

Strategic Communication Consulting
CMGT 503
Rebecca Weintraub, Ph.D.
Fall 2014, 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, organizational communication, executive coaching, strategic communication analysis and messaging, large-scale communication event planning and execution, and training.

This class is designed to facilitate learning-by-doing. It is as much a workshop as it is a graduate class. While the professor 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.

Note: This class includes finals week class of Dec 11. You are expected to be in class that night.

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 will be the subject of short written assignments. While there will be opportunity for both question and

discussion of the texts, the material will not be the subject of lecture. 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 (21%)
- Applied research mid-term paper (18%)
- Short facilitation or training project (15%)
- Class participation (6%)

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 professor will invite potential clients to pitch to the class. 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 5th 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 included in the grading 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
- The initial proposal and any subsequent amendments
- Statement of work
- An estimated and actual budget
- An assessment /research plan
- Time sheets

- Meeting notes (including teleconferences)
- Research materials and results
- Client communications
- Collateral materials produced for the client
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Presentation dates will be assigned in the order topics are approved: the first group will receive its first choice, etc. All binders are due on the last day of class.

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 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. The research question must be approved by the professor. Basically, you are looking for theory, research, evidence and support for the approach you are recommending to your client.

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

REACTION PAPERS:

Each reaction paper should be one page, 12 pt font, and 1-inch margins, double-spaced. Be sure to include your name in the header. Please bring two copies of your reaction paper to class on the day it's due. You do not need to use full APA formatting (i.e., no title page required, no references necessary) but you must use APA style for in-text citations. If you need a quick reference guide for APA style citations, please use this website:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

It is important that you do your in-text citations correctly as this may affect your reaction paper grade.

One Reaction Paper will be required to be re-written after you have received graded feedback from the professor. You will turn in both the original paper and the revised paper.

Reaction paper 1 (DUE: Week 4, Sept. 18): Using chapters 5 & 6 from DeWine, how would you explain to a client the importance and the value of research for identifying communication issues and problems and for determining causes and potential solutions?

Reaction paper 2 (DUE: Week 6, Oct 3): Using the Block Flawless Consulting Fieldbook & Companion, compare and contrast two approaches that could be used in the work you do for your client (NOTE: there must be variety among your team members).

Reaction paper 3 (DUE: Week 7, Oct. 10): Using the readings to date, what do you think have been the biggest challenges with your client engagement and how does this inform your perspective on consulting in general?

Reaction paper 4 (DUE: Week 11, Nov. 7): Consider the training or facilitation exercise in which you were a *participant* (NOT the trainer or facilitator) and discuss what you believe makes for an effective exercise of this type. Use Arnold & McClure, Barrett & Fry, and DeWine as appropriate to support your discussion.

Reaction paper 5 Revision (Due no later than Week 13 November 21): Good writing requires the ability to revise based upon feedback. Choose one of your reaction papers and rewrite it taking into account the comments from the professor. You may choose any of your reaction papers and may turn it in at anytime up until November 21. No papers will be accepted after that. **You must include the original paper with the revision.**

BOOKS:

Author: Sue DeWine
Title: The Consultant's Craft: Improving Organizational Communication, any edition
ISBN: 0312248245

Author: Ingrid Bens
Title: Facilitation at a Glance
ISBN: 1576811379

Author: Frank J. Barrett and Ronald E. Fry
Title: Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity
ISBN: 078802163X

Author: William "E. Arnold and Lynne McClure
Title: Communication Training and Development 2nd Edition

ISBN 088133877X

Author: Peter Block (3rd Edition) – Check pages

Title: Flawless Consulting

ISBN 0470620749

Author: Peter Block

Title: The Flawless Consulting Field Book & Companion

ISBN: 0787948047

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

◆ **Week 1, August 28, 2013**—Consulting Basics

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 (p. 2-35), 7 (p. 121-123—focus on the table)

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

◆ **Week 2, September 4, 2013**—Getting the Work

Proposals and problem identification

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

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.

Block, Chapters 3, 4. 5. 6. Pp. 37-128

◆ **Week 3, September 11, 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 choice for consulting projects **as soon as possible** so that we can confirm groups and clients, and you can schedule meetings for the following week. Each group should have **4-5 students**. 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, Chapters 4 and 5, pp. 49-82.

Block, Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14 (ALL)

◆ **Week 4, September 18— Training, Development and Facilitation:
Critical Consulting Competencies**

TO DO: E-mail Dr. Weintraub (weintrau@usc.edu) as soon as possible. In your e-mail, include:

- 1. The first and last names of all members of your groups (please also **CC everyone in your group** as well so that we can confirm that all members listed have agreed to be in the group).*
- 2. The client you'd like to work for.*

*Clients will be assigned on a first come, first serve basis. The first group to **e-mail with the names of all group members** and request a client will be **assigned to that client**. Please note that you must **e-mail** with your group members and choice of client. Once the professor receives an e-mail from a team with group members and their choice of client, she will reply back to confirm with the group and then send an e-mail out to the whole class to let everyone know that client is no longer available.*

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*

Block, Chapter 12 (ALL)

- ◆ *DUE: Reaction paper 1*

◆ **Week 5, September 25— Survey Writing and Research
Guest Lecture**

Note: This is Rosh Ha Shonah and Dr. Weintraub will not be in class. Unless you are observing the holiday, you are expected to be in class for this important lecture. Roll will be taken.

The guest lecturer 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.

Required Readings

These will be posted on Blackboard.

- ◆ *Reminder: Clients are assigned on a first come, first serve basis. The first group to **e-mail with the names of all group members** and request a client will be **assigned to that client**. Please note that you must **e-mail us** with your group members and choice of client. Once the professor receives an e-mail from a team with group members and their choice of client, she will reply back to confirm with the group and then send an e-mail out to the whole class to let everyone know that client is no longer available.*

DUE Electronically: Group project proposal, costing and work plan

◆ **Week 6, October 2—Strategic Communication**

DUE: Reaction paper 2

Required Readings

Ackerman & Eden reading will be posted on Blackboard.

◆ **Week 7, October 9—Training and Development**

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 pp. 327-342

DUE: Reaction paper 3

Work on Literature Application papers!

◆ **Weeks 8, October 16—Facilitation Projects**

Facilitation teams will present their projects in class.

Required Readings:

DeWine, 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 (ALL)

◆ **Week 9, October 23—Writing as a Consulting Competency**

We'll have a guest lecturer this week. Dr. Michael Robinson will talk about writing and editing as a consulting competency. There will be a pre-work writing assignment.

Required Readings

Any required readings will be posted on Blackboard.

◆ **Week 10, October 30—Training Projects**

DUE: Literature Application paper

Training teams will present their projects in class.

◆ **Week 11, November 6—Non-Profit Consulting**

DUE Electronically: Reaction paper 4

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

◆ **Week 12 November 13—Team Presentations**

Each team will present a 10 to 15 minute summary of their consulting engagement. This must include:

Client problem statement

Summary of literature application results

Research plan and status (if completed, present results and implications)

Successes

Problems or Issues or Concerns

Required Readings

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

Block, Chapters 8-10 (ALL)

◆ Week 13 November 20—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 27—Thanksgiving

NO CLASS

Group Project Presentations

◆ Week 15 December 4—Group Project Presentations

◆ Final Exam Week December 11—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.