Communication Problem #3: Working as a team to solve a complex communication problem

**Keywords**: collaboration, teamwork, communication, proposal, memo, progress reports, presentation, problem-solving, design

**Course outcomes addressed**: (1) Analyze the audience, purpose, and context of technical communication projects, including cultural and ethical considerations, (2) Create technical documents of varied genres to solve practical problems, (3) Write effective technical prose, (4) Create documents and graphics using principles of effective information design, (5) Collaborate on technical communication projects, (6) Critically evaluate and choose technologies and tools that are appropriate for technical communication projects.

**The communication problem**

This assignment asks you to come together in a group and work together to solve a complex communication problem. Your communication problem will vary from group to group throughout the class, as each group may have a different topic/case study.

Your goal is to come up with a solution for your case study’s problem. You will begin to do this through a series of documents that will help you build upon that solution week by week, starting with a short project proposal, all the way to a presentation of your solution and the final deliverable as well.

**Rationale of the communication problem**

Both as a student and as a professional in the workplace, learning how to collaborate well with others and be a part of a team is an essential skill. Working together with your group to propose solutions, work through various ideas, and co-author and co-design documentation will allow you to learn and practice new skills and technologies in order to be successful. These skills are not limited to the classroom, as there may be instances where your leadership skills, collaboration skills, and problem-solving skills will aid in you in becoming a better professional, regardless of the field you’re in.

**Deliverables (550 total points)**

* *Short project proposal – 1 to 2 pages (100 points)*
  + Outline case solution/proposed deliverable
* *Progress Reports (3 each, 33.3 points each)*
  + Formats: adapted memo, professional email, Skype call
* *Oral Presentation (150 points)*
  + Can be standard face to face presentation with PowerPoint, voiceover slideshow using a program like Screencast-o-matic or similar, or some other format.
* *Final Deliverable (200 points)*
  + May vary by group, depending on the Case Study, the group’s strengths, and the writing situation.

**Tentative Schedule**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 3/30 | In-class library research presentation day |
| 4/2 | Short project proposal due to Blackboard by midnight  (this is the memo template I sent out and posted to BB on 3/28) |
| 4/9 | Progress report 1 (formal email) emailed through Blackboard to instructor by midnight |
| 4/11 | Make appointments for progress report 2 (Skype meeting) with instructor |
| 4/13-14 | Skype meetings with instructor (progress report 2)  **NO CLASS 4/13** |
| 4/18 | **No class – team work day** |
| 4/23 | Progress report 3 (memo) due to Blackboard by midnight |
| 4/25 | **No class – team work day** |
| 4/27 | In class peer critique day  Teams will share final documents (to this point) with other teams for discussion/critique |
| 5/1 | Submit presentation materials to Blackboard by midnight |
| 5/2 | CP3 presentations |
| 5/4 | CP3 presentations continued, if needed |
| 5/5 | Final CP3 due to Blackboard my midnight |

**Communication problem documents**

**Short proposal**

This document will detail your team’s plan for completing CP3. You are writing this document to me, your instructor, not your client. You are proposing the actions you will take to complete this project. This document should include the following content:

1. What shape your final client-based proposal will take. For example, will it be a formal text-based proposal, a selection of web-based content + a descriptive memo, or something else?
   * Identify why you made these decisions – why are they the best for your particular writing situation?
   * Integrate whatever research helped lead you to this decision - one on one interviews, internet research, advice from professors or bosses, etc.
2. What role will everyone on your team take on? There are generally three major group roles:
   * Team leader: That person who takes responsibility for making sure deadlines are met, content is produced, and items are submitted for assessment.
   * Researcher
   * Primary writer
   * Designer

*\*\*\*Of course, these roles can be reimagined according to your team’s needs, but do make sure you’re all in agreement who’s going to be in charge of submitting content for the team.*

1. A working detailed schedule identifying when group members agree to have content finished. This can be loosely based on the above tentative schedule, but should be more detailed and personalized to individual group schedules.

\*\*\* I am sending out a template that you can use to complete this requirement. It’s also posted to the cP3 colder in BB \*\*\*

**Progress reports**

Please see *Agile Communicator* Ch. 11 p. 220 for progress report guidance.

Each of the three reports due should address the following:

* What has been completed
* What has yet to be completed
* What problems your team has encountered and how you solved those problems
* How your project has shifted or changed course (in focus or development of deliverable)

You will have three reports:

1. Adapted memo format – please refer to p. 220 in *AC*
2. Formal email – reference content in *AC* p. 220, but adapt for email
3. Skype meeting – all team members + instructor. See oral progress reports in *AC* p. 334

**Oral presentations**

You will complete a presentation that takes the form of a Research and Completion Report (*AC* p. 334). This oral report is mean to be summative and informative in nature. When planning your presentation, think about your audience’s needs and your particular composition situation. If your team chooses to present your findings face-to-face during class with your peers, make a presentation video, complete a recorded voiceover presentation (using Screencast-o-matic or similar), or something totally different. Whatever you choose, you must receive approval from your instructor before proceeding. Remember that, as with the remainder of cP3, you should employ your collective strengths, not your weaknesses.

We’ll take one, possibly two, days to give you the opportunity to present your final presentation to the class. This isn’t meant to be tortuous or embarrassing. We’ll come together as a communication community to discuss your ideas with the rest of the class.

Some requirements: Each presentation must fall between 5-7 minutes and provide some means for feedback or questions. You might include a QR code to your email address or your written email address at the end of your presentation, or some other means of getting feedback. Asking your audience for feedback when presenting face to face is easy – you just ask and answer, and that’s pretty much it. You’re not limited to this, however. Be creative.

**Final deliverables**

This will be on a team-by-team basis and will vary accordingly. Each team must craft a content set that addresses one or more of the problems set forth in your case study. Your proposal + additional items will be written for your client (refer to the case study) and will provide your best ideas for a potential solution to the client’s problems.

Last, but not least, be creative. You all have so much talent, and when you put it all together the result is often amazing. I’m very excited to see what you come up with!