

**Aristotle's Rhetoric:  
How it Plays into Effect between Managers and Consultants at a University Speaking  
Center**

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### **Introduction**

This paper looks at a mid-size state university's speaking center. At this speaking center, managing peers oversee consultants for hour-long shifts, and those who work together during these hour-long shifts are referred to as shift families. These families remain the same for the entire semester, and so effective personal communication between them is essential for making sure the center runs smoothly.

While there are benefits to having shift families within a speaking center setting, there can be some conflicts and miscommunications between managing consultants (hereafter managers) and communication consultants (hereafter consultants). Changing shift families, the different managerial styles of each consultant on shift, as well as the different interpersonal communication styles every consultant has, can lead to these miscommunications and conflicts on shifts.

To navigate the complexities of shift work, effective managers often incorporate a variety of persuasive strategies. Richard M. Perloff (2010) states that persuasion is, "just about anything that involves molding or shaping attitudes" (p. 4). In simplified terms this means that persuasion is changing someone's ideas to align with yours. But how does one persuade? This research paper will look at the use of Aristotle's Rhetoric between managers and consultants within the speaking center.

This research paper will look at an overview of Aristotle's Rhetoric between

managers and consultants on shift. I will analyze the way Aristotle's Rhetoric influenced consultants' responses to managers' requests based on interactions in the speaking center during the fall 2018 semester. It will focus on the importance of rhetoric in better understanding interpersonal communication and conflict management within a speaking center setting, as well as the need for more focus to be put on the use of rhetoric within peer power dynamics.

### **Literature Review**

Aristotle's Rhetoric belongs to the rhetorical tradition of interpersonal communication studies. According to Aryanitis and Karampatzos (2011), "Aristotle's Rhetoric focuses on the persuasiveness of statements toward broader classes of people, rather than a single individual" (p. 849). This means that Aristotle's Rhetoric is targeting groups of individuals together over the actual individuals themselves. When one attempts to persuade using Aristotle's Rhetoric, one tailors their arguments to the entire room, which makes it an ideal framework for this study.

### **Observations**

There are two primary shifts that were observed for this research paper. Shift A had one manager and four consultants on shift. Shift B had one manager and three consultants on shift. Both managers have been in this leadership role for over a year

and have been working at the speaking center for over two years. All of the managers and consultants that were observed identified as female and were of ages varying from nineteen to twenty-three.

The manager on shift A would hold meetings at the beginning of every shift to talk about what needed to be done during down time (time when there were no clients in the center for consultations). During these meetings she would delegate tasks, first by asking who wanted to do what, but assigning tasks if the consultants were not responsive. She used her ethos by telling consultants under her about her history and time put in at the center during their first few shifts together. She would also reiterate her credibility as a manager whenever the consultants under her began to get off task or ignore her. She would also utilize logos by providing thorough explanations for each of the tasks that she assigned.

Unlike the manager on Shift A, the manager on Shift B opted to rely almost solely on her pathos. When this manager assigned tasks, she avoided using logos, which was noticeable by her lack of explanation for delegating jobs. She also never took the time to use her ethos by establishing her credibility as a manager with her shift; instead she focused on making all consultants feel included and equal. She would make a point to personally talk to and connect with each consultant on shift. This manager would start off each shift by welcoming the consultants and asking them how they were and what was new in their personal life.

### Analysis

The manager on Shift A was able to maintain authority in the center while in a managerial role while the manager on Shift B was treated more as a friend or equal than someone in charge. This being said, the use of pathos by the manager on Shift B did

contribute to the consultants' willingness to help. However, the manager on Shift A was more effective in delegating and getting tasks completed during downtime at the center. The manager on Shift B had to repeat herself if she wanted to get the consultants to do what she asked and stay on task. Managers should listen to their consultants and be there to answer all questions; however, to gain the respect required to get consultants to do what is asked of them the first time around, managers must be assertive with their delivery and provide thorough examples and explanations.

### Conclusion

When in a managerial role within a speaking center environment, one must utilize ethos, pathos, and logos in a balanced and informed way. This research paper has ultimately shown that, while there is a lot that goes into being an effective manager, an understanding of rhetorical tools and their effects is an essential aspect that should be included in manager training.

### References

- Arvanitis, A., & Karampatzos, A. (2011). Negotiation and Aristotle's rhetoric: Truth over interests? *Philosophical Psychology*, 24(6), 845-845.
- Perloff, R. M. (2010). *Dynamics of persuasion: Communication and attitudes in the twenty-first century* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.