

Strategic Communication Consulting

COMM 503 Rebecca Weintraub, Ph.D.

Thursday, 6:45 – 9:45 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses the specific skills needed for strategic and organizational communication consulting.

Communication consulting is different from strategic or management consulting although often communication consultants work to support the implementation of the strategies of management consultants. Communication consulting often involves the actual writing of communication media, but it also includes such diverse elements as meeting design and facilitation, strategic messaging, large-scale communication event planning and execution, and presentation coaching.

GOALS:

- To understand the consulting processes and skills for successful communication consulting.
- To understand and be able to use the basic communication consulting methodologies
- To be able to design and conduct a strategic facilitation intervention
- To understand how to assess the communication requirements for a specific engagement

• COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- There are two required texts. Additionally, a reading packet is available for purchase at the USC bookstore. Other literature is recommended throughout the course and is on reserve in the Annenberg Resource Center.
- The reader contains the required readings. Required readings are to be prepared *prior* to class and will be the subject of in-class discussions and the final exam. Reading the optional readings is highly recommended as they round off the required readings and aid in the understanding of the broader context.
- Active participation in class is expected and will be included in the final grade. To help ensure balanced participation, students will be designated as “reading facilitators.” When facilitating a reading you should be able to discuss why the article was written, what insight it offers for managing communication strategically and how the article relates to other materials from the course.
- Students absent more than two times must make an appointment with and provide an explanation to the course instructor in case of any further absence.

Grading:

There are three components to the final grade: one take-home exam (40%), team consulting project (50%), and class participation (10%). Class participation will include case studies, short in-class assignments, and group work.

Group Projects

The Group Project will be a complete consulting project providing consulting services to an organization. This can be a for-profit or a non-profit entity. The Project will encompass all of the steps of a consulting engagement: Problem identification, statement of work, budgeting (although no fees will be collected), proposal, assessment and engagement, research, implementation plan, and final report. Groups will turn in the proposal, statement of work and budget the 6th week of class; the assessment and research plan the 9th week of class; and present the final report as both an oral and written report at the end of the semester. All members of the project must participate in both the consulting project and the final oral presentation. Group Projects presentations will be due the last two weeks of the semester. Each group will produce a 20 – 25 page paper and a 60 minute presentation. Two projects will be presented on Week 14 and two on Week 15. Groups One and Two will present Week 14; Groups Three and Four Week 15. Dates will be assigned in the order topics are approved: the first group will receive their first choice, etc. The papers are due on the day of the presentation.

Group Projects will be graded upon the research, consulting skill application, final presentation, and presentation materials. Creativity is always a plus. Each member is expected to participate fully in all aspects of the project.

The topic and approach must be pre-approved by the fourth week of class. The topic must be complex enough for four or five people to be totally involved in the research and presentation.

Final Examination

See official University final examination schedule for date and time of this exam

LITERATURE:

Author: Sue DeWine

Title: The Consultant's Craft: Improving Organizational Communication 2nd edition

Publication info: Boston/New York: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2001

Author: Ingrid Bens

Title: Facilitation at a Glance

Publication info: GOAL/QPC, 1999

USC Bookstore: Course Reader Comm 599

Schedule of classes:

◆ Week 1 August 26 – **Communication Consulting Basics**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue, *The Consultant's Craft: Improving Organizational Communication 2nd edition*, Part 1: Chapters 1 and 2, pp.2-35.

Hendricks, Edward D. (1997) *The Insider's guide to Consulting Success: How to Establish, Operate and Grow a Consulting Practice*. Chapter 1: An Overview, pp 1-20.

Margerison, Charles J. *Managerial Consulting Skills. A practical guide*, Chapters 2 and 3 pp.14 – 36.

Hargie, Owen and Tourish, Dennis (2000) *Handbook of Communication Audits for Organisations*. Chapter 1: pp. 3-21

◆ Week 2 September 2 – **Getting the Work**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue, *The Consultant's Craft: Improving Organizational Communication 2nd edition*, Chapters 3, pp.36-48.

Greenbaum, Thomas L. (1990) *The Consultant's Manual. A complete Guide to Building a Successful Consulting Practice*. Chapter 11, pp. 161-179.

Tepper, Ron (1993) *The Consultant's Proposal, Fee, and Contract Problem-Solver*. Chapters 3,4, and 5, pp. 75- 174

◆ Week 3 September 9 – **Identifying Communication Problems**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue (2001) *The Consultant's Craft. Improving Organizational Communication*. Chapters 4 and 5, pp. 49-82.

Hargie, Owen and Tourish, Dennis (2000) *Handbook of Communication Audits for Organisations*: Chapter 2, pp. 22-41, and Chapter 5, pp. 85-103.

Downs, Cal W. (1988) *Communication Audits*. Chapter 3 4 and 5 pp. 49-95

◆ Week 4 September 16 – **Communication Competencies for Successful Engagement Management**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue (2001) *The Consultant's Craft. Improving Organizational Communication*. Chapters 8 and 9, pp. 142-205, Chapter 18, pp. 402-416.

Margerison, Charles J. (1988) *Managerial Consulting Skills. A practical guide*. Chapter 5: p. 51-65.

◆ Week 5 September 23 – **Communication Tools, Results, and Implementation**

Required Readings:

Downs, Cal W. (1988) *Communication Audits*. Chapter 10,11, and12 pp. 167-228.

Selnow, Gary W. and Crano, William D. (1987) *Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Targeted Communication Programs. A Manual for Business Communications*, Chapter 6: pp. 190-232.

◆ Week 6 September 30– **Change Management and Communication**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue (2001) *The Consultant's Craft. Improving Organizational Communication*, Chapter 15, pp.340-357.

Miller, Vernon D., Johnson, John R., and Grau, Jennifer, *Antecedents to Willingness to Participate in a Planned Organizational Change*, *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 22 (1994) pp. 59-80.

Armenakis, Achilles A., and Harris, Stanley G., *Crafting a change message to create transformational readiness*, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, (15) 2001, pp 169-183.

Week 6 Continued

Kitchen, Philip J. and Daly, Finbarr, *Internal communication during change management*. Corporate Communications: An International Journal, (7) 2002, pp.46-53.

Klein, Stuart M. (1996) *A management communication strategy for change*, Journal of Organizational Change Management, (9) 1996, pp. 32-46.

◆ Week 7 October 7 and Week 8 October 14– **Training and Facilitation**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue (2001) *The Consultant's Craft. Improving Organizational Communication*. Chapters 6, 9, 10, 12, 17, 19.

Susskind, Lawrence, McKearnan, Sarah, Thomas-Larmer, Jennifer, ed. *The Consensus Building Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement*, Chapter 1, pp.3-60, Chapter 3, pp. 137-168, Chapter 5, pp. 199-240, Chapter15, pp. 557-590.

Bens, Ingrid, *Facilitation at a Glance*.

Arnold, William E., and McClure, Lynn *Communication Training and Development*, Chapter 3, pp. 35-47, Chapters 6 and 7, pp.81-108.

◆ Week 9 October 21– **HR Communications Consulting**

Barocas, Victor S. *Benefit Communications: Enhancing the Employer's Investment* in Conference Board Report Number 1035, pp. 11-25, and 40-45.

Arthur, Diane (1997) *The Complete Human Resources Writing Guide*, Chapters 1,2, and 3 pp. 3-54 and Chapter 5, pp. 67-82.

◆ Week 10 October 28 – **Writing as Consulting**

Required Readings:

Tarver, Jerry *The Corporate Speechwriter's Handbook (out of print—relevant chapters included in reader)*.

◆ Week 11 November 4 – **Communication and Presentation Coaching**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue (2001) *The Consultant's Craft. Improving Organizational Communication*, Chapters 10 and 11, pp. 206-271, Chapter 19 pp. 418-433.

O'Hair, Dan, Friedrich, Gustav W. and Dixon, Lynda Dee, *Strategic Communication in the Business and Professions*, Chapters 13 - 15 pp. 363 - 463.

◆ Weeks 12 November 11– **Specialized Consulting Topics**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue, *The Consultant's Craft. Improving Organizational Communication*. Chapter 16 pp.358-382, Chapter 19-20, pp. 418-457..

Coombs, W. Timothy *Informatin and Compassion in Crisis Responses: A Test of their Effects* in *Journal of Public Relations Research* (11) 1999, pp. 142.

Hargie, Owen and Tourish, Dennis *Handbook of Communication Audits for Organisations*. Chapter 8: pp. 152-175.

Fearn-Banks, Kathleen, *Crisis Communications: A casebook approach*, Chapt. 2 (pp. 18-33) and Appendix A: Generic Crisis Communications Plan (pp. 255-275).

Week 13 – November 18 Group Project Presentations

Group Project Presentations

◆ Week 14 November 25 **Thanksgiving**

◆ Week 15 December 2– Group Project Presentations

Final Exam Due 6:45 December 9 (no email submissions accepted)
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COURSE INSTRUCTOR:

Prof. Ph.D. Rebecca Weintraub
Office: ASC 324D
Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 5:00 to 6:00
E-Mail: weintrau@usc.edu
Phone: (213) 821-0764
Class Time:

Bio:

Rebecca Weintraub has spent over twenty years in the field of communication, facilitation, change management, and organizational behavior. She began her career as an assistant professor at California State Polytechnic University at Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona) where she was also the Director of Forensics. After Cal Poly Pomona, she joined the Hughes Aircraft company, now Hughes Electronics, where over a fifteen-year period she held a number of positions in communication and quality in the satellite manufacturing division before becoming Director of Corporate Communications for the Corporation, a position she held for five years. She left Hughes Electronics to join the consulting firm of Towers Perrin where she focused on organizational communication, health and welfare benefits communication strategy, and change management. Her clients included Northrop Grumman, MGM, Mazda, AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals, WellPoint Health Systems, Hughes Electronics, and the L.A. Times.

Dr. Weintraub is currently a visiting professor at USC in the Annenberg School of Communication where she is the Director of the Center for Corporate and Community Education. She teaches courses in strategic corporate communication in the Communication Management Masters program. Additionally, she provides communication and facilitation consulting services to organizations in the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

She received her Bachelor's degree from UCLA and her master's and Ph.D. degrees from USC. She roots for whoever is winning at half time.