

Lecture 1

Introduction

Business & Technical Communication

Course Description

The main objective of the course is to equip students with skills that will enable them to communicate clearly and concisely in diverse business situations. The students will learn the importance of planning and organizing effective written messages. The course will emphasize on determining objectives and on developing a logical argument before presenting the message in an appropriate format.

The course is divided into two sections:

1. Written communication
2. Oral communication

Written communication will cover planning, structure, and stylistic issues

Specifically, students will learn to write memos and letters; proposals; short and long reports; and procedure and policy documents.

Moreover, the students will learn to simplify complex information through editing and revising, enhancing their ability to create powerful documents to sell their ideas.

The oral communication section will cover planning and execution of effective presentations; group behavior; and planning and conducting effective meetings.

Note :

1. Each student will submit a report (1,000 -- 1,500 words) on an assigned topic.
2. Each student will submit a technical research paper (1,000 -- 1,500 words) on a topic.

Grading:

Report	10%
Technical Research Paper	10%
Quizzes	15%
Written Assignments	15%
Midterm	20%
Final Exam	30%

Books & Materials

- The Mayfield Handbook for Technical Writing
- http://web.mit.edu/odsue/wac_engineering/Mayfield/toc.htm

Modules

- Module 1: Basics of Effective Technical and Business Communication
- Module 2: Forms of Written Communication: Reports; proposals; letters; memos; applications; resumes; Instructions, Specification documents
- Module 3: Research & Writing
- Module 4: Oral Communication

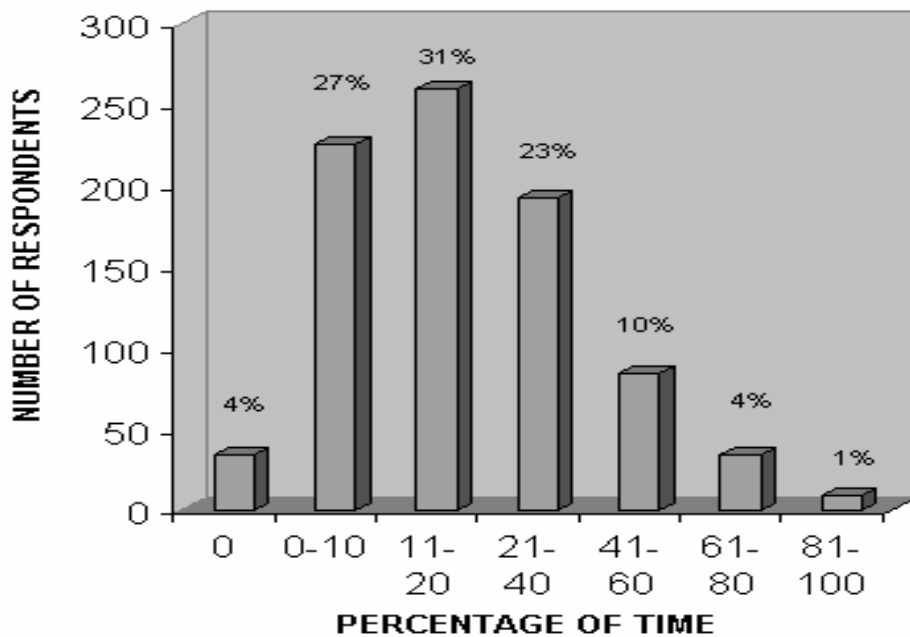
You will need to identify your two roles at work.

- As a specialist you will need to generate ideas which will be potentially useful.
- You will need to share the results of your ideas with co-workers, customers etc as a communicator.

Example: Naila, a newly hired dietitian, must communicate to make the work valuable to her employer, at a large hospital. She has devised a way to reorganize the hospital kitchen that save money etc. Her insights will benefit the hospital only if they are communicated to someone who has the power to implement them, such as the kitchen director.

Writing will be critical to your success.

As a college graduate you will need to spend an average of 20 percent of your time at work writing. That comes out to one out of every five-day work week.



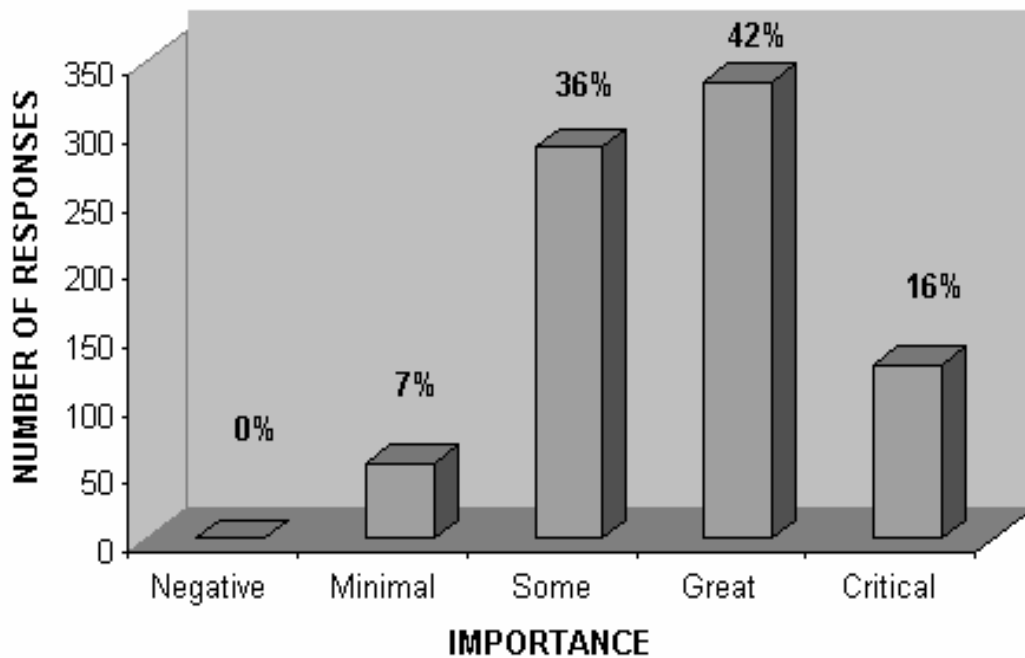
A graph plotted for *percentage of hours spent* versus *the number of people* who responded for the survey.

The study was conducted for a total number of 896 students in US Universities

Besides enabling to do your job, Writing can bring you many personal benefits as well

- Recognition in the form of praise
 - Raises
 - Promotions
 - In many organizations the communication with the upper management is not feasible.
 - In such a company, your memos, reports, and other writing may be the only evidence
 - they have of your good work as either a specialist or a communicator.
- Writing is an important responsibility of managers who have to communicate a wide variety of messages to those above and below him.
- Consequently employers look for writings when considering people for advancement.
- In a study 94 percent of the graduates from seven departments that send students to technical writing classes reported that the ability to "write well" is of "some" importance to them.
 - Furthermore 58 percent said that it is of great or critical importance to them.

In a survey of people listed in the "Engineers of distinction", 89 percent said that the writing ability is considered when a person is considered for advancement.



Survey of people listed in the "Engineers of distinction", plotting the *importance of writing skills* to people versus the *number of people* who responded.

In addition to bringing you recognition, writing well at work can bring you personal satisfaction.

It will enable you to make an important impact.

To succeed in any endeavors during your professional career, you will need to influence peoples opinions, actions and decisions mostly through writing.

- Writing at work differs from writing at school
- To write successfully at work you will need to develop new writing skills and even new ways of thinking about writing.
- That's because on-the-job writing differs in some very fundamental ways from writing done at school.

writing

Purpose

As a student you communicate for *educational* purposes for example writing term papers or taking a written exam etc.

In contrast as an employee you will communicate for instrumental purposes.

Most of your communications will be designed to help your employer achieve practical business objectives.

Example

At school, where your aim is to show how much you know, one of your major writing strategies is to write as much as you can about your subject.

At work, your communications should only include the information your readers *need*.

Extra information would only clog your readers' path to what they need, resulting in

- decreased efficiency
- increased frustration

Audience

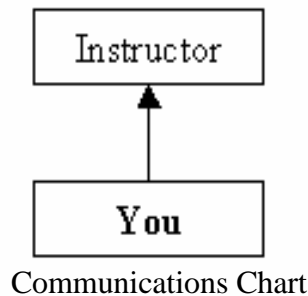
At school your interaction is only one person, the instructor.

In contrast at work, you will often create communications that will address a wide variety of people with different backgrounds.

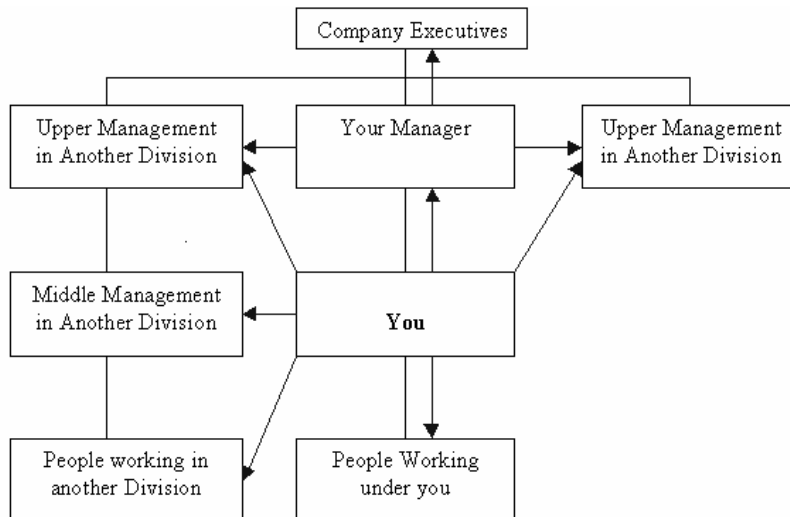
The audience might include who are differ in

- familiarity with your subject
- the use they will make of your information
- the kinds of professional and personal concerns they will bring to your presentation.

CLASSROOM



ON THE JOB



Example

Consider the report in which Naila will present her recommendations for improving the hospital kitchen.

Her recommendations might be read by her supervisor Mr. Nadeem, who will want to know what measures he will have to take in order to follow her recommendations.

The vice president of finance, Mr. Altaf, will want to verify the cost estimates that Nalia includes.

The director of purchasing, Mr. Chauhan, will need to know about the new equipment he will need to order.

The head of personnel, Miss Sara, will want to learn whether she needs to write any new job descriptions.

And lastly the kitchen staff to assure them that their new work assignment will treat them fairly.

So writing for such a large and diverse audience requires skills that are not needed when writing only to your instructor.

Types of Communications

People at work write different communications than the communications written at schools.

Instead of term papers and exams, they write such things as

- memos
- business letters
- instructions
- project proposals
- progress reports.

Each on-the-job communication has its own conventions.

To write successfully at work, you will need to learn how to construct these kinds of communications.

Ownership

Ownership of a writer's work is very important.

While at school your communication only belongs to you, at work however, your communication will belong only *partly* to you.

They will belong to your employer.

What you write at work represents not only you but also your department or your employer.

Example

If you write a letter or report to a customer, the customer views it as an official communication from your employer.

If you write a proposal, your employer will get the contract - or lose it.

Two other situations fairly common at work

- Employees often work on committees that write reports, proposals, and other documents collaboratively. The final version cannot be accredited to only one individual.
- People often write communications that are sent under someone else's name. It is common for departmental reports to be signed by Head of Department, even though are written by staff members.

To succeed on the job, you will need to learn to write under the circumstances in which your employer claims ownership of your communications.

- It is absolutely essential to think constantly about your readers.
- Think about what they want from you - and why?
- Think about the ways you want to affect them.
- Think about the ways they will react to what you have to say.
- Think about them as if they were right there in front of you while you talked together.

The communications must affect in specific ways the individual people you are addressing.

Example

If Naila's proposal of modifying the hospital kitchen explains the problems created by the present organization in a way that her readers find *compelling*, if it addresses the kinds of objections that her *readers* will raise to her recommendations, if it reduces the reader's sense of being threatened by having a new employee suggest improvements to a system that they set up, then it may succeed.

On the other hand if Naila's proposal leaves the readers confused and fails to persuade them it will make Naila seem like a pushy person who has overstepped her appropriate role.

As you write in a professional environment you need to remember three things.

- Readers create meaning
- Readers responses are sharpened by situation
- Readers react on a Moment-by-Moment basis.

Readers create Meaning

Instead of *receiving* the message, people interact with the message to *create* meaning.

While reading we build larger structures of knowledge from small fragments of sentences. These structures are not the words we have just read but our own creation.

Readers' responses are shaped by the situation

Responses to a communication are shaped by a total situation surrounding the message such as

- factors as their purpose of reading
- the readers' perceptions of the writer's aims
- their personal interest and stake in the subject discussed
- past relations with the writer

Readers react on a moment-to-moment basis

On job people react to each part of the memo, report or other business communication as soon as they come to it.

Exercises

1. Imagine the situation in which you will write on the job. For each, explain what purpose you will have for writing and what purpose your readers will have for reading. If you have written as an intern, a co-op student, or a regular employee, you may describe two of those situations.
2. Find a communication written by someone who has the kind of job you want. Explain its purpose from various points of view of both the writer and the readers. Describe some of the writing strategies the writer has used to achieve those purposes.
3. a. Find a piece of writing that you believe to be ineffective. (You might look for an unclear set of instructions or an unpersuasive advertisement of some business or technical product.) Write a brief analysis of three or four "reading moments" in which your interaction with the text in a way that inhibits the author's desired results.

b. Now analyze an effective piece of writing. This time, write about three or four "reading moments" in which you interact with the text in a way that helps the author bring about the desired result.