (e.g., *"Describe a time you handled a severe project crisis"*) using the structured **STAR Framework**:

- **S - Situation:** Establish the specific organizational context, challenge, or commercial crisis (e.g., *"During my summer internship at XYZ Logistics, a major port strike stranded 40% of our container shipments two weeks before holiday delivery deadlines."*).
- **T - Task:** Clearly articulate your specific personal responsibility and objective in that situation (e.g., *"My task was to reroute urgent freight via alternative inland rail corridors without exceeding our 10% emergency budget buffer."*).
- **A - Action:** Describe the concrete, logical steps you personally initiated, highlighting technical competencies, negotiation skills, and leadership initiative (e.g., *"I mapped regional rail freight*

alternatives, negotiated bulk carriage rates with secondary transport providers, and established daily client tracking dashboards.").

- **R - Result:** Conclude with quantifiable, verified outcomes and lessons learned (e.g., *"We delivered 98% of shipments on schedule, restricted additional costs to 6.5%, and received an official letter of commendation from the Chief Logistics Officer."*).

4. High-Impact Executive Presentations and Monroe's Motivated Sequence

Delivering persuasive presentations before senior boards or major clients requires narrative structuring and dynamic stage delivery:

Monroe's Motivated Sequence (Alan H. Monroe)

A proven five-step psychological sequence for organizing persuasive appeals:

1. **Attention:** Capture audience attention through a startling fact, dramatic story, or compelling visual metaphor.
2. **Need:** Demonstrate an urgent, significant problem or unfulfilled need confronting the audience, proving that current status quo is unsustainable.
3. **Satisfaction:** Present your clear, concrete solution, showing step-by-step how your proposed strategy directly resolves the identified need.
4. **Visualization:** Paint a vivid sensory picture of the future: contrasting the positive rewards of adopting the solution with the severe costs of inaction.
5. **Action:** Issue an explicit, immediate call to action telling the audience exactly what concrete steps they must approve or execute today.

5. Structuring Logical Arguments: The Toulmin Argumentation Model

In executive presentations, board debates, and strategic negotiations, emotional assertions crumble under critical scrutiny. British philosopher Stephen Toulmin developed the **Toulmin Model of Argumentation**, providing a rigorous six-part blueprint for constructing bulletproof commercial proposals:

1. **Claim:** The core assertion, recommendation, or thesis being proposed (e.g., *"Our company must expand cold-storage warehouse capacity in Kochi by 30% over the next twelve months."*).
2. **Data (Grounds):** The empirical evidence, market facts, and quantitative metrics supporting the claim (e.g., *"Regional seafood exports grew by 24% year-on-year, and our current facility has operated at 96% peak capacity for six consecutive months."*).
3. **Warrant:** The underlying logical principle or business rule that bridges the data to the claim (e.g., *"Operating near 100% capacity in a fast-growing market leads to turned-away orders and customer attrition to competitors."*).
4. **Backing:** Additional factual support or industry benchmarking verifying the credibility of the warrant (e.g., *"Independent supply chain audits by KPMG indicate regional cold-storage demand*

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will outpace supply through 2030.").

5. **Qualifier:** Words expressing the degree of certainty or boundary conditions of the claim (e.g., *"Presuming regional agricultural and marine harvest yields remain stable..."*).
6. **Rebuttal:** Anticipating and addressing counter-arguments or alternative interpretations (e.g., *"While leasing external third-party storage might require lower upfront capital, our financial models prove that proprietary expansion yields a 18.4% superior Internal Rate of Return over five years."*).

6. Principled Negotiation Architecture: Fisher and Ury's 'Getting to Yes'

Developed at the Harvard Negotiation Project by Roger Fisher and William Ury, **Principled Negotiation** moves away from adversarial positional bargaining (where parties dig in their heels and make grudging concessions) toward collaborative, interest-based problem-solving:

The Four Pillars of Principled Negotiation

- **1. Separate the People from the Problem:** Treat substantive commercial issues with uncompromising analytical rigor, while treating human negotiators with profound personal respect and empathy. Address emotional fears, perceptual biases, and communication breakdowns directly before debating contract terms.
- **2. Focus on Interests, Not Positions:** A position is what a party demands (e.g., *"We insist on a 15% price cut"*); an interest is the underlying need, desire, or fear driving that demand (e.g., *"We need to protect our quarterly operating margins under severe supply chain inflation"*). By exploring underlying interests, negotiators uncover creative compromises invisible at the positional level.
- **3. Invent Options for Mutual Gain:** Conduct joint brainstorming sessions to expand the economic pie before dividing it. Creating trade-offs across non-competing interests (e.g., trading longer payment terms for exclusivity, or offering free software maintenance in exchange for multi-year contract renewals) generates win-win outcomes.
- **4. Insist on Using Objective Criteria:** Anchor negotiations in objective, external standards of fairness—such as independent market valuations, government indices, legal precedents, or professional industry rate cards—rather than subjective battles of personal willpower.

BATNA and ZOPA in Commercial Dealmaking

Prior to entering any negotiation, an executive must determine their **BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)**: the course of action they will take if current negotiations collapse completely. A robust, well-developed BATNA provides psychological leverage and prevents managers from accepting disadvantageous agreements. The **ZOPA (Zone of Possible Agreement)** represents the overlapping financial or operational territory where the buyer's maximum willingness to pay exceeds the seller's minimum reservation price. If no ZOPA exists, a negotiated agreement is mathematically impossible, and parties should respectfully walk away to their respective BATNAs.

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7. Parliamentary Procedure and Robert's Rules of Order

Formal board meetings, annual general meetings (AGMs), and municipal councils operate under the codified parliamentary procedures of **Robert's Rules of Order** to ensure orderly, democratic, and legally binding corporate governance:

- **Quorum:** The minimum number of voting members required to be legally present to transact official corporate business validly.
- **Main Motion:** The formal proposal introduced by a member (e.g., *"I move that the corporation authorize the issuance of 10,000 equity debentures"*), requiring a formal second from another member before opening for debate.
- **Point of Order:** A procedural intervention raised by any member when meeting rules or company bylaws are being breached, requiring the chairperson to rule immediately.
- **Point of Personal Privilege:** Raised to address physical discomfort, acoustic inaudibility, or personal affronts during executive debate.
- **Voting Thresholds:** Distinguishing between Ordinary Resolutions (simple majority > 50%) and Special Resolutions (super-majority ≥ 75% under the Companies Act 2013 for major constitutional changes).

8. Global Cross-Cultural Business Etiquette Matrix

In transnational business leadership, cultural missteps can destroy high-stakes mergers and commercial partnerships. Professional etiquette varies profoundly across international markets:

National Market	Greeting & Non-Verbal Rituals	Meeting Dynamics & Decision Pace	Key Taboos & Sensitive Pitfalls
Japan	Formal bow followed by limp handshake; two-handed business card exchange (Meishi) with respectful inspection.	Consensus-driven (Ringi-sho); decisions require extensive behind-the-scenes consultation (Nemawashi); long silent pauses.	Never write on or fold a received business card; never single out an individual for public praise or criticism; avoid blowing nose in public.
Germany	Firm, brief handshake with direct eye contact; formal address using titles and last names (e.g., *Herr Dr. Weber*).	Highly structured, punctual to the minute; meetings follow strict agendas; debate is direct, rigorous, and fact-heavy.	Never arrive even five minutes late; avoid spontaneous humor during formal technical negotiations; avoid casual small talk during business.
United Arab Emirates (UAE)	Warm handshake between same genders; right-hand placement over heart; respect religious prayer timings.	Relationship-centric; business requires establishing deep personal friendship, hospitality, and trust over multiple meetings.	Never show the soles of shoes or feet; never use the left hand for eating or passing documents; never inquire directly about female family members.

National Market	Greeting & Non-Verbal Rituals	Meeting Dynamics & Decision Pace	Key Taboos & Sensitive Pitfalls
United States	Firm, energetic handshake, warm smile, rapid transition to first-name basis (*"Call me John"*).	Fast-paced, direct, pragmatic; "time is money"; value propositions presented upfront; commercial contracts are extensive and legalistic.	Avoid vague, evasive non-answers; avoid lingering silence in discussions; do not display rigid hierarchical distance with subordinates.

9. Virtual Meeting Protocols and Video-Call Neurobiology

The institutional normalization of hybrid and remote work requires mastering the ergonomics and etiquette of digital video platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet):

Three-Point Lighting and Framing Ergonomics

- **Camera Elevation:** The webcam must be positioned exactly at eye level. Elevating laptops using stands prevents the unflattering 'up-the-nose' camera angle that subconsciously communicates intimidation or disinterest.
- **Lighting Architecture:** The primary light source (Key Light or daylight window) must be situated directly in front of the speaker's face. Strong backlighting from rear windows casts the executive into an anonymous, unprofessional silhouette.
- **Audio Prioritization:** While audiences tolerate mediocre video quality, poor, echoing, or buzzing audio generates immediate cognitive fatigue. Utilizing dedicated external condenser microphones or professional headsets is mandatory for executive credibility.
- **The Neurobiology of 'Zoom Fatigue':** Stanford researchers (Jeremy Bailenson) proved that continuous video calls trigger intense cognitive exhaustion due to: excessive close-up eye gaze, continuous self-view (mirror anxiety), reduced physical mobility, and the immense cognitive load required to consciously transmit and decode non-verbal gestures across pixelated screens. Executives mitigate this through 25-minute meeting blocks and turning off self-view.

10. The PREP Framework for Impromptu Speaking Under Pressure

Executive managers are frequently called upon without warning to give updates, defend budgets, or answer sudden board inquiries. Floundering, rambling, or apologizing destroys professional credibility. Seasoned communicators utilize the structured **PREP Framework** to deliver clear, commanding impromptu statements within seconds:

1. **Point (P):** State your core thesis or conclusion clearly in the very first sentence (e.g., *"I strongly recommend that we delay the software rollout by exactly two weeks."*).
2. **Reason (R):** Provide the primary logical rationale or operational justification driving that conclusion (e.g., *"Because our final load-testing revealed an intermittent data synchronization error that could compromise customer transactions during peak holiday volumes."*).

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3. **Example / Evidence (E):** Substantiate your reason with a concrete, verifiable metric, pilot case study, or historical precedent (e.g., *"During our 2024 regional pilot, rushing past unaddressed sync errors resulted in 48 hours of server downtime and Rs. 12 lakhs in emergency vendor patch costs."*).
4. **Point (P - Reiterate):** Restate your opening core thesis with renewed emphasis and an actionable forward-looking posture (e.g., *"Therefore, investing an additional fourteen days in testing will safeguard our corporate reputation, protect client data, and guarantee a flawless national deployment."*).

11. Non-Verbal Deception Detection and Body Language Mastery

Pioneered by Dr. Paul Ekman's research on affective neuroscience, executive managers enhance interpersonal acuity by reading non-verbal emotional indicators and micro-expressions:

Non-Verbal Indicator	Observable Behavioral Manifestation	Underlying Psychological Meaning
Micro-Expressions	Involuntary facial muscle contractions lasting 1/25th to 1/5th of a second before being masked.	Reveals genuine suppressed emotions (contempt, disgust, fear, anger) before social filtering occurs.
Pacifying / Self-Soothing Gestures	Touching the supra-sternal notch (neck dimple), rubbing the back of the neck, wringing hands, fiddling with rings.	Signals acute internal anxiety, elevated stress hormones (cortisol), and subconscious attempts to calm the nervous system.
Vocal Fry & Uptalk	Glottal rattling at low pitch (vocal fry) or rising intonation at the end of declarative sentences (uptalk).	Erodes executive authority; sounds tentative, uncertain, and unconvincing in corporate presentations.
Steepling Palms	Fingertips of both hands joined together in an upward triangle with palms separated.	Universal non-verbal projection of supreme confidence, intellectual competence, and decisive authority.

12. The Art of the Power Pause: Vocal Cadence and Modulation

Untrained speakers dread silence, filling natural conversational gaps with vocal fillers (*"um"*, *"ah"*, *"like"*, *"you know"*) that destroy authority. Professional communicators harness the **Power Pause** across three strategic moments:

- **The Pre-Opening Pause (3 Seconds):** Standing silently before beginning a presentation, making calm eye contact across the auditorium. This projects total composure and forces the audience into complete silence.
- **The Transition Pause (2 Seconds):** Pausing deliberately between major presentation themes, allowing the audience's working memory to consolidate complex concepts.

- **The Dramatic Emphasis Pause (3 Seconds):** Pausing immediately after delivering a startling statistic or core strategic thesis, letting the gravity of the statement sink in before resuming.

13. Speech Delivery Archetypes and Platform Mechanics

Public speaking and executive oratory encompass four distinct delivery archetypes, each suited to specific commercial environments:

Delivery Archetype	Operational Methodology	Core Advantages & Primary Risks	Appropriate Commercial Settings
Extemporaneous Delivery	Thoroughly researched and practiced using structured conceptual bullet outlines; delivered conversationally.	High audience adaptability, natural vocal inflection, authentic connection. Requires solid domain mastery.	Client sales presentations, board briefings, university lectures, departmental town halls.
Manuscript Delivery	Reading verbatim from a fully prepared written text, teleprompter, or podium manuscript.	Absolute linguistic precision, zero risk of misstatement. Risk of sounding wooden and losing eye contact.	Press conferences, diplomatic government summits, corporate annual shareholder speeches, legal testimony.
Impromptu Delivery	Spoken on the spot with zero advance preparation, relying on working memory and spontaneous frameworks (PREP).	Demonstrates natural cognitive sharpness, high authenticity. Risk of rambling, disorganization, or factual error.	Surprise Q&A sessions, panel discussions, elevator encounters, sudden crisis updates.
Memorized Delivery	Committed completely to memory word-for-word without any notes or slides.	Complete freedom of stage movement and eye contact. Catastrophic risk of total mental blank if train of thought breaks.	TED Talks, short ceremonial toasts, promotional marketing product reveal introductions.

14. Handling Hostile Questions and Media Bridging Techniques

During contentious shareholder meetings, regulatory hearings, or investigative press interviews, executives must defend organizational integrity without becoming defensive or evasive. Media trainers deploy the **ABC Bridging Technique**:

- **Acknowledge (A):** Briefly acknowledge the emotional concern or topic raised by the questioner (e.g., *"I understand that warehouse automation raises natural concerns regarding staffing adjustments..."*).
- **Bridge (B):** Deploy a verbal transition phrase that pivots the conversation from the hostile premise to your core corporate message (e.g., *"...and what our empirical productivity data shows*

is that..." or *"...the broader strategic priority we are addressing is..."*).

- **Communicate (C):** Deliver your proactive, verified core message, supported by concrete facts, safety commitments, or retraining investments (e.g., *"...we are investing Rs. 4 crores in retraining 100% of affected staff for advanced robotics maintenance roles, resulting in zero involuntary layoffs."*).

15. Crisis Speech Management and Corporate Apology Architecture

When an enterprise faces severe operational failures (e.g., data breaches, defective product recalls, or public safety incidents), senior managers must deliver formal crisis remarks. A flawed, evasive statement amplifies reputational damage. Organizational communications experts mandate the **Four-R Crisis Apology Framework**:

1. **Regret:** Express sincere, unreserved empathy and sorrow for the harm, distress, or inconvenience experienced by affected customers or employees, avoiding defensive qualifiers (e.g., avoiding *"We apologize if anyone felt offended"*).
2. **Responsibility:** Acknowledge organizational accountability for the systemic breakdown, demonstrating transparency rather than scapegoating junior employees or third-party vendors.
3. **Remedy:** Clearly announce immediate, concrete restitutionary interventions (e.g., immediate full refunds, free credit monitoring, dedicated 24/7 customer hotlines).
4. **Reform:** Outline verified operational safeguards, third-party audits, and policy overhauls instituted to guarantee that the breakdown can never recur.

16. Executive Storytelling: The Corporate Hero's Journey

Data informs the intellect, but narrative moves the human heart. Visionary managers structure strategic town halls and investor pitches around Joseph Campbell's **Hero's Journey (The Monomyth)**, translated into business contexts:

- **The Ordinary World (Status Quo):** Establishing the familiar corporate baseline before disruption began.
- **The Call to Adventure (The Market Disruption):** The emergence of an existential threat or bold technological opportunity (e.g., AI transformation).
- **The Road of Trials (Operational Challenges):** The difficult sacrifices, cultural resistance, and complex obstacles overcome by the team.
- **The Ultimate Boon (The Strategic Breakthrough):** Achieving market leadership, customer delight, and sustainable competitive advantage.
- **Return with the Elixir (Shared Prosperity):** Celebrating team resilience and distributing rewards across the entire organization.

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17. Rhetorical Devices for Executive Persuasion

Masterful communicators deploy classical rhetorical figures of speech to make strategic concepts memorable:

- **Anaphora:** The deliberate repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences to create rhythmic momentum and emotional urgency (e.g., *"We must innovate in our product design. We must innovate in our customer care. We must innovate in our core culture."*).
- **Antithesis:** Juxtaposing two contrasting ideas in balanced parallel structure to highlight strategic choices (e.g., *"Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate."*).
- **Chiasmus:** Reversing the grammatical structure in successive phrases to create poetic resonance and enduring memorability.

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