1-2014

# COMX 423.01: Practical Issues in Organizational Communication

Betsy Wackernagel Bach
*University of Montana - Missoula*, betsy.bach@umontana.edu

# COMX 423

## Practical Issues in Organizational Communication


**SPRING, 2014**

*Course Information*

Tuesdays and Thursdays
2:10 – 3:30 pm
LA 302

*Instructor Information*

Betsy Wackernagel Bach, Ph.D.
Office: LA 415
Phone: 243.6119
Email: betsy.bach@umontana.edu

*Office Hours*

Mondays – 2:00 – 3:30 pm
Thursdays - 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm
And by appointment

*"Trust and a high sense of ethics are key factors in establishing a successful consultant/client relationship." BWB*

## Required Reading

You will need to purchase one textbook for this course. Additional, *and also required,* readings are found on the course Moodle site. The site can be accessed by going to the umonline website. The textbook we will use is:

Beebe, S. A., Mottet, T. P., & Roach, K. D. (2013). *Training and development: Enhancing communication and leadership skills.* Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

## Course Description

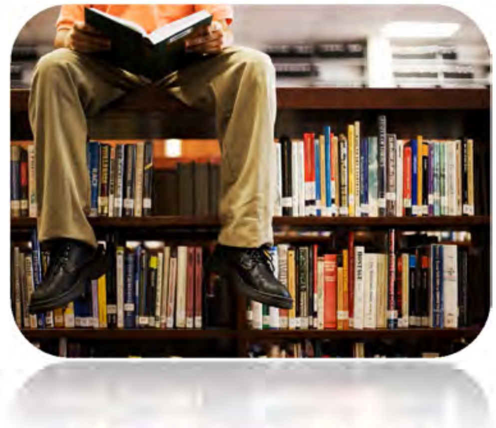
This course is designed to introduce students to the theoretical and practical issues involved in communication training and consultation. Following an introduction and overview of several theoretical models, students will become familiar with the "nuts and bolts" of communication training and consultation. Carrying out a consultation project (e.g., contracting for a project and using the Needs Centered Training Model) 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. Articulate several different theories of organizational change and innovation;
3. Identify several different training and consultation models and use at least one of these models to conduct a consultation;
4. Enter into a written contractual agreement with a client;
5. Complete all 8 steps of the Needs Assessment Training Model;
6. Articulate what consumers of consulting identify as effective consultation behaviors.
7. Adapt training to different audiences (and actually design a project doing such);
8. Evaluate both the client's and trainees' perceptions of the consultation;
9. Discuss both the personal and professional ethical implications of consultation;
10. Conduct an actual training session for a client of your choosing.



*While I understand the need to keep in contact with friends, I respectfully request that you refrain from texting or checking social media while in class. It is distracting and I can't help but interpret it as lack of engagement. I appreciate your help!*

## 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.

*Get updates on COMM Department happenings by "friending" the Department Facebook page*

# Instructional Policies

1. Active student participation (in the form of contribution to discussion and involvement in class activities) is instrumental for success in this course; therefore, attendance is not only expected, it is **required**. I will take attendance at every class. 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 a 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.
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.
7. Extra credit is NOT available.

**All coursework must be completed for a student to pass this class.**

# Course Requirements

*I plan three formal assignments and five quizzes. The weight for each is as follows:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Field Interview | 50 points | 10% |
| Adaptation to a Target Population | 75 points | 15% |
| Quizzes | 100 points | 20% |
| Training Project | 150 points | 30% |
| Presentation of Training Project | 50 points | 10% |
| Participation | 75 points | 15% |
| TOTAL | 500 points | 100% |

*A = Excellence in all assignments, highly motivated, innovative ideas, engaged in all aspects of the class*

*B = Above average in all work*

*C = Completion of all projects, satisfactory class participation*

*D = Under prepared for class, little participation*

*F = Incomplete work, poor participation, more than three unexcused absences.*

# Course Outline

**For a complete listing of, and direct links to, the required readings, see the course Moodle site. Reading for non-textbook readings and PowerPoint slides for lectures can also be downloaded from the site.**

*January*

1/28 and 1/30 – Course Introduction; Profit, Perils, and Sins of Consultants

*February*

2/04 and 2/06 – Theories of Change and Innovation
2/11 and 2/13 –Consulting Models; Consultant Roles
2/18 and 2/20 – Project #1 DUE (NO CLASS 2/18 – BB at WSCA)
2/25 and 2/27 - Project #1 DUE (NO CLASS 2/25 – BB at UW-O)

*March*

3/04 and 3/06 –Resistance to Change; Entry
3/11 and 3/13 – Needs Centered Training Model , Steps 1 and 2
3/18 and 3/20 – Needs Centered Training Model, Steps 3-5
3/25 and 3/27 - How Adults Learn (NO CLASS 3/27 – BB at NCA-Chicago)

**See November and December on page 5.**

## SPECIAL NOTE

### Compensation:

Since you will be required to complete assignments in groups outside of class, I will compensate you for out of class time. As such, there will be times when class will not meet, thereby giving your group time to meet and plan.


### Quizzes:

We will have 5 quizzes. They will be announced in advance and will be based on the readings of both the course text and ancillary readings. You will also receive reading guides for the ancillary readings.

*April*

4/01 and 4/03 – NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
4/08 and 4/10 - Project #2 DUE (NO CLASS 4/10 – BB at NJCC)
4/15 and 4/17 – Project #2 - Needs Centered Training Model, Steps 6-7
Contract for Project #3 Due
4/22 and 4/24 - Needs Centered Training Model, Steps 6-7
4/29 and 5/01 – Needs Centered Training Model, Step 8

*May*

5/06 and 5/08 - Ethics and Professionalism
5/08 – Project #3 DUE
5/15– EXAM WEEK - Project #3 – THURSDAY 8:00 – 10:00 am

# Guide for Success

1. Attend class! As much of this course revolves around application of concepts using the case study method, most of the learning that occurs comes through discussion. It is almost impossible to "get the notes" from class.

2. Do not text or otherwise use social media during class. I find it distracting and disrespectful, so please refrain from checking your phones during class.

3. Make sure you review the grading criteria for each assignment and include all of the parts requested in your paper or presentation.

4. I expect all presentations to be professional. That is, introduce all group members, begin with an overview of what you will discuss, and provide a summary. Make sure that PowerPoint presentations are professional and devoid of typos.

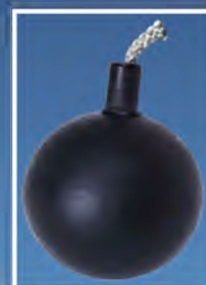
5. As in any situation, if you MUST miss a class, please let me and your group members know if your absence.

6. If you must leave early for some reason, wait until the person speaking has finished.

**SPECIAL NOTE**

## Succeeding in Bach's Class

If you want to do well in Bach's class (and don't want to bomb), be sure to read the "Guide for Success in Bach's Classes" in this newsletter.



## Group Participation:

Half of your final participation grade will be given by your group members for your role in working with the group. Be sure that you pull your weight and contribute equally to all group activities to ensure a good grade from your peers.

# 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 the Moodle site.
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.

# Paper/Project #2 – Adaptation of Training Strategies to a Specific Audience

Objectives

1. To identify and describe instructional strategies which might work best with individuals in your target population.
2. To practice parts of the Needs Centered Training Model before you use them with your client in Project #3.
3. To get feedback on a writing assignment using parts of the NCTM prior to writing Project #3.

Procedures

1. Identify a specific target population. This will be a group of your choice. The key here is to argue what makes them unique and how you will adapt or tailor your training to this specific group (e.g., nurses, middle school children, foreign students, teaching assistants, etc.). This group **must** be different than the group you are using for Project #3.
2. Identify special considerations for this audience, where you explain, citing sources in *addition* to the text, how they are unique and deserves adaptation of your training strategies. You should, for example, identify the particular learning styles of your audience and argue for how your training methods are suitable for them. You will have to make some assumptions as you will not have a real group to train. The group will be of your construction (again, a group that you can identify—the elderly, new mothers, etc.).
3. Identify two training objectives for this population, and explain how they are observable, measurable, specific and/or attainable.
4. Identify at least two different training methods for this population, and a) argue the advantages of each method, b) note how they are best used in your overall curriculum design, and c) what you will do to make your lesson successful. Be sure to reference class readings as you argue for your methods.
5. Write a training plan using either the descriptive, outline, or multicolumn format. To do this, you will need to identify a particular topic in which to train them (e.g., teaching computer skills to the elderly, training teaching assistants on the process of listening, etc.). Briefly explain why you chose the format you did. You will need to read ahead in the BMR text to learn more about writing training plans.
6. Prepare a 5-7-page paper that contains the above information (attach your simulation and training plan as appendices).
7. 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 the procedures stated above are met.

2. The extent to which your paper and your presentation ***integrates course readings and demonstrates that you can synthesize and evaluate what you have read and apply it to a training project.***

3. The extent to which your paper is clearly organized, well written, and innovative.

4. The extent to which your PowerPoint presentation is professional and takes into account the discussion PowerPoint presentations we had in class.

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

* Training physicians in interview techniques.
* Training administrative assistants in conflict management skills.
* Teaching suicide prevention strategies to Resident Assistants so they can assist their residents.
* Training 6th grade students about the effects of bullying.
* Training first year college students about date rape.
* Training college student wait staff how to increase their tips.
* Teaching listening behaviors to hearing impaired adults.
* Training elders to handle the move from their own homes to assisted living.
* Teaching senior citizens to create a Facebook page and how to use it to connect with others.

## Project #3 – Design and Presentation of Workshop or Other Consulting Activity

<u>Rationale</u>

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.

<u>Procedure</u>

1. Find a client on your own. This is often the hardest part of the assignment, so begin EARLY!

2. Engage in all steps required to develop and produce a training project (or other related consulting activity) as discussed in readings and in class. This includes contracting as well as all eight steps of Beebe, Mottet and Roach's *Needs Centered Training Model.*

3. Provide at least two hours of consultation/training.

<u>Process</u>

After your complete your project, you are to produce a formal paper 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 as *Appendix A*)
    a. Why did you include the items that you did in your contract?
    b. What worked well during the process of contracting?
    c. What changes would you make?
4. A discussion of your needs assessment. How did you assess organizational needs (e.g., a SWOT or PESTLE analysis, if applicable)? How did you assess individual trainee needs (attach any surveys or tools you used as *Appendix B*).
5. The 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. For example, how did you use set induction, stimulus variation, provide closure, etc.?
7. The content presented during your workshop and the training methods used to convey this information (lecture, etc.). Why did you select these particular methods? Explain why you chose the content and methods that you did.
8. Discuss your Training Plan. How did you determine the amount of detail included and how did you plan for contingencies? Attach a copy of your Training Plan in either descriptive, outline or multicolumn format in *Appendix C*. Include all training materials NOT included in the Participants' Guide in this appendix.
9. Discuss your Participants' Guide, and include a copy in *Appendix D*. What did you consider as you developed and finalized the guide?
10. Discuss the actual training or consultation in terms of environment, and your connection/immediacy with trainees. What was successful and what could you improve for the future?
11. The tools used to assess trainees' learning outcomes (please include a copy of the instrument as well as a summary of the results in *Appendix E*). Make sure that you measure cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes as discussed in class, as well as your effectiveness as trainers and client satisfaction. Also discuss your evaluation meeting with the client in terms of what went well and what you would change in the future.
12. A discussion of what you learned overall about the training/consulting process.
13. Please make sure that your paper has an introduction/overview, headings for each of the above sections, a summary, and is formatted using either APA or MLA style.

<u>Evaluative Criteria</u>

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.

Evaluative Criteria (cont'd)

4. The extent to which you present your project in a professional manner.
5. An evaluation by the client of the project's effectiveness.

Class Presentation

You are also required to make a presentation to the class about what you observed. The best presentations are those that cover what you perceive to be the most interesting aspects of your training and consultation, and are formally presented using PowerPoint. Make sure that you do the following in your presentation:

1. make sure that every person in your group talks;
2. dress as if you are giving a formal presentation;
3. talk for 20 minutes;
4. provide an introduction to the group and an overview of what you will be doing. Introduce all group members;
5. end your presentation with a discussion of what you learned about training and consultation over the course of this project.

## A Strong Paper Will Have:

*Development of Ideas* – ideas focused on the topic and fully developed through specific details and compelling examples; clear, logical thinking; understanding of the complexities of the topic;
*Organization of Ideas* – organization of ideas appropriate for the purpose and audience; a strong, purposeful introduction, smooth transitions; a satisfying and purposeful ending;
*Language Choice* – language choices that are well-controlled and very effective for the purpose and audience; strong language proficiency;
*Conventions* – few, if any, errors in grammar usage and mechanics;
*Integration of Resources* – sources that are used effectively in relevant, thorough, specific, and intentional ways; Accurate in-text citations and bibliography; appropriate and effective use of quotations, summaries and paraphrasing.