

# COMM 423 - Practical Issues in Organizational Communication

Tuesday, Thursday, 12:40 - 2:00p.m. - LA 302

Spring, 2009

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:00 - noon; Thursdays 2:00 - 4:00

## REQUIRED READINGS

Beebe, S. A., Mottet, T. P., & Roach, K. D. (2004). Training and development: Enhancing communication and leadership skills. Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

The additional course readings listed below can be downloaded from my website - <http://www.cas.umt.edu/dcs/Faculty/bach/default.html>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the theoretical and practical issues involved in communication training and consultation. Following an introduction and overview of several theoretical models, students will become familiar with the "nuts and bolts" of communication training and consultation. Carrying out a consultation project (e.g., contracting for a project, problem analysis, designing a solution, implementing a solution, and assessing the effectiveness of the solution) will sharpen both the theoretical and applied issues explored during the semester.

It is important to note that although you will have an understanding of the consultation processes and skills required to be an effective communication consultant/trainer, by the end of this course you will NOT be ready to market yourself as such.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of satisfactorily completing the course, students should be able to do the following:

1. Discuss the benefits and risks of training and consultation;
2. Identify several different theories of organizational change and innovation;
3. Understand the procedures for entering into a consultant-client relationship;
4. Identify several different training and consultation models and use at least one of these models to conduct a consultation;
5. Know how to enter into a written contractual agreement with a client;
6. Understand the necessity for organizational assessment;
7. Be aware of the special problems of organizational entry;
8. Understand what consumers of consulting identify as effective consultation behaviors.
9. Identify behavioral/instructional objectives and teaching strategies to meet these objectives;
10. Know why it is important to adapt training to different target populations (and actually design a project doing such);
11. Know how to evaluate the client's and trainees' perceptions of the consultation;
12. Identify the ethical implications of consultation;
13. Identify major texts, training journals, and resources devoted to consulting and training.

## TEACHING STRATEGY

In this class we have the opportunity to learn from each other and to bring our combined experience into focus. We will talk about our preferred styles and approaches, and will examine the strengths and weaknesses of each orientation. There will be time in each class session to report on progress and collectively discuss problems. I expect you to be here. Be aware of the following teaching strategies:

1. This course will be fast paced, and discussion will move quickly.
2. The reading load is heavy, with much of the reading done during the first half of the semester.
3. There will be some overlap in the reading, as I want you to read articles that offer different perspectives. Moreover, there are several older, key, articles that you will be reading;
4. This course should be perceived as a culmination of your learning. I will push you to transfer much of what you have learned about organizational communication to its application in a "real life" setting.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Field Interview (due 2/19)	10%
Adaptation to a Target Population (due 3/12)	20%
Quizzes	25%
Consultation Project	30%
Class Participation	<u>15%</u>
TOTAL	100%

## INSTRUCTIONAL POLICIES

1. Active student participation (in the form of contribution to discussion and involvement in class activities) is instrumental for the success of this Honors course; therefore, attendance is not only expected, it is required. Moreover, although I am not anyone's Mother, I expect you to contact me in advance if, for some reason, you must miss a class.
2. You are expected to read assigned material prior to class and be prepared to discuss the readings. Expect to be called on to answer questions about what you've read.
3. All assigned projects must be completed in order for a student to receive passing grade for the course.
4. The University and COMM department regulations on plagiarism and all other unethical behavior will be strictly enforced. **Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated!!** Anyone caught plagiarizing will be given a grade of "F" for the course and will be reported to the Department Chair and to the Dean of Students. All students must be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321](http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321).
5. Assignments are to be typed and proofread. Messy, poorly spelled assignments communicate that you don't care about the reader—who in this case will also be the grader of the assignment.....me!

6. I like to joke around and have fun during class. Please don't mistake my sense of humor for a lack of standards. I expect you to do your best work.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### **1/27 and 1/29 - Course Introduction: Profit, Peril, and Sins of Consultants**

Goodall, H. L. (1989). On becoming an organizational detective: The role of context sensitivity and intuitive logic in communication consulting. *The Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 55, 42-54.

Owen, D. (1982, November). Those who can't, consult. *Harpers*, 8-17.

Stewart, J. (1983). Reconsidering communication consulting. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 11, 153-167.

March, J. G. (1991). Organizational consultants and organizational research. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 19, 20-31.

DeWine, S. (2001). *The consultant's craft: Improving organizational communication* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins, pp. 22-35.

### **2/3 and 2/5 - Theories of Change and Innovation; Consulting Models; Consultants Roles**

Beebe, S. A. (2007). Raising the question #6: What do communication trainers do? *Communication Education*, 56, 249-254.

B, M, and R, Chapter 1

Appelbaum, S.H., & Steed, A. J. (2006). The critical success factors in the client-consulting relationship. *Journal of Management Development*, 24, 68-92.

Kitay, J., & Wright, Ch. (2004). Take the money and run? Organisational Boundaries and Consultants' Roles. *The Services Industries Journal*, 24, 1-18.

Rogers, E. M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations* (4th ed.). New York: The Free Press, 1-37.

Lange, J. (1982). Toward a model of communication in process consultation. *The Communicator*, 12, 47-68.

### **2/10 and 2/12 - Resistance to Change**

B, M, and R, Chapter 10

Zaltman, G., & Duncan, R. (1977). *Strategies for planned change*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 62-89.

Lange, J. (1984). Seeking client resistance: Rhetorical strategy in communication consulting. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 12, 50-62.

DeWine, S. (1994). *The consultant's craft: Improving organizational communication*. Boston, MA: St. Martins, pp. 278-286.

## **2/17 and 2/19 - Field Reports on Consumers of Consulting**

## **2/24 and 2/26 - Entry into the Consultant-Client Relationship**

Block, P. (1981). *Flawless consulting: A guide to getting your expertise used* (pp. 41-53). San Diego, CA: University Associates.

Weisbord, M. (1973). The organizational development contract. *Organizational development practitioner*, 5, 1-4.

## **3/3 and 3/5 - Diagnosis, Developing Objectives and Content**

B, M, and R, Chapters 3, 4, and 5

Lucier, K. (2008). A consultative training program: Collateral effect of a needs assessment. *Communication Education*, 57, 482-489.

## **3/10 and 3/12 - Training Options**

B, M, and R, Chapters 6 and 7

DeWine, S. (1994). *The consultant's craft: Improving organizational communication* (pp. 108-131). Boston, MA: St. Martins

## **3/17 and 3/19 - Adaptation to a Target Population**

B, M, and R, Chapters 2, 8, and 9

Silber, K. H., & Stelnicki, M. B. (1987). Writing training materials. In R. L. Craig (Ed.), *Training and development handbook* (pp. 263-285). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Smeltzer, L. R., & Arnold, D. H. (1982). Presenting a course in business and industry: Suggestions and caveats. *Communication Education*, 31, 73-78.

Cragan, J. F. (2008). Designing and maintaining a communication consulting relationship: A fire officer case study. *Communication Education*, 57, 464-471.

### **3/24 and 3/26 - Adaptation to a Target Population: Class Reports**

### **3/31 and 4/2 - No Class – Spring Break**

### **4/7 and 4/9 - Evaluation and Feedback**

B, M, and R, Chapter 11

DeWine, S. (2001). *The consultant's craft: Improving organizational communication* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 402-416). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins.

### **4/14 and 4/16 - Ethics and Professionalism**

Redekop, B. W., & Heath, B. L. (2007). A brief examination of the nature, contexts, and causes of unethical consultant behaviors. *Journal of Practical Consulting*, 1, 40-50.

Harrison, T. (1982). Toward an ethical framework for communication consulting. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 10, 87-100.

Glassman, A. M., & Lundberg, C. C. (1988). In search of the right consultant: An OD fable. *Group and Organization Studies*, 13, 5-18.

Pasmore, W. A. (1988). A reply to Glassman and Lundberg's fable. *Group and Organizational Studies*, 13, 19-23.

Nadler, D. A. (1988). Putting the problem with the fable on the table. *Group and Organization Studies*, 13, 25-28.

Schein, E. H. (1988). What are the lessons of the OD fable? *Group and Organization Studies*, 13, 29-32.

Frankenhuis, J. P. (1977). How to get a good consultant. *Harvard Business Review*, 55, 133-139.

O'Shea J., & Madigan, C. (1997). *Dangerous company: The consulting powerhouses and businesses they save and ruin* (pp. 288-301). New York: Random House.

### **4/21 and 4/23 – No class – training time**

### **4/28 - Class Presentations (no class 4/30)**

### **5/5 and 5/7 – Class Presentations**

### **5/13 - Course Wrap Up and Evaluation – 1:10 – 3:10**

## **PROJECT #1 - Field Interview\***

### Objectives

1. To describe the kinds of consulting/consultants hired by the "client" you have chosen to interview.
2. To identify consultant competencies that your "client" expects (e.g., their perception of the "ideal" consultant and/or the qualities of a good consultant).
3. To describe the consultant selection process used by the consumer.
4. To identify general organizational or bureaucratic constraints imposed on consultants by the consumer (e.g., what organizational hoops, if any, must consultants navigate before they are allowed to consult in the organization)?

### Procedures

1. Identify a consumer of consultants.
2. Draft interview questions (to be submitted with your final oral report). For a refresher on interviewing, I have placed a chapter on the informational interview from Stewart and Cash's *Interviewing: Principles and practices* on reserve in LA301.
3. Interview the consumer.
4. Present your report orally to the seminar, limiting your presentation time to 20 minutes. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation and provide me with a copy of your presentation at the time you present.
5. Make sure that you follow the rules for a good presentation by providing an introduction, an overview of what you'll cover, and a summary or conclusion at the end. Providing a brief history of the person interviewed and his/her organizational experience is also helpful for establishing his/her credibility.
6. Participate in a synthesizing discussion over what consumers expect of a consultant.

### Evaluative Criteria

1. Preparation of interview questions.
2. Quality of information obtained as represented in class report (e.g., how helpful is the information you obtained to the potential consultant, and to what extent does it cover the four questions asked in the objectives section, above?).
  3. The extent to which the information you report demonstrates both synthesis and evaluation of seminar readings. That is, do you incorporate the readings to date into your presentation, discussing how they support, relate to, enhance, etc. the information that you gathered from

your consumer?

4. Effectiveness of presentation to the seminar.

\* Adapted from Jody D. Nyquist and John Stewart, University of Washington, Department of Communication.

**THIS PROJECT IS WORTH 10% OF YOUR GRADE**

## **PROJECT #2**

### **Adaptation of Training Strategies to a Specific Target Population**

#### Objectives

1. To identify and describe instructional strategies which might work best with individuals in your target population.
  2. To provide a rationale in which you argue for the effectiveness of the strategies identified.
  3. To design one simple simulation that would work with the population you have identified.
  4. To defend (using theoretically-based arguments) the effectiveness of the simulation.

#### Procedures

1. Identify a specific target population. This group **must** be different than the group you are using for Project #4.
  2. Identify special considerations for this population.
  3. Identify two (or more) instructional strategies for training this population.
  4. Provide a rationale where you argue for the effectiveness of the identified strategies.
  5. Design or adapt a simple simulation (e.g., activity, exercise) for training this population.
  6. Argue (using theory) for the appropriateness of this simulation given the special needs of your target group.
  7. Prepare a 5-7-page paper that contains the above information (attach your simulation as an appendix).
  8. Prepare a 20-minute presentation of your findings, ensuring that you follow the rules for a good presentation by providing an introduction, an overview of what you'll cover, and a summary or conclusion at the end.

#### Evaluative Criteria

1. The extent to which objectives 1-4 are met.
  2. The extent to which your paper is clearly organized, well written, and innovative.

To get an idea of what others have done before, here is a list of topics that people have covered in previous classes:

- \* Teaching interpersonal communication to computer programmers.
  - \* Teaching hearing impaired students the identification and use

of vocalics.

- \* Nonverbal/chronemics - time management strategies for Hispanic employees coming to work in the United States.
- \* Training crisis center volunteers in active listening strategies.
- \* Training American managers to adapt to management practices in India.
- \* Training strategies for helping middle school girls deal with sexual harassment.
- \* Teaching listening behaviors to hearing impaired adults.

**THIS PROJECT IS WORTH 20% OF YOUR GRADE!**

## **PROJECT #3**

### **Design and Presentation of Workshop or Other Consulting Activity**

#### Rationale

The assignment of this project assumes that there is value in learning by doing. Students will be engaged in an actual consulting or training project to experience the consulting process.

#### Procedure

You are to produce a formal paper and a 30-minute class presentation in which you include the following information:

1. How you obtained your client.
  2. The framework or model you selected as most appropriate for your consulting task and explanation of why this model was chosen (e.g., Dr./Patient, process, etc.).
  3. The process of contracting (please include a copy of your contract).
  4. The client needs and expectations you identified, including:
    - a. a discussion of how you conducted your needs assessment;
    - b. the assessment tools you used;
      - c. an explanation of why you chose the tools you did;
      - d. what you learned from your assessment;
      - e. what you learned (provide copies of the assessment tools that you used).
5. The behavioral/instructional/training objectives you developed as a result of the needs assessment (making sure that they are observable, attainable, measurable, and specific).
  6. The training curriculum you designed and an explanation of what you did to make it successful (e.g., use of set induction, etc.)
  7. The information presented during your workshop and the training methods used to convey this information (lecture, etc.), along with a discussion of why you chose these particular methods.
  8. A discussion of how you connected the assessed training needs with your objectives and then your objectives with the methods you used.
  9. The tools used to assess trainees' learning outcomes (please include a copy of the instrument as well as a summary of the results).
10. A discussion about the effectiveness of your project, based upon:
  - a. your assessment of trainees' learning outcomes;
  - b. an interview with your client (in which you received evaluations/made recommendations);

c. a discussion of the merits/problems with team consultation.

11. A discussion of what went well and how you would change the project in the future.
12. A discussion of how you dealt with any resistance or conflict that you encountered.

#### Evaluative Criteria

1. The extent to which your project is designed in relation to client expectations and needs.
  2. The extent to which you meet the above task criteria.
  3. The extent to which you integrate both the theory and application discussed in the course throughout your project.
  4. The extent to which you present your project in a professional manner.
  5. The extent to which you rely on verbal communication rather than become overly reliant on PowerPoint to convey your message.
  6. An evaluation by the client of the project's effectiveness.

**THIS PROJECT IS WORTH 30% OF YOUR GRADE, 5% OF WHICH WILL BE YOUR PRESENTATION**