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ABSTRACT

Across many organizational communication curricula, faculty are including undergraduate courses on the analysis and assessment of an organization's communication. This paper was designed to aid potential instructors of an organizational analysis course in their preparation and execution. The paper contains a syllabus which provides one example of how such a course might be executed. The paper states that ideally, this course should be taught as an upper division follow-up course to the introduction to organizational communication. The paper points out that the crux of this course is the final assignment for which students join self-selected groups to study a small organization using some of the audit methods discussed in class. It notes that the final month of the semester provides students scheduled class time to meet with the instructor for several different workshops. An appendix presents a case study in developing a questionnaire. (NKA)

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Teaching Organizational Analysis

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Teaching Organizational Analysis

Across many organizational communication curriculums, the faculty are including undergraduate courses on the analysis and assessment of an organization's communication. This paper and presentation were designed to aid potential instructors of an organizational analysis course in their preparation and execution.

Organizational communication consulting, training & development, and organizational analysis are just a few of the different course names used to describe a communication course that teaches students the means to examine and address organizational communication problems. The following syllabus provides one example of how such a course might be executed.

Ideally, this course should be taught as an upper division follow up course to the introduction to organizational communication. Where the introductory course discusses theories, concepts, history, and ideas about organizational communication, organizational analysis helps students practice and apply those theories in real (or manufactured) organizations. This course is also an excellent way to tie in many of the organizational communication students earlier coursework (like group communication, business and professional speaking, and communication research to name a few).

The crux of this course is this final assignment for which students join self-selected groups to study a small organization using some of the audit methods discussed in class. Students should be encouraged not to take on too large or too small of an organization. The final month of the semester provides students scheduled in class time to meet with the instructor for several different "workshops." The "questionnaire workshop" is designed to ensure that the students' questionnaires ask meaningful

questions that should elicit meaningful answers. The “network analysis workshop” and the “data analysis workshop” enables the students to meet in computer labs where the appropriate software is available to conduct these analyses (we use UCINET and SPSS).

Any questions, comments, or concerns about conducting an organizational analysis course can be directed to the author by telephone or e-mail.

Syllabus:

Analyzing Organizational Communication

Text: DeWine, S. (1994). The Consultant’s Craft: Improving Organizational Communication. NY: St. Martin’s Press.

Introduction: The goal of Analyzing Organizational Communication is to provide you with an in depth examination and analysis of the role communication plays in organizations. Predominantly, we will be focusing on communication problems in an organization: preventing problems before they occur, detecting problems once they occur, and learning strategies for improving organizational communication.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation (10%): This class will be primarily discussion in format. Active participation in class discussions is mandatory. While most of the classes will consists of discussions related to the assigned readings, I do not intend to teach the book. All readings are due on the day they are listed in the syllabus so that we can carry out intelligent dialogue. It is essential that you attend class regularly in order to participate fully. Excessive absences and lateness (defined as more than 3) will adversely effect your grade.

Exam (15%): There will be one examination for this course. The exam will focus on the lecture/discussion portion of this course. It will be an essay exam worth 15% of your grade. The exam will be held on November 6, 2000, to leave us just over a month to work on the final project. There will be no make up exams unless you have a documented illness/excuse, and talk to me *before* the exam is given.

Assignments (75%): There will be four assignments/projects throughout the semester. The contents are briefly described below, though as the due dates draw closer you will receive more information.

Assignment #1 --

Short Papers: The first step in preventing, detecting, or eliminating organizational communication problems is to understand what these problems are and how others in the field have gone about detecting them. This assignment requires you to pick one organizational communication concern, write a short paper describing what is problematic about it in an organization, and find at least one tested inventory that assesses the organizational concern. You will need to make enough copies of your paper and inventory for the entire class. You will present your results at the "Short Paper Roundtable".

Assignment #2 --

Questionnaire Assignment: You will be given a case study for which you will need to find a way to assess the needs of the organization. In order to do this, you will create a questionnaire. You will also need to defend your questionnaire in a short paper. You may work in pairs and hand in one collective paper.¹

Assignment #3 --

Network Analysis Assignment: You will be given a case study for which you will conduct a network analysis. You will need to include a written analysis of the outcome. You should work alone on this assignment².

Assignment #4 --

Final Assignment: You will need to find some small group, small company, club or other organization that you can observe. You will need to create a communication questionnaire, collect the data related to the questionnaire, run a network analysis, analyze the data, and offer some strategies for improving their communication in a formal paper. Additionally, you will need to prepare a presentation as if you were offering this information back to the organization's managers. For this assignment you should work in groups of three or four.

¹ See case study in Appendix A

² Students are given manufactured data to run and assess a Network Analysis for the case study in Appendix A.

Grades: Grades will be computed as follows.

Short Paper Assignment	10%
Questionnaire Assignment	15%
Network Analysis Assignment	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Assignment Paper	20%
Final Assignment Presentation	15%
Class Participation/Attendance	10%
TOTAL	100%

Hints, tips, and suggestions:

1. Classes meet twice a week. Consider missing a class equivalent to missing important work meetings. If you miss too many you'll be out of a job (or fail the class).
2. Since I hate to lecture, participation in meaningful class discussions will be looked upon as highly favorable.
3. Note the due dates of assignments and the exam now. Late papers will be penalized by one full letter grade for each week it is late. No papers will be accepted more than three weeks after the due date.
4. If you have an Organizational Communication text, you may want to consult it for refreshers of many of the terms. If you don't have your introductory Organizational Communication text you may borrow one from me or the library if the need arises. If you haven't taken Organizational Communication you will not be able to complete this course. Other courses you should have completed before attempting to take this course: Group Decision Making, Business and Professional Speaking, and Communication Research. Co-registration in these courses is not suggested, but is acceptable.
5. Only 35% of what you need to know to be successful in this course comes from the book, 50% comes from in-class discussion, the final 15% will come from external research. Do not rely solely upon what myself and the book say when writing your papers.
6. Don't wait too far into the semester to start the final project. Start thinking now about the organization you can observe, and with whom you want to work. By mid semester you should have most of the tools to begin a large portion of this project. Keep in mind that this project is a culmination of all you will learn over the semester, and is therefore a much larger undertaking than any of the other assignments.

7. Don't choose too large or too small of an organization for the final project (10 – 20 people will be best). Communication audits of large organizations can take up to 6 months with several research assistants, and very small organizations will not be very interesting. Choose an organization for which you have access, and can handle the number of personnel. Consider choices like these: the people who live in an off-campus large house/greek house, another class, a doctor's office staff (or any other similar small organization), or a residence life staff. If you need help, please consult me, I am in my office much more often than my official office hours indicate.
8. Take pride in the work you hand in. Make sure to spell check your documents, edit for mistakes, and be conscious of the overall appearance. With so many computers available on campus, *DO NOT* use a typewriter to hand in paper assignments.

Tentative Schedule of Classes

Week	Topic	Assignment
1	Introduction to the course Background Theories/Concepts	Ch. 1
2	Why is communication imp.?	Ch. 2
3	Training and consulting	Goldhaber article
4	Being Communication Managers What is a Needs Assessment?	Ch. 3 Ch. 4
5	Paper Roundtable (useful ch.8,11,13,14) Needs Assessments – creating questionnaire's	short papers due
6	Data Analysis	Ch. 5 Questionnaire's due
7	Network Analysis and Network Theory	
8	Using UCINET Understanding NA Outputs	
9	Running Interventions	Ch. 6 & 7 NA due.
10	Intervention Exercises Group Assignments	
11	Exam	
12	Questionnaire Workshop	
13	Data Collection	
14	Network Analysis Workshop Data Analysis Workshop	
15	Presentations Presentations	Final Paper Due

Appendix A

Needs Assessment Assignment -- Questionnaire Design

What Questions Should Chris Ask Now?

Background

Chris Stone owns and runs Fly Away Travel Agency. Fly Away is a successful agency located in Lawrence, Kansas for the last fifteen years. Chris is quite proud of the large clientele they service in the relatively small city of Lawrence (population 80,000). Fly Away's storefront is located on a major intersection in the historic downtown district allowing them to draw in new customers who are casually passing by while servicing all the current customers. Additionally, Fly Away won a bid three years ago to be the exclusive agency for the University of Kansas and all of its employees. Two of Chris' employees spearheaded this bid and now run Fly Away's University Travel division. The distinction of being the University's exclusive agency brings in considerable business, and has aided in making Fly Away the most profitable travel agency in the county.

Recently, Chris found out that a national chain travel agency plans to purchase a storefront less than two blocks away. Chris would not normally be concerned about competition, except the national chain has the means to pay agents considerably more (and word has it their benefits package is unbeatable). In fact, rumor has it that the national company is already trying to get in touch with several of Chris' best agents in attempt to convince them to leave Fly Away and to bring with them local contacts including the University of Kansas.

Chris feels this is a tough situation that has the potential to derail much of the agency's success. Chris is used to finding creative solutions to problems and has no intention of giving up what took so many years of developing and improving. Chris fears, however, that since communication has been difficult and tense lately with a rampant rumor mill, many of the agents will leave regardless of the loyalty Chris thought had developed.

Your Job

Chris has retained your services as a consultant. Before you can sit down and discuss possible directions for Chris, you must gather as much information as possible. Chris has provided you with the following data, but you will need to create a questionnaire for the Fly Away staff that will give sufficient feedback about the company. **THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG APPROACHES TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.** However, you should be able to defend the questions you ask in a short paper. Make sure you know why you are asking each question, and what you hope to gain from the answers. Also be certain, that you consult the course notes on

questionnaire formation. You will want to consider the organizational communication issues at the heart of Chris' dilemma.

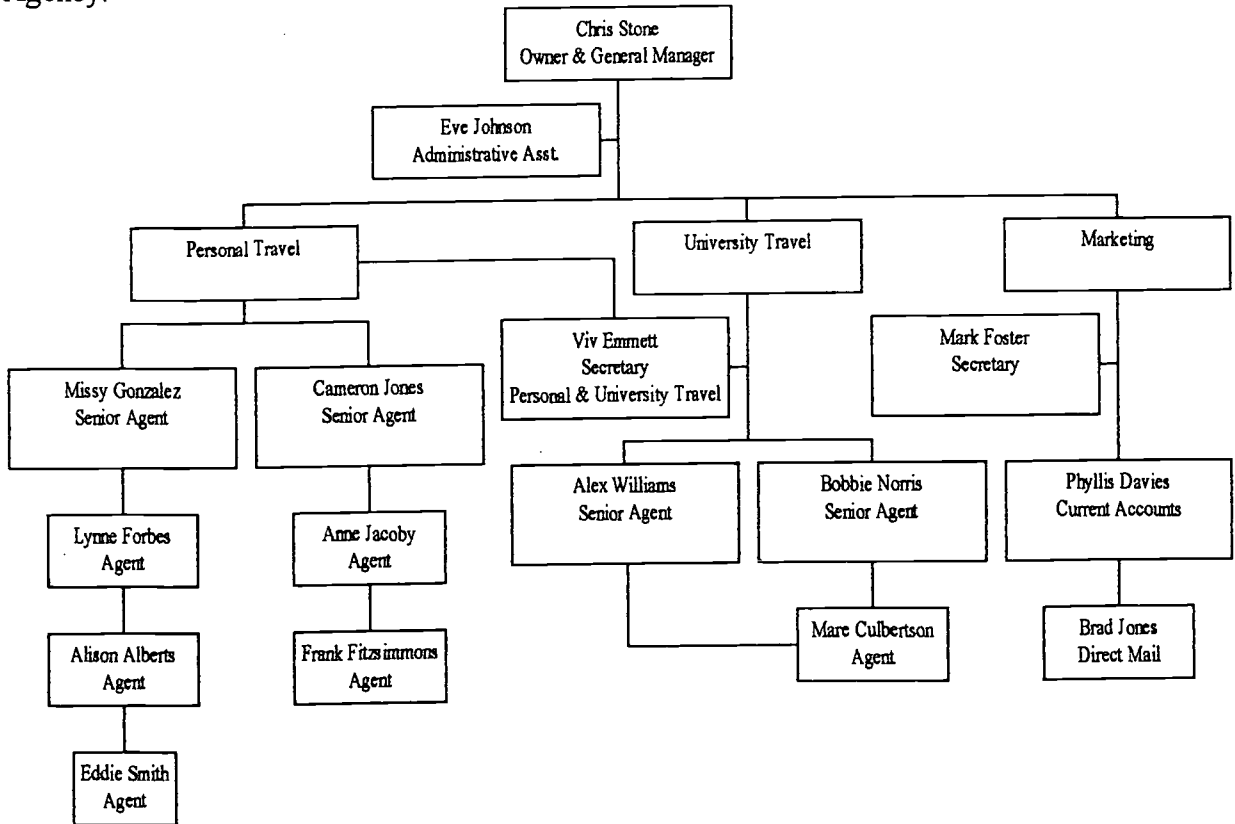
Data

Chris has supplied you with the following information, hoping it will help in your creation of the questionnaire.

Chris' department consists of 15 employees:

- 1 Administrative Assistant to Chris
- 10 Travel Agents (7 "personal" agents & 3 "University" agents)
- 1 Secretary to the Travel Agents
- 2 Marketing/advertising staff
- 1 Secretary to the Marketing staff

Chris runs a "user-friendly" office, but prefers to maintain a rather strict chain of command. The following is an organizational chart Chris gave you to best describe the Agency.



Chris also explains that there has been some difficulty between the Personal Travel Agents and the University Travel Agents. Chris sees this as an after effect of getting the university contract. Suddenly there is the perception of a status difference between the University's travel planning and individual vacation planning. The marketing people stay out of the conflicts, for the most part. "Although," Chris says, "since marketing/advertising is much more necessary in the Personal Travel area, Phyllis and

Brad have a tendency to take the Personal Travel Agents side in some of the office conversations.”

Chris’ closest allies in the department are Missy and Cameron because the three of them share a visible level of commitment to their work, staying late or coming in on days off. Often these three go out to lunch or dinner together, something Chris seldom does with other members of the company. While Chris was thrilled when Alex and Bobbie took the initiative to seek out the University’s bid for exclusivity, Chris has never been very social with either of them. Chris feels there has been ample compensation for Alex and Bobbie’s effort, but Chris senses Alex and Bobbie may resent that Fly Away is such a small company and thus their upward mobility is limited. If Alex and Bobbie leave Fly Away, Chris believes that the University of Kansas contract will likely follow them wherever they go.



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