BUSINESS COMMUNICATION (ECKELMANN)

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Business Communication

Claudia P. Eckelmann

Professor, Business Administration

Diablo Valley College

Semester Project: Company Global Expansion

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Licensing

A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in Back Matter/Detailed Licensing.

1: Project overview

This document describes a semester-long project for a business communication course.

1.1: Learning by doing

Relevance: why do we have to learn this?

The project provides a framework for the students to experience the relevance of learning topics.

The professional (real) world: do businesses use it?

Students participate in a business process, imitating a business situation.

1.2: Parts of the project

Some of the parts can be moved around to parallel a textbook's chapters if so desired.

I recommend the OER text **Business Communication Skills for Managers**.

- Create a business idea
- Active listening
- Effective business meeting
- Online meeting
- Creating and conducting surveys
- Delivering bad news: in person and in writing
- Creating an internal proposal
- Team presentation

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2: Idea for a business

1. Each student comes up with a business idea
2. Create small groups, 4-5 students per group (random, student choice, counting off, deck of cards, ...)
3. Each student presents his/her business idea to the rest of the group
4. Students design a decision-making process to choose one of the business ideas
5. Each group decides on a name and logo for the business

2.1: Purpose

Purpose

- Engage all students and provide reasons to get invested in the first part of the project.
- Student ownership of the decision-making process.
- Team-building process initiation: forming, storming, norming, performing

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2.2: Activity

Instruction: Think of one product (this can be a thing or a service) you would like to sell to others. Write it in your notebook, just one or two sentences.

Example: I would like to sell self-cleaning cat litter boxes.

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2.3: Persuade

> This page is a draft and is under active development.

Activity
- Groups of 5 (or insert desired group size here)
- Take turns presenting your idea for a product/business.
- As a group, create a process to select one of them.

How to persuade: confident, logical, benefit to the audience, choose impactful words.

Resource: PowerPoint_CPE

Resource: Rhetorical Strategies
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/establishing_arguments/rhetorical_strategies.html

Resource: Group Decision Making https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/group-work/group-decision-making

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2.4: Next step

Students are divided into small groups and each group has chosen a business, the team formation continues.

Active listening is an important skill when working with others. Let's have a little fun practicing that skill.

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3: Active listening

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3.1: Purpose

How do I know that I am listening?

- What is the difference between listening and hearing?
- In American culture, what can I do to show that I am listening?
- Good listening benefits personal relationships.
- Good listening helps us create and maintain productive relationships.
- Good listening sends a powerful message to those with whom we interact: I care.

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3.2: Activity

In-class activity

1. **Put students in pairs.** I usually have them count off "One, two, one, two..." and then have them self select which One partners with which Two. If it's an uneven number of students, I participate.
2. **The two students face each other.**
3. **Ask students in each pair to decide**: one is Blue, the other Green--or any other pair of something you like to use.
4. **Blue goes first:** for 1 minute, without stopping, describe what you did last weekend/over summer/over the holidays… **Green:** demonstrate the best listening skills.
5. **Green goes next.** For 1 minute, without stopping, describe what you did last weekend/over summer/over the holidays… **Blue:** demonstrate the worst listening skills.
6. After 1 minute, put together 2-3 student pairs and ask the Blues to compile a list of how they knew that their partners were listening; if you want, also ask to list how they felt about that.
7. Compile a class list on the whiteboard: active listening best practices and the positive emotions it produced.

Extention

- Compile a similar list of emotions from those who were in the Green talking group--Blue didn't listen to what they said.
- Possible conclusion statement: as listeners, it is our behavior (which is under our control) that leads to emotions in our conversation partner. It's a powerful tool in our toolbox.

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3.3: Next step

- Steven Covey in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* tells how the CEO of a multinational corporation with 35,000 employees came to acknowledge the importance of listening: 'He said, "My wife told me that I don't listen to our daughter." After he honed his listening skills, he and his daughter grew closer, and he realized the value of listening as applied to business.'
- When we listen, we demonstrate that we are paying attention to the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the other person (seeing the world through their eyes). This increases our capacity to influence, motivate, develop, or serve people effectively.

Our listening skills will be a useful tool in the business meetings we'll practice next.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Effective small business meetings

4.1: Purpose

Practice conducting productive meetings

"The biggest sources for frustration of the business leaders surveyed was unnecessary or poorly planned meetings wasting their time." https://www.inc.com/david-finkel/5-meeting-best-practices-every-leader-should-follow.html

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4.2: Create a meeting agenda

As an instructor, I provide:

- Meeting agenda template; for example, one of these https://templates.office.com/en-us/minutes
- List of requirements

  - Meeting length: 15 min
  - Roles that need to be assigned and noted on the agenda:

    - Facilitator: lead the meeting
    - Timekeeper: keeps the meeting on track to achieve the purpose within the set time
    - Recorder: takes meeting notes
    - Includer: encourages all team members to participate equally

  - Purpose statement: decide on the company's name and logo
  - First agenda item: review agenda
  - Allocate duration/time for each agenda item

Resource: What's on the Agenda? https://blog.asana.com/2017/12/run-effective-meetings-agenda-tips/#close

Resource: How to Design an Effective Agenda https://hbr.org/2015/03/how-to-design-an-agenda-for-an-effective-meeting

4.2: Create a meeting agenda is shared under a not declared license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

4.3: Conduct first in-class meeting

Decide on your company's name and logo

1. Review: what is the duty of
   1. Facilitator
   2. Timekeeper
   3. Recorder
   4. Includer

2. Conduct the in-class meeting: start and end on time (hard stop).

Outcome

Groups present their company name, logo, and product.

4.4: Meeting minutes

Why do we create meeting minutes?

- Inform those who didn't attend of outcomes
- Keep track of what was decided during the meeting

1. Write the minutes as soon as possible after every meeting. I highly recommend using the meeting agenda document and adding a column for the minutes in bullet point format.
2. Use neutral, objective words
3. Use the same verb tense throughout

Include:

- Date and time of the meeting
- List meeting participants and list those who were expected but were absent
- Decisions made about each agenda item, for example:
  - Actions taken or agreed to be taken
  - Who will do what by when
  - Next steps
  - Voting outcomes—what was the topic of the vote; outcome (how many for what)
- Next meeting date and time

Distribute the minutes ASAP, preferably within 24 hours of the end of the meeting.

Resource: How to Write Effective Meeting Minutes https://www.wildapricot.com/articles/how-to-write-meeting-minutes#record-taking

4.5: Second in-class meeting

Setting the stage

You already decided on your company name, what your company does, and a logo. As employees of [insert your company name here], you will create an agenda, conduct a meeting, and create the meeting minutes in class today.

Purpose of the meeting

Select two (2) countries that would be good candidates for your company's expansion.

Activity

1. Create an agenda for your 10-min meeting. Include the purpose statement and who is taking on which one of these roles: Facilitator, Recorder, Timekeeper, Includer
2. Hold your meeting. Consider what your product is and where in the world your target market is.
3. Deliver your two (2) country choices to the Chair of the Board [your instructor]. S/he will inform you which one of the two countries you will expand to (no duplications)
4. Create meeting minutes.

Tip: allow a full 90-minute class meeting, if possible in a computer lab

4.6: Next step

Now that we practiced our business meetings in person, it's time to use video technology for a meeting.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Virtual (online) Meetings

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5.1: Purpose

For many businesses, working from home has become the norm; most of their activities are now taking place online. We're also likely to see this massive change carry on into the future.

And for good reason.

- 85% of businesses state their productivity has increased after going remote.
- 50% of remote workers report that it has reduced their sick days. Fifty-six percent of those working from home take fewer leaves of absence.
- Remote workers are 57% more likely to be satisfied than the average American worker.

https://www.business.com/articles/ho...ness-meetings/, retrieved 01.19.2021

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5.2: Setting the stage

You have been assigned to a task force that will prepare and conduct a workshop for those of your colleagues who will actually move to your chosen expansion country. The workshop's purpose is threefold:

- **Create positive anticipation**: your colleagues are excited and worried; nervous and eager; thrilled and apprehensive about moving to a different country for two years. Your workshop needs to lower the anxiety and up the enthusiasm.
- **Prepare your colleagues professionally**: what is different in business etiquette between the expansion country and the US; what do your colleagues need to know to not embarrass themselves and the company while doing business in the expansion country.
- **Introduce tourist attractions**: it's not all about work; what fun things can your colleagues look forward to?

You will conduct a video meeting (Zoom) to decide on five general areas for your workshop.

5.3: Virtual meeting instructions for students

The handout is attached as a Word document.

Resources:

1. Student virtual meeting instructions

2. Article: Harvard Business Review on virtual teams

3. Article: Harvard Business Revue on how to run a meeting

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5.4: Next step

We have created and worked with our small group members; we have conducted meetings and created documents to make those meetings successful; we have used our active listening skills to support our teams' success.

And now we'll work together to design a survey, get responses, and analyze the results. Exciting isn't it?!

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Survey

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6.1: Purpose

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The magic of Google Forms and its graphical dashboard view is so very useful as we prepare to make an argument for or against something.

In business, we make presentations that argue one side or another a lot, and Google Forms can be a useful tool.

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6.2: Activity

1. Create **four questions** that will give you some general insight about what people who are moving to [your expansion county] want to know before they move.
2. Use four different types of questions:
   a. https://www.researchnow.com/blog/8-most-common-types-of-survey-questions/
3. Using a Google Form, set up your survey questions
4. Submit the link to your survey to the Canvas assignment

Conduct the survey:

1. Each team member sends the survey link to at least four (4) people (outside of our class) and verifies completion.
2. Review the Google Forms dashboard and graphs before our next class meeting.
3. Prepare a short summary of your findings to present to our classmates

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6.3: Next step

We now have a good idea of what people who move to another country want to know about. Before we use our analysis and the graphs, we have to give bad news to one of our colleagues who had signed up to move.

Giving bad news effectively is a skill. Thankfully, there are useful processes for both, in-person and text-based. Let's find out more!

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Bad news in person and in writing

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7.1: Purpose

It's every manager's least favorite task: delivering bad news. Maybe your company is closing a facility. Or letting people go. Or you have an employee who isn't getting that coveted promotion or has been denied an overseas posting, or can't take an expensive training course.

In any case, your impulse is to soften the blow. After all, you're a caring person, and you'd like to make a difficult situation easier. So you start the conversation by talking about something else. And when it's time to deliver the news, you try to sugarcoat it.[1]

And, as with everything else, practice makes better. Let's do it!

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[1]https://www.inc.com/alison-davis/need-to-deliver-bad-news-to-employees-science-says-do-this.html accessed 01.27.2021

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7.2: Bad news in person- LARA

What are our goals as we deliver bad news?

- Acceptance—strive to help the receiver understand and accept the bad news.
- Positive image—promote a good image of yourself and your organization. Strive to reduce bad feelings. Convey fairness.
- Message clarity—make the message so clear that no further correspondence is necessary.
- Protection—avoid creating legal liability.
- Avoid defamation—a false published statement that harms an individual's reputation
    - Libel—written defamation
    - Slander—spoken defamation

Expect these reactions to bad news

- Disappointment
- Irritation
- Anger

Prepare for the meeting

- Gather all the information.
- Prepare and rehearse.
- Explain past, present, and future.
- Consider taking a partner.
- Think about timing.
- Be patient; make time for the person to have an emotional reaction.

Conversation steps: LARA

1. Listen
2. Affirm
3. Respond
4. Add information/Ask questions

Resources:

1. LARA method, PDF document
2. CLARA Guide, PDF document

7.2: Bad news in person- LARA is shared under a not declared license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

7.3: Bad new in writing- four parts

What are our goals as we deliver bad news?

- Acceptance—strive to help the receiver understand and accept the bad news.
- Positive image—promote a good image of yourself and your organization. Strive to reduce bad feelings. Convey fairness.
- Message clarity—make the message so clear that no further correspondence is necessary.
- Protection—avoid creating legal liability.
- Avoid defamation—a false published statement that harms an individual's reputation
  - Libel—written defamation
  - Slander—spoken defamation

Expect these reactions to bad news

- Disappointment
- Irritation
- Anger

The writing process for bad news: Indirect Strategy

1. Buffer
2. Reason
3. Bad news
4. Closing

Resource: Writing bad-news letters, with several examples; accessed 01.27.2021

7.4: Activity

Setup:

Your manager informs you that a budget review revealed that the expansion team has to be cut by one employee. And it's your job to inform that employee.

To do:

1. One of your colleagues who has volunteered to move to [your expansion country] for two years and who has prepared for months for this is now being told by you that he/she is no longer part of the expansion team.
2. Carefully prepare for your in-person conversation.
3. In your small group, take turns to give and receive the bad news.
4. If time permits, ask for volunteers from each small group to conduct the conversation for the class.

7.5: Assignment

Setup:

Your manager informs you that a budget review revealed that the expansion team has to be cut by one employee. And it's your job to inform that employee.

To do:

1. One of your colleagues who has volunteered to move to [your expansion country] for two years and who has prepared for months for this is now being told by you that he/she is no longer part of the expansion team.
2. Write a letter to your colleague informing him/her of the decision.

7.6: Next step

Delivering bad news is now a tool in our tool box. Time to take a deep breath and return to our survey responses. Let's use the data and graphs in a short proposal. On we go!

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8: Proposal

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8.1: Purpose

Most large businesses use internal proposals. The purpose of an internal proposal is usually **to persuade** your boss or supervisor to:

- Change a process or policy
- Purchase products and/or services
- Participate in something
- Use company resources like time, facilities, technology

An internal proposal uses persuasive, fact-based, and verifiable language and messages.

It always includes a benefit statement: why should the proposal be accepted? What's in it for the company? For example, improvements in productivity, profitability, or name recognition.

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8.2: Activity- document setup

Proposal

As a team, create a proposal to conduct a one-day workshop for your colleagues who will be moving to your expansion country. You will need to decide on:

- the date and time for your workshop
- the location for your workshop - cost of rental
- the food and drink - budget?
- the agenda - include ice breaker, informational session, guest speaker, meals, ...
- the cost of the time away from work for each participant plus the presenters (your team members)

Include your survey results to support your agenda and workshop proposal. Conclusion: you have the **data to prove that your proposed workshop/presentation will assist** your colleagues in getting a good start in [insert your chosen country here].

To do:

Using a wiki tool like Google Docs, set up a team document with these main areas:

Heading 2:

1. Problem/Purpose
2. Scope
3. Planning/Timeline
4. Resources
5. Qualifications
6. Budget
7. Evaluation/Assessment

Resource: using headings https://support.office.com/en-us/article/add-a-heading-3eb8b917-56dc-4a17-891a-a026b2c790f2

8.3: Short proposal assignment

1. Problem/Purpose statement
2. Scope
3. Planning process
4. Resources
5. Qualifications
6. Evaluation
7. Budget

Then, for each of the seven (7) parts, include the necessary information. Whenever possible, use:

- numbered or bulleted lists
- parallel construction
- business vocabulary (no slang)

RECOMMENDATION: check out sample short reports/proposals

Include in your team's proposal document for the one-day workshop:

- Cover page: Your company name and logo
- Headings: the seven (7) parts— how-to https://support.office.com/en-us/article/add-a-heading-3eb8b917-56dc-4a17-891a-a026b2c790
- Information for the seven (7) parts using business communication best practices
- Four (4) graphs that represent the results of your four survey questions; use the data to support your argument for the workshop's usefulness; place the graphs under Problem/Purpose—show that you understand the problem and that you have a realistic solution
- Conclusion: you have the data to prove that your proposed workshop/presentation will assist your colleagues in getting a good start in [insert your chosen country here].

Upload your proposal to the Canvas assignment.

Resources:

How to use headings in a Word document https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/...rs=en-us&ad=us

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8.4: Next step

Good news--your proposal was accepted and the company leadership supports your ideas. Now it's time to prepare the actual workshop. Let's go!

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9: Team presentation- Conduct the Workshop

9.1: Purpose

The overall purpose of your presentation is to create **positive anticipation** – that this is a great opportunity for the company **AND** for your colleagues who will move to and live in the expansion country.

Help your colleagues to hit the ground running as they meet with potential customers and/or competitors in the new country. And don't forget their family members: they want to do some sightseeing and explore the city and country.

NOTE: You are presenting to your colleagues, so you will **not talk** about your product or service, or explain your company. Your colleagues know all that! Do drop your company's name every now and then.

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9.2: Team presentation prep

Required

Upload your **outline** and PPT to the Canvas assignment.

- All team members must participate equally.
- Attention getter: music, dress, role play… start with a bang!
- Introduce all team members.
- 3S: Say what you'll say; Say it; Say what you just said
- Show a map of the country in the world, and a map of the country itself
- Time: 15 minutes - not shorter than 12 minutes, not longer than 17 min
- PPT with focus on images, not text (think: 3x3 rule)
- Engaging body language, voice modulation, gestures, movement
- Signposts
- 3-5 main points
- End with a call to action

Optional

Bring something from your chosen country – food, music, dress … anything that gets us excited about the expansion. Let's make it lively and positive!

Tags recommended by the template: article:topic

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9.3: Activity

Create your PPT and outline for your presentation; all team members have to participate

Example presentation: Expansion to Germany; 15 min

Our business communication course has a class max of 45. I create groups of 5 students and schedule two class meetings for the presentations.

1. **Attention getter**: Nena's "99 Luftballons" and video Tesla on the Autobahn (no speed limit in Germany)
2. **Preview**: the main points
3. **Map** of the world
4. **Map** of Germany
5. Main point 1--The Weather
6. Main point 2--The Food
7. Main point 3--Business etiquette
8. Main point 4--Four interesting customs
9. **Review**: the main points; call to action
10. **Sources**

Assessment

- The classmates who are not presenting are acting as the colleagues of the presenters; those employees who will move to [the expansion country].
- Each student receives two blank eval forms; the instructor assigns two presenting teams to be evaluated by each student.
- Student evaluations: 50% of the team grade; Instructor evaluation: 50% of team grade

Resources:

- How to Nail a Group Presentation--handout
- Example PPT--Germany presentation
- Team presentation evaluation form

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Index

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

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Overview

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Webpages: 55

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By Page