

Northeastern University
Department of Communication Studies
Spring 2005

CMNU533: Consultation Skills

Sequence D; Key #23425
Tuesday & Friday 9:50 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Location: 320 Shillman Hall

Instructor: Dr. Walter Carl Office: 119 Holmes Office Phone Number: 617-373-4075 E-mail: w.carl@neu.edu	Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:45 am – 12:30 pm; 3:30 – 4:30 pm Thursdays 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm Fridays 11:45 am – 12:30 pm and by appointment
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Opening Turns in the Conversation...

“Our real task [as consultants] is to help our clients learn how to better function in their world, which is permanently and elusively out of control. The fact that most clients seek from consultants a way to increase their own sense of control makes the consulting job more difficult. The resolution of this is to stay focused on the relationship with the client, for out of this comes the realization that clients can achieve the results they want without having to control those around them”

- Peter Block, *Flawless Consulting*

“The basic function of all communication is to seek a sense of control of the environment and of the rightness of one’s views of it; judgments of ‘rightness’ being the issue that brings communication into contact with community”

- Walter Carl & Steve Duck, *Communication Yearbook 28*

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to both the content and process of communication consulting, including: theoretical frameworks to guide a broad range of consulting activities (including both organizational communication consulting and training and development), opportunities for students to investigate the field of consulting (including current trends and emerging issues), and participation in consulting activities (including case studies and training activities).

Course Pre -Requisite

Students must have taken and passed the introductory organizational communication course (CMNU231/CMN1430) and Advanced Organizational Communication (CMNU531/CMN1431) or must have instructor approval in order to take this course. Otherwise, students will be dropped from this class.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to help students meet the following objectives:

- to comprehend various theoretical frameworks and models that inform consulting practice and the instructional design of training modules;
- to appreciate the similarities and differences between internal and external consulting work;
- to understand and develop skills in the contracting process between consultant and client;
- to distinguish among, and appreciate the implications of, the various roles that consultants enact;
- to develop knowledge and skills necessary to successfully analyze and address organizational communication issues (with the goal of enhancing the quality of organizational communication processes);
- to gain competence in designing and implementing a training program on a communication topic;
- to learn how to identify, name, and manage client resistance;
- to become familiar with recent trends and companies in communication and management consulting;
- to learn about practical issues of running an independent consulting business;
- to reflect and assess one's own competence in communication-based skills required for effective consulting practice;
- to respectfully consider the ethical complexities of organizational communication consulting issues.

Course Readings and Materials

- DeWine, S. (2001). *The consultant's craft: Improving organizational communication*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. Available at NU Bookstore. One copy on reserve at NU Library (2-hour loan period; must stay in library).
- NU Classpac of supplemental readings. Available at NU Bookstore. One copy on reserve at NU Library (2-hour loan period; must stay in library).
- Supplemental readings on course Blackboard site (see Supplemental Reading Pack list for details on Blackboard).

Below is a list of course materials you will need:

- access to supplementary readings placed on reserve at the University library;
- additional small purchases such as an index cards, magazines, newspapers, photocopies, presentation binders, etc.;
- access to, and proficiency is using, a computer, e-mail, Blackboard, and the internet;
- high density floppy disk or Zip disk to save material handed in (be sure to keep an electronic copy of all materials turned in).

In addition to meeting in a traditional classroom, this course will be supplemented with web technology, specifically Blackboard. Students can access handouts, assignment sheets, and course readings, as well as their grades as soon as they are posted through Blackboard.

Students with Disabilities and Special Challenges

I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability or a special challenge that requires some modification of the seating or other class requirements so that we can make appropriate arrangements (in conjunction with the Disability Resource Center). Please see me after class or during office hours.

Projects & Grading

Consulting Company Research Project – 10% The purpose of this assignment is to learn more about particular *organizational communication* consulting and training companies, the types of services they provide, their clients, and the backgrounds of the consultants. You will be required to use at least three sources in your research (for example, internet and/or library searches, interviews, company documents, etc.). Your inquiry will result in an essay of approximately 1000 words.

Diagnostic Intervention Proposal Case Study – 20% The purpose of this assignment is to give you practice in applying some of the consulting techniques and strategies you have read about in the text (and which we have discussed in class) to a real consulting problem, and to do so by using the consulting and research frameworks which serve as a basis for this course. Students will work in teams to analyze a case study. This analysis will serve as the basis for a proposal written by the group, as well as a group oral presentation (8-10 minutes). The project grade will be comprised of the written proposal (group), the oral presentation (group), and an assessment of individual team members' contributions (individual).

Instructional Training Assignment – 25% The purpose of this team project is to gain experience in the delivery and facilitation of a training module. Your team will be responsible for using a variety of instructional/training strategies to facilitate a 55-minute section of the class. In addition to selecting a reading for the class participants, the teams will prepare a training module that includes a brief lecture, class discussion, and a small group activity and debrief session. Additionally, each group member will write a 700-800 word evaluation of their group's overall performance. Students will receive both a group and individual grade for their performance on this project.

Exams – 30% There will be two exams, each worth 15% of your final grade. Exam 1/Midterm covers course readings and discussion up to that point (see schedule for dates), and the format consists of essays of varying lengths (generally 500-750 words or no more than 1000 words). Exam 2/Final (a take-home final during Final Exam week) will be a self-assessment that will ask you to reflect on the most valuable skills and concepts learned in the class, your strengths and weaknesses with consulting and training activities, as well as your future as a consultant.

Class Participation & Attendance – 15% This portion of your grade includes contributions for in-class discussion, in-class activities, attendance, out-of-class assignments, listening responsiveness, case studies, etc. For expectations on class participation, see section below entitled "Participation and Attendance."

The following table shows what percentages correspond to each letter grade:

Letter Grade = %	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69
A = 93-100	B = 83-86	C = 73-76	D = 63-66
A- = 90-92	B- = 80-82	C- = 70-72	D- = 56-62 F = 0-55

Please feel free to check with me about your progress at any time throughout the quarter. To do this, schedule a meeting time with me and bring *specific* questions. If you would like to discuss any project with me after I give you feedback/evaluations, please wait twenty-four hours to "catch your breath" and collect your thoughts; again, be sure you bring *specific* questions to our discussion.

Participation and Attendance

Students will be expected to critically assess the course readings, to argue a coherent position on course topics, and to be challenged by others in the class regarding these positions. Effective participation in course discussions includes being able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of course material and have something insightful to say about it;
- facilitate development of a coherent discussion thread;
- respect other's contributions and awareness of a challenging and supportive classroom climate;
- permit others the opportunity to contribute as well.

Because class participation and discussion are an integral part of this course, it is essential that students show up to class and in a timely manner (i.e., at the start of class would be the best time for this). Otherwise, you can miss two (2) class periods without penalty. For each class missed beyond this without a University-excused absence, one (1) point per class missed will be deducted from your class participation grade. If you know you are going to be absent or late on a certain day, please let me know ahead of time. Even if you are absent/late you are still responsible for any work that is assigned or due.

Note: Since showing up late to class can be rude and disrespectful, an absence will be counted for every three (3) tardy appearances.

Students will be required to complete a self-evaluation sheet for their class participation, which will be provided by the Instructor.

Late Work

All assignments are due at the start of class on the day listed on the syllabus (unless otherwise discussed in class and announced on Blackboard). If you anticipate that you will have difficulty turning in an assignment on time, notify the Instructor by e-mail as soon as possible and we may be able to negotiate special arrangements. *If an assignment is turned in late without notifying the Instructor at least 24 hours in advance, the following penalties may apply:* turned in by 4:30 p.m. on due date (-5 points; ½ letter grade); turned in next day after due date (-10 points; full letter grade); -5 points will be deducted for each additional day assignment is not turned in.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is borrowing others' words or thoughts without their permission and without giving them proper credit (for example, by using a citation system such as APA or MLA). The penalty for plagiarism can be failure on a project and/or in a course, a permanent mark on your record, and/or expulsion from the University. Plagiarism is often a result of ignorance, laziness, or fear of not getting a high grade. If you are tempted to plagiarize, please consider that it is generally better to fail an assignment than it is to fail an entire course, or to be expelled from the University. If you are considering plagiarism because you are having trouble doing the assignment due to not understanding it or because you feel you will do poorly, then please come talk to me (before the assignment is due).

Cellular Phones, Beepers, Pagers, and Alarms

Before entering the classroom, please turn off all cell phones, beepers, pagers, alarms, and any other bits of technology that could disrupt the class.

-- SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE --		
DATE	TOPICS	READINGS TO BE DISCUSSED/INFO
Jan. 07 F (1) #1	Course Introduction Knowledge Workers in a Knowledge Economy	Buy textbook (T; Bookstore) and scan supplemental readings (SR)
Jan. 11 T (2)	What is Organizational Communication Consulting? <i>Assign Consulting Company Res. Prj.</i>	Read c. 1 (T), c. 2 (T), & four SRs (see SR list for details)
Jan. 14 F (3) #2	Consulting Roles and Activities	Read Turner (SR) & Nord (SR); Self-assessment (pp. 11-12; T)
Jan. 18 T (4)	Frameworks for Consulting Contracting & Negotiating Roles	Read Nyquist & Wulff (CP); Read Block's Framework (SR)
Jan. 21 F (5) #3	Applying Consulting Frameworks	<i>Bonner Case Study Homework</i> (Bb)
Jan. 25 T (6)	Needs Assessment & Data Analysis <i>Assign Diagnostic Intervention Proposal Project</i>	Read c. 4 & c. 5 (T)
Jan. 28 F (7) #4	Writing Effective Proposals Group Meeting Time In Class	Read Washburn & Hosmer (SR) & Potter (SR)
Feb. 01 T (8)	Discuss Consulting Company & Activities Research Projects	<i>Consult. Company Res. Prj. Due</i>
Feb. 04 F (9) #5	Organizational Assessment & Auditing	<i>MCQ Audits</i> (SR) & pp. 148-157 (T)
Feb. 08 T (10)	Reflective Practitioners and Communication Evaluation & Development Process	Read Jones & Stubbe (SR)
Feb. 11 F (11) #6	Designing Consulting Interventions	Read c. 8 (T); <i>Proposal Due</i>
Feb. 15 T (12)	Exploring Training & Development Designing Training Programs	Read Arnold & McClure (SR) and Kibler et al. (SR); <i>Results Returned to Students</i>
Feb. 18 F (13) #7	Workshop: Oral Presentation Midterm Exam Review	Bring notes, handouts, questions, etc.
Feb. 22 T (14)	<i>Group Oral Presentations of Diagnostic Intervention</i>	<i>Presentation Outline and Handouts Due</i>
Feb. 25 F (15) #8	Midterm Exam <i>Assign Instructional Training Project</i>	<i>Midterm Exam Due</i>
Feb. 26 - Mar. 06	Spring Break – NO CLASSES	
Mar. 08 T (16)	Training Strategies	Read c. 6 (T)
Mar. 11 F (17) #10	Facilitation Skills and Leading Discussions	Read Davis (SR) & McKeachie (SR)
Mar. 15 T (18)	Evaluation of Training & Consulting Activities	Read c. 17 & c. 18 (T)
Mar. 18 F (19) #11	Business & Ethics of Consulting Guest Speaker	Read c. 20 (T); Shenson et al. (SR) & Weiss C2M Articles (SR)
Mar. 22 T (20)	Workshop: Group Training Presentation	Bring notes, handouts, questions, etc.
Mar. 25 F (21) #12	Group Training Presentation Day*	Readings assigned by group
Mar. 29 T (22)	Group Training Presentation Day*	Readings assigned by group
Apr. 01 F (23) #13	Group Training Presentation Day*	Readings assigned by group
Apr. 05 T (24)	Group Training Presentation Day*	Readings assigned by group
Apr. 08 F (25) #14	Group Training Presentation Day*	Readings assigned by group
Apr. 12 T (26)	Looking Backward/Looking Forward Final Exam Review	
Apr. 15, 18-22	Final Exam Week	Take-Home Final (due Tuesday, April 19 th by 4:30 pm in 101 Lake)

* Topics (corresponding to chapters 9-14 in DeWine text) include Listening Skills, Managing Meetings, Presentation Skills, Team Building, Effective Use of Feedback, and Conflict Management.