

Strategic Communication Consulting
CMGT 503
Rebecca Weintraub, Ph.D.
Fall 2013, Thursday 6:30-9:20 PM, ASC 204

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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

Communication consulting is different from strategic or management consulting although communication consultants often 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 training.

This class is designed to facilitate *learning-by-doing*. While the professor and graduate assistant will present material throughout the semester, much of your learning in this class will come from your consulting engagement. You will find at times that the work you are doing for your client will require you to read ahead in the text, do outside research, or meet with the professor or graduate assistant. You will learn as much or more from your individual and group work as you do from your instructors.

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 six required texts. Other literature will be available on Blackboard as needed. Some of these will be optional, others required.
- Required readings are to be prepared *prior* to class and may be the subject of in-class discussions and will be the subject of short written assignments. 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. 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 five components of the final grade:

- Final team consulting project (30%)
- Final project peer review evaluations (10%)
- Four 1-page reading reaction papers (20%)
- Applied research mid-term paper (15%)
- Short facilitation or training project (15%)
- Class participation (10%)

Class participation involves participating in discussions and contributing on in-class projects.

GROUP PROJECTS:

The Group Project will be a complete consulting project providing consulting services to an organization. You will pick your own teams. Teams will be made up of five or six people. The client can be a for-profit or a non-profit entity. The consulting engagement will encompass all of the steps of a consulting engagement: problem identification, proposal, statement of work, budgeting (although no fees will be collected), assessment and engagement, research (including academic literature), implementation plan, and final report. **Groups will turn in the proposal, statement of work and budget the 3rd week of class and present the final report as both an oral presentation and a written report at the end of the semester. All members** of the project team must participate in the consulting project. Between the status report and the final oral presentation, every member of the group must participate in a presentation. Each of these segments will be graded as part of the final project deliverable.

Group Project **presentations** will be due during the last two weeks of the semester.

Each group will produce a **project binder** and a **20-minute presentation**. The binder will include:

- A 10 page engagement summary
- Your proposal
- Statement of work
- An estimated and actual budget
- An assessment and research plan
- Time sheets
- Meeting notes
- Research materials

- Client communications
- Collateral materials

Dates will be assigned in the order topics are approved: the first group will receive its first choice, etc. The binders are due on the day of the presentation.

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

If a group is having difficulty with a member who is not participating fully, you are expected to first attempt to work the problem yourselves. If this is not successful, you are expected to bring the issue to professor immediately. Waiting to bring this to the instructor's attention until the end of the semester will impact the grades of the entire team.

LITERATURE APPLICATION PAPER—MIDTERM:

This is an individual assignment but based on your consulting team project. You will write a 3- to 5-page paper drawing from two or three (no more) peer-reviewed academic articles to address one of the research questions that need to be answered for your client engagement. Basically, you are looking for theory, research, evidence, support for the approach you are recommending to your client.

The paper will utilize research from **academic journals**. *The paper will be written in APA format and failure to follow APA style guidelines will result in a lowered grade.*

REACTION PAPERS:

Reaction paper 1: Reading

Reaction paper 2: Reading

Reaction paper 3: Reading

Reaction paper 4: Training and facilitation projects

BOOKS:

Author: Sue DeWine

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

ISBN: 0-312-24824-5

Author: Ingrid Bens

Title: Facilitation at a Glance
Publication info: GOAL/QPC, 1999

Author: Frank J. Barrett and Ronald E. Fry
Title: Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity
ISBN: 0-78133-877-X

Author: William "E. Arnold and Lynne McClure
Title: Communication Training and Development 2nd Edition
ISBN 0-88133-877-X

Author: Peter Block (3rd Edition) – Check pages
Title: Flawless Consulting
ISBN 0-7879-4803-9

Author: Peter Block
Title: The Flawless Consulting Field Book & Companion
ISBN: 0-7879-4804-7

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

◆ **Week 1, August 29, 2013—Prospective Client Pitches**

Potential clients will be present in class (in person or via Skype) to pitch their projects to you. After the pitches, you will have a chance to speak with the clients and ask them questions. Please e-mail us the names of your group members along with your first and second choice for consulting projects by **Monday, August 4** so that we can confirm groups and clients as quickly as possible, and you can schedule meetings for the following week. We will do our best to match groups with the clients they'd like to work for, but please be aware that you may not be assigned to your first choice.

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue, *The Consultant's Craft: Improving Organizational Communication 2nd edition*, Part 1: Chapters 1 and 2, pp.2-35, Chapter 20, pp. 434-459

Block, Peter, *Flawless Consulting*, Preface to 3rd Edition, Chapters 1, 2, 7, 18 (selected pages will be provided)

NOTE: You should read these chapters *before* the first class.

◆ **Week 2, September 5, 2013—NO CLASS TODAY (Rosh Hashanah)**

Since we don't have class this week, you need to get together with your consulting team during to begin planning for your consulting engagement. You need to work on your

project proposal, costing and work plan. Be prepared to meet with Dr. Weintraub to review these during class next week (September 12).

Required Readings:

DeWine, Chapters 3, pp.36-48.

Arnold, William E., and McClure, Lynne, *Communication Training and Development 2nd Edition*, Chapter 5 pp. 65-80 and Appendix, pp. 167-186.

◆ **Week 3, September 12, 2013—Communication Consulting Basics: Getting the Work and Proposals**

DUE: Draft of group project proposal, costing and work plan

DUE: Reaction paper 1

Activity. We'll do an in-class exercise about how to get the information you need from a client by asking the right questions.

Meetings. You'll have short meetings with Dr. Weintraub during the last hour of class to report on the progress you made last week in your group meetings. You should bring a draft of your project proposal for your client as well as your costing and work plan. Dr. Weintraub will review these with you and help you to edit the proposal before you send it to your client.

Required Readings:

DeWine, Chapters 4 and 5, pp. 49-82.

Block, Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 (selected pages from each chapter will be provided).

◆ **Week 4, September 19—Survey Writing and Research**

Assigned: Literature Application paper

Allie will talk about the research you'll do for your consulting engagements. This includes the original research you'll do for your client—which might involve surveys, interviews, content analysis, etc.—as well as the academic research you'll do for your literature application midterm paper, which will be assigned in class tonight.

Required Readings

These will be posted on Blackboard.

◆ **Week 5, September 26—Training, Development and Facilitation: Critical Consulting Competencies**

Assigned: Training and facilitation projects

Dr. Weintraub will lecture on critical consulting competencies, including training and facilitation. The lecture as well as the required readings will help you with your training and facilitation projects, which will be assigned in class tonight.

Required Readings:

Bens, Ingrid, *Facilitation at a Glance (Reference Text)*
Frank J. Barrett and Ronald E. Fry, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity*

◆ **Week 6, October 3—Strategic Communication**

Due: Reaction paper 2

Required Readings

Ackerman & Eden reading will be posted on Blackboard.

◆ **Week 7, October 10—Change Management**

Due: Reaction paper 3

Allie will talk about change management and there will be in an in class exercise. During the last hour of class there will be time for team meetings, and Allie will be available to answer questions about your literature application papers (due next week).

Required Readings

Required readings will be posted on Blackboard.

◆ **Weeks 8, October 17—Facilitation Projects**

Due: Literature Application paper

Facilitation teams will present their projects in class.

Required Readings:

De Wine, Chapters 6 and 7, pp. 83-141, and Chapter 9, pp. 187-205, Chapter 17, pp. 384-401, Chapter 19, pp. 418-433.

Arnold and McClure, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, pp.1-107 and 10, 11, 12, pp. 135-166

Block, Chapter 19

◆ **Week 9, October 24—Non-Profit Marketing**

We'll have a guest lecturer this week. Gary Wexler will talk about non-profit marketing.

Required Readings

Any required readings will be posted on Blackboard.

◆ **Week 10, October 31—Training Projects**

Training teams will present their projects in class.

◆ **Week 11, November 7—Team Project Status Reports**

Due: Reaction paper 4

Each team will present a 10-minute status update of their consulting project during class. Dr. Weintraub will be out of town, so these reports will be taped, and she'll watch them and provide feedback and advice when she returns.

◆ **Week 12 November 14—Writing as a Consulting Competency**

We'll have a guest lecturer this week. Anne Framroze will talk about writing as a consulting competency.

Required Readings

DeWine, Chapters 8 and 9, pp. 142-205, Chapter 14pp. 318-339, Chapter 18, pp. 402-416.

Block, Chapters 8-10 (selected pages will be provided)

◆ **Week 13 November 21—Crisis Communication and Risk Mitigation**

Dr. Weintraub will lecture on crisis communication and risk mitigation.

Required Readings

Any required readings will be posted on Blackboard

◆ **Week 14 November 28—Thanksgiving**

NO CLASS

Group Project Presentations

◆ **Week 15 December 5—Group Project Presentations**

◆ **Final Exam Week December 12—Group Project Presentations**

Due: All group will turn in their project binders TODAY on the second day of presentations.

COURSE INSTRUCTOR:

Prof. Rebecca Weintraub Ph.D.

Office: ASCJ 324D

Office Hours: Thursday, 3:00 to 6:00 pm and by appointment

E-Mail: weintrau@usc.edu

Phone: (213) 821-0764

Class Time: Thursdays, 6:30-9:30 pm

Rebecca Weintraub has spent more than twenty-five years in the field of strategic communication, executive coaching, 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. She then joined the Hughes Aircraft company, which became Hughes Electronics, where over a fifteen-year period she held a number of positions in communication and total quality in the satellite manufacturing division before becoming Director of Corporate Communications for the Corporation, a position she held for five years. In that position she was responsible for communication strategy and tactics for the corporation as well as providing executive coaching for a variety of Hughes executives. She left Hughes Electronics to join the consulting firm of Towers Perrin where she focused on strategic organizational communication, health and welfare benefits communication strategy, and change management. Her clients included Northrop Grumman, MGM, Mazda, AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals, WellPoint Health Systems, and the L.A. Times.

Dr. Weintraub is currently a Professor of Communication at USC in the Annenberg School for Communication where she is both the Director of the Communication Management Master's Degree Program and the Director of the Center for Corporate and Community Education. She teaches strategic organizational and corporate communication classes in that program. Her Strategic Corporate Communication course is Annenberg's only on-line course for which she was awarded the 2004 Best On-line Teaching award for higher education by the US Distance Learning Association. In addition to her teaching, she provides strategic communication planning, presentation, executive coaching, management training, and facilitation consulting services to organizations in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Her clients have included such organizations as Toyota Motor Sales, Fox Networks, the Dental Health Foundation, Mindjet, the County of Los Angeles, and the Redondo Beach Unified School District. In addition to her consulting work, she serves on the Board of Directors of The Wellness Community South Bay, a cancer support and education organization, the California Communication Council for the American Cancer Society and the Yellowstone Park Foundation Advisory Council.

Dr. Weintraub received her Bachelor's degree from UCLA and her Master's and Ph.D. degrees from USC. She roots for whoever is winning at halftime.

COURSE TA:

Allison Noyes
Office: ASCJ G6 (Basement of West Lobby)
Office Hours: By appointment
E-Mail: anoyes@usc.edu
Phone: (213) 973-8442

Allie Noyes is a doctoral candidate at Annenberg studying strategic organizational communication. Her specific research interests focus on collaboration, culture, and organizational change management. Since coming to Annenberg, Allie has worked on research and training projects with a variety of nonprofit organizations, the U.S. Navy, the World Bank, and the entertainment industry. She is currently conducting her dissertation research on collaborative care capacity at an LA-based hospital. Prior to graduate school, Allie worked in politics and government. She has experience working on both primary and general election campaigns during the 2004 presidential election and three years of public outreach experience at the National Archives and Records Administration.