Association for Business Communication

Southwestern United States

2015 Refereed Proceedings
March 11-14, 2015
Houston, Texas

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A special thanks to the A.B. Freeman School of Business Media Services Department for duplicating these proceedings for distribution for the ABC-SW.

Editor's Note

Welcome to the 42nd meeting of the Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States. Many thanks to the planners, program chairs, reviewers, presenters, and other contributors responsible for making this strong conference program possible. Special thanks go to Katie O'Neill, President-Elect and Program Chair of ABC-SWUS, who has assembled a great program that will appeal to those teaching business communicators as well as those researching in the discipline.

The program this year includes 28 presentations by 55 authors from United States institutions in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Texas, as well as from Mexico. Six papers are included in this proceeding. I would like to extend special thanks to the proposal and paper reviewers: Traci L. Austin, Kathy L. Hill, Debbie D. DuFrene, Geraldine E. Hynes, Susan E. Jennings, Carroll Nardone, Marcel Robles, Lucia S. Sigmar, Laura L. Valenti, and Bradley S. Wesner.

Each year completed papers that are submitted for the program are considered for the Irwin/McGraw Hill Distinguished Paper Award. This year's distinguished paper was awarded to **Mark Leonard, Marsha Bayless, and Timothy Clipson** from Stephen F. Austin State University. They will present their paper on Thursday, March 12 at 8:30 a.m.

Congratulations to **Lucia Sigmar**, from Sam Houston State University, who has been named the 2015 Federation of Business Disciplines Outstanding Educator Award. In these proceedings, you will also find information on previous program chairpersons, Distinguished Paper Award recipients, and recipients of the Outstanding Research and Outstanding Teacher awards.

Please make plans to join us next year in Oklahoma City for the 2016 Conference on March 9-12, 2016. The call dates for next year's papers are September 15th for presentation proposals and January 15th for the accepted presentations.

The 2015 conference program should prove to be quite engaging and informative. It will also provide opportunities to interact with new colleagues in our field and allow you to explore future collaborative research partnerships.

Kelly A. Grant
Editor

Table of Contents

Future National and Regional Meetings
2015 – 2016

For more information visit:
http://businesscommunication.org/conferences

Association for Business Communication Western Conference
May 20-22, 2015
Los Angeles, California

Global Advances in Business Communication
May 27-30, 2015
Ypsilanti, Michigan

Association for Business Communication 80th Annual Convention
October 28-31, 2015
Seattle, Washington

Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States
March 9-12, 2016
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

ABC-SWUS Program Chairpersons 1973 - Present

2014-2015	Kathryn S. O'Neill
2013-2014	Traci L. Austin
2012-2013	Randall L. Waller
2011-2012	Lucia Sigmar
2010-2011	Margaret Kilcoyne
2009-2010	Faridah Awang
2008-2009	Marcel Robles
2007-2008	Ann Wilson
2006-2007	Carolyn Ashe
2005-2006	Harold A. Hurry
2004-2005	Lana W. Carnes
2003-2004	Marsha L. Bayless
2002-2003	Betty A. Kleen
2001-2002	William Sharbrough
2000-2001	Carol Lehman
1999-2000	William P. Galle, Jr.
1998-1999	Anita Bednar
1997-1998	Timothy W. Clipson
1996-1997	Debbie D. Dufrene
1995-1996	William J. Wardrope
1994-1995	Roger N. Conaway
1993-1994	Donna W. Luse
1992-1993	F. Stanford Wayne
1991-1992	Beverly H. Nelson
1990-1991	Marian Crawford
1989-1990	Marlin C. Young
1988-1989	Sallye Benoit
1987-1988	Tom Means
1986-1987	Lamar N. Reinsch, Jr.
1985-1986	Sara Hart
1984-1985	Betty S. Johnson
1983-1984	Larry R. Smeltzer
1982-1983	Daniel Cochran
1981-1982	Nancy Darsey
1980-1981	John M. Penrose
1979-1980	R. Lynn Johnson
1978-1979	Raymond V. Lesikar
1977-1978	Jack D. Eure
1976-1977	Phil Lewis
1975-1976	Dale Level
1974-1975	Bette Anne Stead
1973-1974	Sam J. Bruno

Call for Papers

Federation of Business Disciplines
Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States
Houston, Texas
March 11 - March 14, 2015

Please submit a proposal or paper related to **business communication topics** for presentation at the 2015 ABC-SWUS Conference in Houston, Texas. Research papers or position papers related to **business communication topics** in the following areas are encouraged:

Communication Technology	Technology and Education
Innovative Instructional Methods	Business Education Issues
International Business Communication	Paradigm Shifts in Communication
Training and Development/Consulting	Interpersonal Communication
Nonverbal Communication	Executive/Managerial Communication
Legal and Ethical Communication Issues	Organizational Communication

- Papers or proposals should include a statement of the problem or purpose, methodology section (if applicable), findings (as available), a summary, implications for education and/or business, and a bibliography.

- If you are submitting a proposal only, it should contain 750 to 1,500 words and must be submitted on the ABC website: http://www.businesscommunication.org. Click on the link for the **2015 ABC-SWUS Conference**.

- If you are submitting a completed paper, please submit your proposal online as indicated above. Then e-mail the completed paper to Kathryn O'Neill at kso003@shsu.edu by **September 15, 2014**. All submissions must be in Microsoft Word.

    - Personal and institutional identification should be removed from the body of the paper. Identify yourself and your institution only on the cover page. Submissions will be anonymously reviewed.
    - A cover page is required with the title of the paper and identifying information for each author: name, institutional affiliation, address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address.

- For your research to be considered for the Richard D. Irwin Distinguished Paper Award, you must submit a completed paper rather than a proposal by the submission deadline, **September 15, 2014.**

- Submitted papers should not have been previously presented or published, nor should they be under consideration or accepted for presentation elsewhere.

FBD Statement of Academic Integrity

Your paper should not have been previously published or previously presented at FBD. Please indicate to the program chair if your paper is currently under submission to another FBD association. If your paper is later accepted by another FBD association, it is your responsibility to notify the appropriate program chairs.

- Upon receiving notice of acceptance, all authors and co-authors are expected to **pre-register for ABC-SWUS and FBD** at http://www.fbdonline.org

<u>Deadline</u>: Papers and proposals must be received by September 15, 2014.

The deadline for submitting accepted papers to the Proceedings will be January 15, 2015.

Prentice-Hall and Thomson Learning Outstanding Educator Awards

for

The Association for Business Communication

Southwestern United States

To be eligible for the award, recipients must have received the ABC-SWUS Outstanding Educator Award, must not be a previous recipient of either the Prentice-Hall or Thomson learning awards, must be a member of the Association for Business Communication, and must teach in the business communication discipline. This top tier ABC-SWUS award began in 2001 to honor outstanding educators in ABC-SWUS who were already recognized by our association. The award was sponsored by Prentice-Hall in 2001 and 2002, and by Thomson Learning in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007. The award winner must also have been recently active in the association as evidenced by attendance at recent ABC-SWUS conferences. The award winners are listed below:

2015	Lucia Sigmar, Sam Houston State University
2014	Margaret S. Kilcoyne, Northwestern State University
2013	S. Ann Wilson, Stephen F. Austin State University
2012	Marcel M. Robles, Eastern Kentucky University
2011	Harold A. Hurry, Sam Houston State University
2010	Geraldine E. Hynes, Sam Houston State University
2009	Roger N. Conaway, Tecnológico de Monterrey, campus San Luis Potosí
2008	Bobbye J. Davis, Southeastern Louisiana University
2007	Betty A. Kleen, Nicholls State University
2006	William Wardrope, University of Central Oklahoma
2005	Betty S. Johnson, Stephen F. Austin State University
2004	Marsha L. Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University
2003	Lillian H. Chaney, University of Memphis
2002	Debbie DuFrene, Stephen F. Austin State University
2001	Anita Bednar, University of Central Oklahoma

The Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States

Outstanding Researcher and Teacher Awards

These awards were developed and first awarded in 1992 to recognize the accomplishments of the region's members. Nominated candidates are evaluated by a panel of previous award winners. No awards were given in 1998, 2001, 2003, 2007 or 2013. The association began alternating the awards every other year in 2000 between researcher and teacher. In 2011 the Outstanding Teacher Award was renamed the Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award in honor and memory of his contributions to the ABC-SWUS organization. The recipients below each received a plaque and award of $100 (the award was changed to $200 in 2008):

2014 Lucia Sigmar, Outstanding Researcher Award

2013 Brenda Hanson, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2012 Susan Evans Jennings, Outstanding Researcher Award

2011 S. Ann Wilson, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2010 Margaret Kilcoyne, Outstanding Researcher Award

2009 Harold Hurry, Outstanding Teacher Award

2008 Roger N. Conaway, Outstanding Researcher Award

2008 Geraldine E. Hynes, Outstanding Teacher Award

2006 Janna P. Vice, Outstanding Researcher Award

2005 Bobbye Davis, Outstanding Teacher Award

2003 Marcel Robles, Outstanding Teacher Award

2004 William Wardrope, Outstanding Researcher Award

2002 Lillian H. Chaney, Outstanding Researcher Award

2002 Jeré Littlejohn, Outstanding Teacher Award

2000 William Sharbrough, Outstanding Researcher Award

1999 Robert Olney, Outstanding Teacher Award

1999 William Wardrope, Outstanding Teacher Award

1998 Betty Kleen, Outstanding Researcher Award

1997 Al Williams, Outstanding Teacher Award

1996 Betty S. Johnson, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Marsha L. Bayless, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Anita Bednar, Outstanding Teacher Award

1994 Nelda Spinks, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 Timothy W. Clipson, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 F. Stanford Wayne, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Debbie D. DuFrene, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Beverly H. Nelson, Outstanding Teacher Award

The Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States

Irwin/McGraw-Hill Distinguished Paper Award Recipients

2015 Mark Leonard, Marsha Bayless, and Timothy Clipson
Media Selection in Managerial Communication: Exploring the Relationship between Media Preference, personality, and Communication Aptitude

2014 Kathryn S. O'Neill and Gary L. May
Using Business Cases to Foster Critical Thinking

2012 En Mao, Laura Lott Valenti, and Marilyn Macik-Frey
Status Update – "We've Got a Problem" – Leadership Crisis Communication in the Age of Social Media

2011 Betty A. Kleen and Shari Lawrence
Student Cheating: Current Faculty Perceptions

2010 Jose Guadalupe Torres and Roger N. Conaway
Adoption and Use of New Communication Technologies in an International Organization: An Exploratory Study of Text Messaging

2009 Susan Evans Jennings, S. Ann Wilson, and Judith L. Biss
Is Email Out and Text Messaging In? Communication Trends in Secondary and Post-Secondary Students

2008 Debbie D. DuFrene, Carol M. Lehman, and Judith L. Biss
Receptivity and Response of Students to an Electronic Textbook

2007 William J. Wardrope and Roger N. Conaway
Readability and Cultural Distinctiveness of Executives' Letters Found in the Annual Reports of Latin American Companies

2006 Janna P. Vice and Lana W. Carnes
Professional Opportunities for Business Communication Students That Go Beyond the Course Grade

2005 Lillian H. Chaney, Catherine G. Green, and Janet T. Cherry
Trainers' Perceptions of Distracting or Annoying Behaviors of Corporate Trainers

2004 Patricia Borstorff and Brandy Logan
Argumentativeness and Verbal Aggressiveness: Organizational Life, Gender, and Ethnicity.

2003 Ruth A. Miller and Donna W. Luce

The Most Important Written, Oral, and Interpersonal Communication Skills Needed by Information Systems Staff During the Systems Development Process

2002 Roger N. Conaway and William Wardrope
Communication in Latin America: An Analysis of Guatemalan Business Letters

2001 Annette N. Shelby and N. Lamar Reinsch Jr.
Strategies of Nonprofessional Advocates: A Study of Letters to a Senator

2000 Donna R. Everett and Richard A. Drapeau
A Comparison of Student Achievement in the Business Communication Course When Taught in Two Distance Learning Environments

1999 Susan Plutsky and Barbara Wilson
Study to Validate Prerequisites in Business Communication for Student Success

1998 Jose R. Goris, Bobby C. Vaught, and John D. Pettit Jr.
Inquiry into the Relationship Between the Job Characteristics Model and Communication: An Empirical Study Using Moderated Progression Analysis

1996 Beverly Little, J. R. McLaurin, Robert Taylor, and Dave Snyder
Are Men Really from Mars and Women from Venus? Perhaps We're All from Earth After All

1995 Bolanie A. Olaniran, Grant T. Savage, and Ritch L. Sorenson
Teaching Computer-mediated Communication in the Classroom: Using Experimental and Experiential Methods to Maximize Learning

1994 James R. McLaurin and Robert R. Taylor
Communication and its Predictability of Managerial Performance: A Discriminant Analysis

1993 Mona J. Casady and F. Stanford Wayne
Employment Ads of Major United States Newspapers

1992 Betty S. Johnson and Nancy J. Wilmeth
The Legal Implications of Correspondence Authorship

1991 Rod Blackwell, Jane H. Stanford, and John D. Pettit Jr.
Measuring a Formal Process Model of Communication Taught in a University Business Program: An Empirical Study

Media Selection in Managerial Communication: Exploring the Relationship between Media Preference, Personality, and Communication Aptitude

Mark Leonard, Marsha L. Bayless, and Timothy Wayne Clipson

Stephen F. Austin State University

Abstract

Joseph Walther's (1992) social information processing theory (SIP) holds that given sufficient time, sufficient accumulation of messages, and sufficient adaptation to online environments, individuals can overcome the challenges of computer mediated communication (CMC) and communicate as effectively through CMC as in face –to-face (F2F) interactions. The body of research that falls under SIP has almost exclusively focused on the implications of SIP in the formation of online relationships in online gaming and social media sites.

This exploratory study examines the implications of SIP for managerial communication and attempts to explore the media preferences of employees based on their personalities and communication ability. Three primary conclusions were reached: 1) individuals who self identify as introverts are more likely to prefer email over F2F communication, 2) individuals who self identify as strong F2F communicators are more likely to select F2F over CMC, and 3) preference for email over F2F communication positively correlates with level of education, career level, and identification as an office worker.

Introduction

Joseph Walther's work on social information processing theory (SIP) has demonstrated that it is possible to effectively communicate and develop meaningful relationships in online environments that are limited to text-based communication (Walther, 1992). Over time and with sufficient accumulation of messages, users adapt to their online environments and substitute textual equivalents for the nonverbal cues that are rich in communicative information during face-to-face (F2F) interaction. While early telecommunications theories such as media richness (Daft & Lengel, 1984) and social presence (Short et al., 1976) predicted that computer mediated communication (CMC) could never be as efficient as F2F communication, Walther's SIP indicates that humans are remarkably capable of adapting to new communication mediums such as CMC. In fact, in her study of online gaming environments, Utz (2000) observed that users who are shy and have trouble communicating in face-to-face environments adapt well to CMC environments.

While many scholars have embraced Walther's SIP theory, research has almost exclusively examined online social environments. However, Utz's observation makes SIP an intriguing research avenue for the field of managerial communication. If shy individuals who have trouble finding a voice during F2F interaction excel in CMC environments, managers can seek these individuals out through CMC channels to make sure their valuable input and feedback is heard.

Researchers developed a survey to measure personality type, communication aptitude, and preferred communication media to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Do employees who score high in introversion prefer computer mediated communication (CMC) over face-to-face (F2F) communication?

RQ2: Do employees who score low in communication aptitude prefer computer mediated communication (CMC) over face-to-face (F2F) communication?

Literature Review

Social information processing theory addresses the development of relationships in online environments. While online communication lacks the non-verbal cues that enhance F2F communication, social information processing theory holds that users adapt language use and textual displays to accommodate for a lack of non-verbal cues. These verbal and textual cues, combined with sufficient time and accumulation of (CMC) messages, allow CMC to be as efficient as face-to-face communication during later stages of CMC (Walther, 1992).

Joseph B. Walther (1992) introduced social information processing theory in response to discrepancies between prevailing communication theories and field research. Theoretical approaches to CMC studies in the 1980s and 1990s determined that CMC environments, "eliminate the nonverbal codes that are generally rich in relational information" (Walther, 1992). Experimental studies found that the lack of these nonverbal cues constrained communication in online environments (Soukup, 2000). Rice & Love (1987) identified constraints of the CMC medium, "One basic assumption about computer mediated communications is that they transmit less of the natural richness and interaction of interpersonal communication" (Rice & Love, 1987: pg 87). In contrast, field studies found that users of CMC were able to adapt to the online communication medium and develop meaningful relationships (Walther, 1992). Social presence and media richness approaches highlighted the shortcomings of CMC as a communication medium but largely failed to consider the impact of time on the quality of CMC communication (Daft & Lengel, 1984; Short et al., 1976; Walther, 1992).

Walther (1992) provides five assumptions for SIP theory: 1) it is a basic human instinct to affiliate through communication, 2) impressions develop during interactions based on information communicated verbally and nonverbally, 3) development of relational communication is contingent upon the formation of interpersonal impressions between interactants, 4) "relational messages are transmitted (i.e., encoded and decoded) by nonverbal or verbal, linguistic, and textual manipulations" (p. 69), and 5) CMC messages take longer to process than F2F messages.

Walther (1992) goes on to present six propositions about the nature of CMC communication based on his five assumptions; 1) because it takes longer to process CMC messages, strangers develop interpersonal impressions slower through CMC interaction than through F2F interaction, 2) since development of interpersonal knowledge is slower in CMC, it takes longer to develop personalized communication styles through CMC interaction than through F2F interaction, 3) as the number of CMC message exchanges increases, relational communication develops, 4) relational communication is different in later interactions than in initial interactions, 5) it takes longer for relational communication changes to occur in CMC interactions than in F2F interactions, and 6) over time and given sufficient message exchange, "relational valences in later periods of CMC and face-to-face communication will be the same" (Walther, 1992; p. 69).

Walther's (1992) assumptions and propositions were based on his observation of high quality relationships developing online in the absence of F2F communication techniques, without gestures, facial expressions, vocal articulation, positioning, etc., to facilitate communication. He found that, rather than communicating in the absence of these techniques, individuals were developing ways to manipulate text characters and developing other linguistic techniques to substitute for F2F nonverbal expressions. CMC users attribute characteristics to their online acquaintances based on textual cues, knowledge development, personalized communication, and employment of "metacommunicative" cues like emoticons (Walther, 1992; p. 78).

SIP quickly gained traction in social media studies which largely focused on relationship development. For example, in their study of online dating sites in Japan, Farrer & Gavin (2009) found that as CMC message exchanges increased and the length of the online relationships increased, the perceived level of intimacy between users increased. This study demonstrated the utility of SIP even in a Japanese culture that prefers indirect cues and high context communication (Farrer & Gavin, 2009). Japanese users were able to utilize tools of the dating website platform to replace F2F communication techniques, form interpersonal impressions, develop relational communication, and engage in meaningful relationships with online acquaintances (Farrer & Gavin, 2009). Olaniran et al. (2012) found that the meta-communicative cues posited in social information processing were adequate for development of effective online communication even across cultural boundaries. In her study of computer mediated support groups, Vilhauer (2013) confirmed Walther's thesis that CMC effectiveness can reach F2F levels given sufficient time. Walther & Bunz (2005) studied the way that spoken and unspoken rules stabilize and facilitate relational development in online environments, noting that rules reduce uncertainty and lead to higher levels of trust by regulating behaviors, perceptions, and outcomes. Utz's (2000) study of multi-user dungeons (MUDs), virtual game worlds where users communicate through real-time text messaging, found that over time, users adapted to the medium, developed metacommunicative cues, and cultivated meaningful relationships. Even users with low sociability scores were able to effectively adapt to the communication environment of the MUDs, highlighting a potential benefit of CMC in that it allows users who have difficulty communicating in F2F interactions to successfully communicate and develop high quality relationships online (Utz, 2000).

While the majority of research has focused on social CMC, SIP theory has implications for managerial communication research. As users become familiar with the rules and communicative framework employed during social interaction online, they may operate under the same rules and communicative framework during CMC interactions at work. Additionally, if Utz's observation that shy individuals communicate effectively online is true not only for social interaction but for workplace interaction as well, it could help managers more effectively utilize communication mediums.

Methods

For this study, researchers developed a survey that consisted of a brief demographic questionnaire followed by a Likert scale component that asked participants about their personality, communication aptitude, and preferred communication media. The goal of this approach was to gather ordinal data that could be used to identify statistically significant correlations between personality and media selection as well as communication aptitude and media selection. In the scale portion of the study, participants were asked to assess themselves by indicating how they related to direct statements about their personality, communication aptitude, and media preferences (i.e. “I consider myself introvert”). While standardized personality and communication aptitude tests would have been ideal, asking participants for direct self-assessments was appropriate given the exploratory nature of the project. Participants had the option of choosing disagree strongly, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The research team used Qualtrics software to create and disseminate the survey. The construct was approved by the university’s institutional review board for protection of human subjects in research.

In the spring of 2014, a link to the survey was disseminated to two business graduate classes and one business undergraduate class. Students were awarded extra credit for their participation. A total of 40 responses were obtained in this initial dissemination. At the conclusion of the spring semester, one of the researchers posted a link to the survey on his Facebook page, resulting in an additional 27 participants and bringing the total to 67. Participants followed the link to the survey and completed the questionnaire online. The survey was closed and data was exported from Qualtrics to SPSS and Microsoft Excel for analysis. Correlation analysis was conducted using the Spearman rho function in SPSS. The Spearman rho correlation data was exported from SPSS to Microsoft Excel for analysis. Response frequencies were converted to percentages and correlation analysis was employed to study the relationships between variables.

Results

Participants in the survey included 44 (66%) individuals in the 20-29 age range, 12 (18%) individuals in the 30-39 age range, 4 (6%) individuals in the 40-49 age range, 4 (6%) in the 50-59 age range, and 3 (4%) individuals 60 or older. There were 32 (48%) male participants and 35 (52%) female participants. A total of 46 (69%) participants indicated that they were currently in school while 21 (31%) participants indicated that they were not currently in school. The following table summarizes responses to a survey question that asked participants to indicate the highest level of education they have achieved:

Table 1: Highest level of education completed

Answer	Responses	Percentage
High School	2	3%
Some College	11	16%
Associate Degree	10	15%
Bachelors Degree	12	18%
Some Graduate School	23	34%
Masters Degree	7	10%
Some Doctoral Coursework	0	0%
Doctoral Degree	2	3%
Total	67	100%

Participants were asked how long they had been a full time employee and 20 (30%) participants indicated that they had never been a full time employee while 21 (31%) indicated that they had been a full time employee for 1-5 years. The remaining responses included 13 (19%) with 6-10 years of experience, 4 (6%) with 11-15 years of experience, 1 (1%) with 16-20 years of experience, and 8 (12%) with more than 20 years of experience. The following table indicates the length of time participants had held their current position at the time of the survey:

Table 2: Length of time in current position

Answer	Responses	Percentage
Not currently employed	10	15%
Less than 6 months	12	18%
6 months - 2 years	19	28%
2-5 years	16	24%
5-10 years	4	6%
10-20 years	3	4%
20 years or more	3	4%
Total	67	100%

A total of 38 (58%) participants indicated that they were working in an office environment at the time of the survey, 27 (42%) indicated that they were not working in an office environment, and two participants opted out of this question. The final question preceding the scale portion of the survey asked participants to rate their current career level on a scale of 1-7, with one being an entry level employee and seven being a CEO. The following table summarizes responses to this question:

Table 3: With 1 being an entry level employee, 4 being a mid level manager, and 7 being a CEO, rate the career level of your current position

Career Level	Respones	Percentage
1	18	27%
2	17	26%
3	12	18%
4	12	18%
5	4	6%
6	1	2%
7	2	3%
Total	66	100%

The following table summarizes responses to the Likert scale portion of the survey; responses are represented as percentage of total:

Table 4: Responses to scale portion of survey

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sometimes I don't feel like I fully express myself during meetings at work	11%	27%	27%	29%	6%
Text based communication like email or chat can be more productive than face-to-face communication	9%	33%	20%	29%	9%
I consider myself a good communicator in face-to-face situations	0%	4%	7%	57%	31%
I could not do my job without face-to-face communication	5%	17%	12%	36%	30%
I consider myself an introvert	23%	27%	26%	20%	5%
I like to be the center of attention	18%	32%	29%	20%	2%
I usually control the flow of conversation in group settings	8%	17%	36%	35%	5%
I could not do my job without my email account	6%	12%	8%	33%	41%
I tend to speak up when others don't	2%	9%	23%	45%	21%
I am a good writer	0%	12%	23%	35%	30%
I prefer to work alone	8%	26%	33%	23%	11%
I am a highly social individual	5%	14%	18%	38%	26%
I get nervous when I have to speak in front of others	14%	24%	14%	38%	11%
I have trouble putting my thoughts into words while maintaining eye contact	21%	39%	17%	21%	2%
I consider myself an extrovert	15%	11%	30%	30%	14%
I often prefer to use email over face-to-face conversations or phone calls	6%	32%	33%	17%	12%
I communicate more effectively in face-to-face interactions than I do in email or chat conversations	0%	15%	32%	30%	23%
I am comfortable using computers	0%	2%	8%	32%	59%

The SPSS Spearman rho correlation analysis yielded 56 correlations that were significant at.01 level (2-tailed) and 27 correlations that were significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). Of these correlations, 57 were not analyzed because they were between self-assessment variables. For example, there was a negative correlation between the two variables 'I consider myself an extrovert' and 'I consider myself an introvert'. Twelve of these correlations weren't analyzed because they were between variables from the demographic portion of the survey, for example, there was a positive correlation between 'age' and 'years as a full time employee'. Five of the remaining correlations were relevant to the research questions because they identified a statistically significant relationship between demographic factors and media preference:

Table 5: Relationship between demographic factors and media preference

Spearman rho Correlations Analysis - Demographic Data vs Media Preference				
	Preferred Media			
Demographic Question	CMC More Productive than F2F	Could Not do My Job Without F2F	Could Not do My Job Without Email	Often Prefer Email over F2F or Phone
What is your age?	NC	NC	NC	NC
Gender	NC	NC	NC	NC
Are you currently in school?	NC	NC	.289*	.300*
What is the highest level of education you have completed?	NC	NC	.309*	NC
How many years have you been a full time employee?	NC	NC	NC	NC
How long have you held your current position?	NC	NC	NC	NC
Do you currently work in an office?	NC	NC	-.380**	NC
Rate your career level-With 1 being an entry level employee, 4 being a mid level manager, and 7 being a CEO, rate the career level of your current position	NC	NC	.348**	NC

NC: No Correlation
* P<.05
**P<.01

The nine remaining correlations were also relevant to the research questions because they described a statistically significant relationship between media preference and self-assessments of personality and communication aptitude:

Table 6: Relationship between media preference and self-assessments of personality and communication aptitude

Spearman rho Correlation Analysis - Self-assessment Data vs. Media Preference				
	Media Preference			
Self-Assessments	CMC More Productive than F2F	Could Not do My Job Without F2F	Could Not do My Job Without Email	Often Prefer Email over F2F or Phone
Good F2F Communicator	-.255*	.278*	NC	-.312*
Good Writer	NC	NC	NC	NC
Good Computer Skills	NC	.275*	NC	NC
Introvert	NC	NC	NC	.308*
Extrovert	NC	NC	NC	-.244*
Strong Communicator in Groups	NC	NC	NC	-.285*
Poor Communicator in Groups	NC	NC	NC	NC
Low Speech Anxiety	NC	NC	NC	NC
High Speech Anxiety	NC	NC	NC	NC
Prefer Social Environments	NC	NC	NC	-.287*
Prefer to Work Alone	NC	NC	NC	.357**

NC: No Correlation
* P<.05
**P<.01

Discussion

RQ1: Do employees who score high in introversion prefer computer mediated communication (CMC) over face-to-face (F2F) communication?

Results indicated that introverted employees were more likely to prefer CMC over F2F communication ‘often’ (CC .308; P<.05), and that extroverted employees were less likely to prefer CMC communication over F2F ‘often’ (CC -.244; P<.05). This result suggests that there are certain situations where introverted employees feel that an email is more appropriate while extroverted employees are less likely to see email as a more appropriate medium in certain situations. While there was no correlation between self-assessment as a poor group communicator, which indicates both low communication aptitude and introversion, there was a negative correlation between strong self-assessment as a group communicator and ‘sometimes prefer email over F2F or phone’ (CC -.285; P<.05). Additionally, there was a negative correlation between participants who identified as highly social and prefer to use email over F2F ‘often’ (CC -.287; P<.05). Accordingly, there was a positive correlation between those who preferred to work alone and preferring email over F2F ‘often’ (CC 3.57; P<.01). There were four measures for media preference and three of the four measures indicated no relationship between introversion and media preference. There was one exception, extroverted individuals were less likely to agree with the statement, “I often prefer to use email over face-to-face conversations or phone calls,” while introverted individuals were more likely to agree with this statement. This result supports Utz’s (2000) conclusion that less social individuals feel more comfortable using CMC and also suggests that more social individuals are more comfortable with F2F communication.

RQ2: Do employees who score low in communication aptitude prefer computer mediated communication (CMC) over face-to-face (F2F) communication?

Participants provided a self-assessment of their communication aptitude by responding to statements regarding their ability to communicate in F2F situations, their writing ability, group communication skill, and speech anxiety. In three of the four measures of media preference, those who indicated that they were good F2F communicators demonstrated a strong preference for F2F over CMC media. Those who indicated that they were strong writers did not demonstrate a statistically significant preference for F2F or CMC in any of the four media preference measures. There was no statistically significant relationship between high or low speech anxiety and media preference. Those who preferred to work alone did not indicate a preference for F2F or CMC in any of the media preference measures. Participants who self-identified as strong group communicators were more likely (CC -.285; $P<.05$) to disagree with the statement, "I often prefer to use email over face-to-face conversations or phone calls." There was no correlation between self-assessment as a poor communicator and media selection; however, those who self identified as strong F2F communicators demonstrated a strong preference for F2F over CMC. While this study found no relationship between a self-assessment as a poor communicator and preferred communication media, it did find that those who believe that they are strong communicators in F2F situations prefer F2F over CMC.

Additional Findings

In addition to answering the research questions posed at the onset of the project, the data also provided some insight into the relationship between demographic data and preferred communication media. There was a positive correlation between not being in school and a preference for email over F2F communication. This result is difficult to interpret but if these participants have been out of school and in the work force longer, it could signify a shift toward seeing email as more important the longer an individual has been employed. This conclusion is more firmly supported by three other correlations which more specifically indicate that email becomes more important over time: 1) The higher level of education a participant had completed, the more likely they were to agree with the statement, "I could not do my job without my email account," 2) Employees who worked in an office were more likely to agree with the statement, "I could not do my job without my email account," and 3) participants who were at higher career levels were more likely to agree with the statement, "I could not do my job without my email account." This finding supports Walthers' (1992) thesis that given time, sufficient accumulation of messages, and sufficient adaptation to an online medium, communication efficiency improves. As participants amassed more experience using email in the work place, they began to see it as a more essential communication medium.

Limitations

The primary limitation with this study is the self-assessment of personality and communication ability. Without the use of standardized constructs to measure these variables, there is an inherent validity problem with the personality and communication aptitude measures. The measures for media preference were also developed for the purpose of this study, so it is difficult to determine whether or not they measured what they were intended to measure. There are also reliability issues because this was a one-shot study with a new construct; however, as an exploratory study, the project was designed to explore the role of communication media in organizations rather than produce generalizable results. The convenience sample method and small sample size also prevent generalizations. Finally, since this is an organizational communication study, future research might limit its sampling to employees where this study primarily targeted college students with minimal work experience.

Future Research

Much of the work on social information processing theory has focused on web-based social interactions. This exploratory study attempted to apply the theoretical gains from social media studies to organizational communication to uncover the relationship between personality, communication aptitude, and media selection in the work place. Utz's (2000) finding that shy individuals communicate better through CMC than F2F was supported by the finding that participants who self-identified as introverts often preferred email over F2F or phone interaction. Given that this finding was replicated, future studies might ask participants to take a standardized personality and employ qualitative inquiry to determine why introverted individuals prefer CMC over F2F. Developing a greater understanding of this phenomenon would improve vertical and horizontal communication within organizations by creating space for the voices of introverted employees and improve the effectiveness of managerial communication by informing appropriate media selection. Another result with promising implications for future research was that participants who self identified as strong F2F communicators indicated that they preferred F2F over CMC in three of four media preference measures. Why do strong communicators prefer F2F interactions over CMC interactions? In his study of resistance and the numerous ways that people are subjugated by institutions of power, Foucault notes that for a power relationship to exist there must be an exploitable difference between two parties (Foucault, 1982). A critical scholar might examine the way communication media selection influences power relationships within organizations. Finally, Walther (1992) held that time and accumulation of messages helps individuals overcome the lack of non-verbal cues and effectively communicate in online environments. This thesis was supported by the positive correlation between several demographic metrics related to accumulation of work experience and perceived importance of email. Future research might examine the impact of accumulation of work experience more directly and determine if there is a correlation between work experience, self-identification as a strong communicator, and a strong preference for F2F over CMC.

Conclusion

This study identified relationships between media preference, personality, and communication aptitude. Walther's (1992) SIP theory was supported as time in the work place led to increased preference for CMC. Utz's (2000) contribution to the body of SIP literature, individuals who score low on sociability communicate effectively through CMC, was also supported. In addition to confirming the findings of Walther and Utz, the study identified a strong relationship between self-identification as a strong F2F communicator and a preference for F2F over CMC. Ongoing SIP research in the field of organizational communication is necessary to advance our understanding of the way communication media are utilized in the work place. As the telecommunications era matures, it seems Mcluhan's (1964) notion that the medium is the message is becoming increasingly relevant. Media selection communicates information in much the same way that non-verbal cues communicate information in F2F interaction, and SIP is a useful vehicle for understanding how and why employees are selecting communication media.

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WEAVING ACCREDITATION STANDARDS THROUGHOUT A BUSINESS SCHOOL'S CURRICULUM, SPECIFICALLY COMMUNICATION SKILLS: A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract

With continued thrusts to show and document that students have actually learned throughout their time in college from stakeholders, institutions have adopted assurances of learning (AoL). This article discussed one method used to capture this data. It involved tracking a student's writing as a freshmen and again when that same student is a senior to determine whether learning has occurred. This provided opportunity for faculty to improve the quality of their instruction and improve student learning and achievement. Even though it was a small sample at least 75% of the students demonstrated an increase in knowledge from the initial data collection as a freshman to the final data collection as a graduating senior. Recommendations include continued monitoring and increasing the sample size.

Communication skills are ranked among the top ten of desired skills needed by business graduates. Survey research indicates that business graduates lack communication skills needed by employers. This is supported by recent surveys. (Farrington, 2014; Hanneman & Gardner, 2010; Henricks, 2007; Rimer, 2011; Tugend; 2013; White, 2013; "Why Aren't Companies Getting Grads…", 2013)

To ensure that institutions of higher education are providing opportunities to their students to meet the business and industry needs, one needs to determine their students' current knowledge and skills at the beginning of a business degree program and then determine their students' knowledge and skills as they are graduating from a business degree program.

The questions posed are (1) how to determine the current knowledge and skill levels of students, specifically, communication skills and (2) how do educators determine if learning has occurred?

In the article, "Why Aren't Companies Getting Graduates with the Skills They Need?" (2013), Bruce Nolop highlighted the growing communication deficiencies displayed by recent college graduates in the workplace. He proffers possible reasons for this disturbing trend, but also provides potential solutions to mitigate and/or eliminate such communication issues. With this being said, he cited possible deficiency reasons as playing video games, watching television, texting, and failing to read in the their leisure time. White (2013) reported that there is a considerable disconnect between employers' definition of job ready and the college graduates. Farrington (2014) reported that college graduates are primarily interacting with their peers and failing to have the exposure to business communication models used in the workplace. As a result this lack of practice has impaired their communication process. Hence, college graduates do not know the proper communication techniques and strategies to use with clients and bosses. This is important since Tugend (2013) mentions as the workforce becomes leaner, it is imperative that college graduates possess not only good communication skills; but they must be able to select the appropriate channel to deliver messages. Have a lack of proper communication in the corporate world puts college graduates at a disadvantage. Basically, college graduates might possess the knowledge; however, they lack the corporate world application side.

Today institutions of higher education are being asked to provide documentation that student learning has occurred and that the student learning outcomes align with the school's mission which in turn aligns with the university's mission to create a common thread. (AACSBI, 2011; Louisiana Board of Regents, 2001, 2011a, 2011b; Rimer, 2011; Henricks, 2007; Hanneman & Gardner, 2010)

Institutions of higher education are expected to provide students with learning opportunities that enhance their skills sets. These opportunities vary by institutions, as well as, the assessment techniques and strategies used to measure that learning has occurred. Various assessment methods can be used such as (1) student selection measurements; (2) course embedded measurements; or (3) demonstration through stand-alone testing or performance. (AACSBI, 2011) For example, to meet AACSBI accreditation standards for assurance of learning (AoL), Gardiner, Corbitt, and Adams (2010) used an assessment model for measuring student learning outcomes (AoL); specifically, written communication. This particular school found its accounting students to be weaker in written skills; therefore, the accounting faculty decided to implement changes in their major courses to include extra writing assignments. Rimer (2011) stated that college students are not being challenged. Half of the students reported not being assigned intense writing assignments. Hanneman and Gardner (2010) found that employers are seeking a well-rounded college graduate. Henricks (2007) reported that college graduates were not adequately prepared to write business documents. He reported that employers felt it was the job of the educational institutions to prepare graduates.

The purpose of the study was to provide appropriate documentation that determines whether student learning has occurred; specifically in the area of business communication. Therefore, students' business communication knowledge and skills were assessed upon entrance into the business degree program and assessed at end of the business degree program. Specific questions addressed by this study are

(1) What is the student's current business communication knowledge and skills as they enter the business degree program?
(2) What is the student's business communication knowledge and skills upon completion of the business degree program?

For this pilot study, data was collected using pre-test assessments and post-test assessments. In the fall 2010, business students enrolled in an entering freshman orientation class at a regional southern university were the participants. In the fall 2013 and spring of 2014, business students enrolled in a senior-level management class were the participants. For comparison purpose, we used matched pairs. From these two groups we were able to identify five students who had completed the assessment as entering freshman and as graduating seniors.

Using a faculty developed grading rubric consisting of 25 total points the assessment is divided into two parts: an e-mail message and a business document. The e-mail message is worth 10 points and the business letter is worth 15 points. Students are required to create a business letter addressing a business problem and deliver the letter as an e-mail attachment to the ‘mock employer’, the professor. Information regarding the business problem which focuses on management performance appraisal issues is provided and students are to create a one page business letter describing their solution and recommendations to solve the problem. This particular assessment combines critical thinking, content matter knowledge, and technology mastery. At least 75% of the students must earn 70% or better on this written business document.

Using a 25-point based grading rubric, the paired assessments were rated by five raters. The e-mail message was rated for format and content – 10 points. The business letter was rated for format (5 points) and content (10 points).

Of the five matched pairs, three scored an 84% or better on the final business document and 1 student scored 65% and 1 scored a 58%. Of the five students, four students demonstrated an increase in knowledge from the initial data collection as a freshman to the final data collection as a graduating senior; however, one student did score ½ point lower on the final assessment as a graduating senior. The ratings among the raters were consistent.

Since the target goal of 75% of the student must earn a 70% or better was not met on this written business documents for this sample of students, faculty decided to revise the grading rubric to emphasize the elements that were not met by this group of students. It is important to note that this was a very small sample and further analysis with a larger sample is needed to validate the results.

After evaluation of these business documents from the fall 2010 semester (freshman course) and the fall 2013 and spring 2014 (senior-level course), the raters suggested some clarification modifications be made to the scoring rubric to improve the process. The revised rubric will be used for the first time in the fall 2014-freshman level course, the business communication course, and the senior-level management course.

Based upon the raters' recommendations, the grading rubric was revised as follows:

(1) Leave E-mail criterion as is with no changes.

(2) Add the following clarification descriptions to the Attachment Letter criterion:

Dateline	No date		Has current date in appropriate format - May 5, 2014
Inside/Receiver Address	No inside/receiver address		Has complete inside address in appropriate format.
Salutation	No salutation		Has complete salutation - Dear Dr. Kilcoyne.
Body	No body	Has at least one paragraph.	Has more than one paragraph.
Complimentary Close	No complimentary close		Has complete complimentary close - Sincerely followed by sender's typed name and title if applicable.

Add the following descriptions to the Content & Spacing of the Attachment Letter:

Content & Spacing - Letter	**Not Acceptable (0)**	**Acceptable (1)**	**Excellent (2)**
Spacing (2)	Dateline, inside/receiver address, salutation, body, complimentary close are not in appropriate places, inappropriate spacing between major parts of the letter; paragraphs are not single spaced; no spacing available for sender's signature	One minor spacing error i.e. signature space	Dateline in appropriate place; double spaced appropriately; paragraphs single spaced.
Grammatical Errors (2)	Misspelled words, misused words, incomplete sentences, etc.	One misspelled word or misused word; no incomplete sentences.	No misspelled words; no misused words; no incomplete sentences.

Opening (2)-Gaining Attention	No introduction of topic		Has an appropriate introduction
Body (2) AIDA Model specifically, creating interest and desire.	Does not cover topic	Few items about topic	Has topic covered adequately.
Closing paragraph (2)-Requesting ACTION	No closing paragraph	Has closing paragraph with either contact information or requested action; but not both.	Has appropriate closing paragraph with contact information & requested actions if appropriate.

In fall 2014, three more matched pairs were identified. Of the three matched pairs, two scored an 88% or better on the final business document and 1 student scored 76%. Of this group, one of the students scored 100% on the final business document. All three students demonstrated an increase in knowledge from the initial data collection as a freshman to the final data collection as a graduating senior. The ratings among the raters were consistent.

Using the revised grading rubric to emphasize the elements that were not met by last group [n=5] of students, all three students [n=3] exceeded the target goal of 75%. However, once again it is important to note that this was a very small sample and further analysis with a larger sample is needed to validate the results.

It has been suggested that information regarding ALL grading rubrics will be brought to the students' attention and the business faculty members' attention so they can use them prior to assignment and/or project submissions. Using a sample grading rubric, students will be encouraged to complete a self-evaluation on all written assignments and projects. The grading rubric will be shared with those professors interested in reinforcing this skill set throughout the business degree program. For example, the same grading rubric will be used in the business communications course, in the marketing course, and in the management course.

Also, it was recommended that the written portion be given at another time and not in conjunction with another exam. The students could take the business letter assignment home to complete and e-mail back within 24 hours.

Data collected from this study is available to the various stakeholders. Information was used to make curricular revisions and to make adjustments where appropriate to class assignments and projects. Future studies will incorporate a larger sample in multiple classes.

In summary, to close the gap and prepare a business graduate with effective communication knowledge and skills for the corporate world, we must implement a knowledge and/or skills pretest prior to instruction. Throughout the business curriculum, we must provide the opportunities and activities that allow the students to practice the techniques and strategies learned and model effective communication knowledge and skills. Therefore, measurements will be taken in other courses as they progress through the curriculum.

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An Exploratory Investigation of the Role of Communication in Student Engagement and Learning

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Abstract

Instructors communicate with students in a variety of ways that positively or negatively impact student engagement and learning. These communications are the result of a complex set of factors that include instructors' personal characteristics, attitudes from previous experiences, and other conscious and unconscious motivations, including certain signals that instructors convey.

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate aspects of instructors' attitudes and behavior that may have negative consequences for student engagement and learning through an exploratory investigation of the role of communication. For this paper, we develop a prospective model to examine the negative effects of verbal and nonverbal communication on student motivation to learn.

Introduction and Problem

Instructors communicate with students in a variety of ways that impact their engagement and learning. While it should be the goal of instructors to maximize the positive effect and minimize the negative impact of these communications in their lectures, supplemental materials and interactions with students, too often this is not the case. Through their verbal and nonverbal communications instructors negatively impact student engagement and learning.

An instructor's source credibility, competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill affect how the instructor is perceived by students (McCroskey and Teven, 1999; Banfield, et al, 2006). A student's perception of an instructor is formed as the instructor interacts with and communicates concepts, principles, and other information to students.

While it seems logical to link faculty-student communications to student engagement and learning, much of what we think we know about the nature of this relationship is largely speculation. The purpose of this research was to investigate aspects of instructors' communications that may affect student engagement and learning. This research will provide a basis for a further study that will provide information could assist instructors in making adjustments their teaching style so that they are more likely to accomplish their instructional student learning goals.

Conceptual Framework for the Literature Review

Communication theory provides a basic framework for investigating faculty-student communications that may have positive and negative consequences for student engagement and learning. The components of this model include the (1) instructor (sender/signaler), (2) student (receiver/observer), (3) signals, (4) noise, and (5) feedback links.

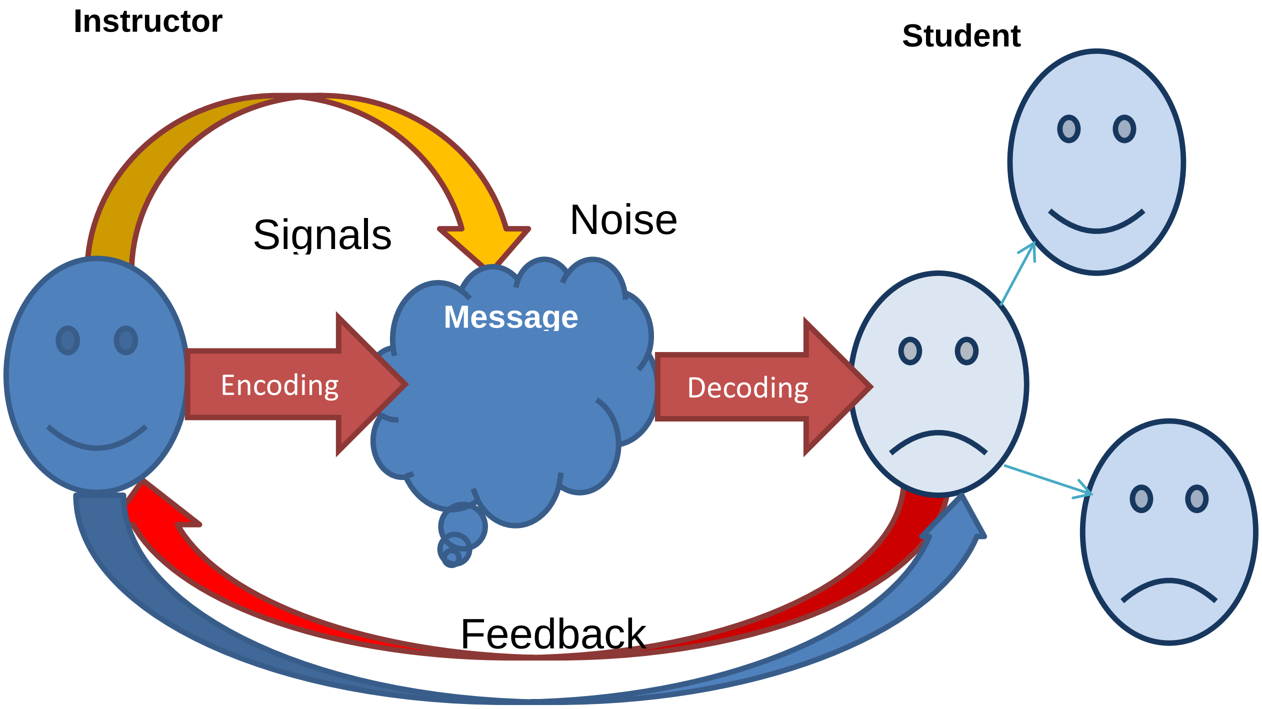


Figure 1: Interactive Communication Model

The instructor (*sender/signaler*) communicates with students in a variety of ways that may result in positive or negative outcomes. An instructor's communication techniques include signals, symbols and words. Communications based on words which are governed by a set of grammatical rules in the most effective, whereas symbols can be classified into word classes such as verbs, nouns, and propositions; signals only have referential relationships. With increased instructor clarity and credibility, a student's perceptions of the instructor's credibility increase. Researchers contend that credibility has potential to affect all communication events (McCroskey and Young, 1981). If students do not perceive an instructor to be credible, they will likely listen and learn less from the instructor (McCroskey, et al, 1974). Instructors should demonstrate a very good knowledge of the subject matter and contents of a course, and communicate and interrelate ideas and information within the subject matter. Overall misbehaviors such as indolence, incompetence and ineffectiveness are seen as anti-social communication skills which impact students negatively.

In this model, *signals* can be negative or positive. A signal should represent a valid and reliable measure if the underlying quality that it is attempting to communicate. Unintentional signals could potentially conflict with intentional signals and communicate negative information about the signaler to the receiver (students). Good signals are observable, irreversible, governed and credible (Connelly et al. 2011). Students receive both positive and negative information from instructors, and decide whether the information is useful or useless (noise). We use signaling theory to focus on actions instructors take to intentionally or unintentionally communicate positive or negative information to students. A key point is that both the signaler and the receiver should benefit from the signals. Signals by instructors are likely to stimulate either negative or positive outcomes for students by either reducing or enhancing cognitive and/or affective learning.

Noise represents anything that interferes with, distorts, or slows down the transmission of information sent by instructors to students. Noise can be implicit or explicit. An instructor's unrealistic expectation of students is an example of explicit noise. Examples of explicit noise are irrelevant course material, repetitive=ness, incompleteness, contradictions, lecturing in monotone, boring or confusing student s and overloading students with information. Noise is a learning distracter that interferes negatively with a student's motivation to learn. Limiting noise embedded in an instructor's messages could improve faculty-student relationships.

Decoding is the interpretation of signals sent by the source. As previously discussed the student is the receiver or observer. Even though a message is received, it may not be decoded as intended because the decoders may manipulate, alter or modify the message to reflect their own biases, needs, knowledge, culture, or other factors.

Transmission of a message requires a channel - voice, computer or other communication medium. At a fundamental level verbal communication convey meanings encoded into words. Meaning can also be conveyed nonverbally. Nonverbal communication is the process of sending and receiving wordless signals between people, a nonlinguistic transmission of information from the sender to the receiving observer. Visual impact is many instances are just as important as verbal impact in communicating meaning. Receivers of messages will make assumptions based on facial expressions, attire and personal appearance, body language and other visual signals. The mode of communication can be impacted by a variety of factors that includes the behavior, attitudes, and personal characteristics (sex, race, national origin and age) of both the sender and the receiver.

Feedback is a key element of the sender-receiver collaborative model. The receiver of the message decodes the message and responds to the sender with feedback to which the source of the message may respond. The communicative exchanges become a collaborative activity in which meaning emerges from the participants' collaborative efforts. A positive exchange of information between the instructor and student encourages a positive learning atmosphere where students excel academically. Instructors who fail to (1) provide student feedback on progress, (2) check to determine if students are progressing toward stated objectives, (3) respond to individual student's needs; and/or (4) change instruction based on result monitoring are likely to negatively impact student learning.

Faculty-Student Behaviors and Student Learning

The behaviors of students and faculty have been assessed in terms their impact on student learning. The general conclusion derived from these investigations is that instructor's misbehavior affects student learning. While students are often perceived as originators of classroom misbehavior Kearney, Plax, Hay and Ivey (1991) identified instructors as a "potential source of instructional and/or motivational problems in the college classroom". Their study identified 28 categories of teacher misbehaviors; and defined misbehavior as any teacher behavior that interferes negatively with instruction or student learning.

Gorham and Christophel (1992) categorized 2404 motivators and demotivators provided by 308 college students. Instructor behaviors accounted for approximately 44% of both motivators and demotivators, however, negative teacher behaviors were perceived as more central to students demotivation than positive teacher behaviors were perceived as central to motivation.

Their research supports findings of previous investigations (e.g., Kearney, Plax, Richmond, and McCroskey, 1984; Kearney, Plax, Richmond, and McCroskey, 1985; Kearney, Plax, Richmond, and McCroskey, 1986; Gorham, 1988; Gorham and Christophel, 1990; Gorham and Zakahi, 1990; Kelley and Gorham, 1988; Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey, 1987).

Banfied, Richmond and McCroskey (2006) examined the impact of incompetent, indolent, and offensive teacher misbehavior on students' perception of the instructor. The authors describe incompetence as basic skills of teaching that instructors should oppose. These could include the use of monotone, confusing students and unreasonable expectations. These behaviors show a lack of competence such as instructor's knowledge of subject matter or his/her teaching skills. Indolent behaviors are represented by instructor disregard for the students, such as missing class, rushing through class period in order to leave early and returning papers to students late. Offensive behaviors also includes instructors' tendency to abuse students verbally. These behaviors included humiliating, embarrassing, and insulting students (Kearney, et al, 1991). The results of this research show that offensive teacher misbehavior negatively impact students' affect for the teacher most, followed by the incompetent teacher and then indolent instructor. This research emphasized the importance of instructor misbehaviors on student's perception; however it does not address how misbehaviors directly impact teaching. Thweatt and McCroskey (1996) examined teacher nonimmediacy misbehavior and unintentional negative communications. Their study involved the manipulation of teacher immediacy and teacher misbehavior to determine their individual and combined impacts on perceived teacher immediacy and teacher misbehavior. The authors describe immediacy cues as eye contact, smiling, movement in the classroom, friendliness/approachable, and enthusiasm. Non-immediacy cues included not smiling, lack of eye contact, lack of movement in the classroom, unfriendliness and unapproachable. They concluded that nonimmediate instructors were perceived to be misbehaving even when no misbehaving was induced in the experiment; and students perceived teachers who communicate in nonimmediate ways as misbehaving.

Ishiyama and Hartlaub (2002) address the contents of the course syllabus as instructor communication that may affect student learning. They examine the impact of language that appears in the syllabus on students' perception of the instructor. The authors reviewed instructor's uses of "rewarding" or "punishing" phrases in describing course requirements. For example, "punishing" syllabus statement reads, "If for some substantial reason you cannot turn in your papers or take an exam at the schedule time you must contact me prior to the due date, or test date, or you will be graded down 20%." Whereas, a "rewarding" syllabus statement reads, "If for some substantial reason you cannot turn in your papers or take an exam at the scheduled time you should contact me prior to the due date, or test date, or you will be eligible for 80% of the total points." The conclusion suggests that first- and second-year students are particularly sensitive to the wording of the syllabi, especially whether they view the instructor as approachable. Their conclusion supports earlier studies which indicate a connection between the wording of a syllabus and a willingness of students to seek help from the instructor. Harnish and Bridges (2011) also examine the effects of syllabus tone on student's perceptions of the instructor. They concluded that a syllabus written in a "friendly", rather than "unfriendly" tone evoked a perception of the instructor as being warm, more approachable, and more motivated to teach the course.

Ambiguity tolerance is another factor related to communication and student learning. Ambiguity is the way students perceive, interpret and react to ambiguous instructor communications. Ambiguity occurs when instructors consistently interact with numerous meanings, incompleteness, vagueness, contradictions, probability or lack of clarity and consistency, a representation of "Noise" delineated in Figure 1. Thus, the level of a students' tolerance for ambiguity is determined by how he/she perceives and responds to uncertain situations (Stoycheva, 2003). Students who are characterized as ambiguity tolerant tend to have the capacity to recognize and analyze ambiguous conditions through their thinking processes, constructive practices and use of inductive and deductive reasoning. Whereas students with lower tolerance for ambiguity are in need of teacher cues, questions that focus on what is important and ample wait time to analyze information. Research suggests that tolerance for ambiguity is developed over time. As a result students with a higher level of ambiguity tolerance become adaptive allowing time to generate alternative responses to instructors' ambiguous behaviors.

Two other exceptional studies are those by Lantos (1997) and Komarraju (2013). These studies identify preferable teacher traits and behaviors; and provide principles for student motivation. Lantos (1997) provides nine instructor remedies called the "PROFESSOR" for motivating students to become active learners. These principles include (1) Pragmatic, problem-solving, and participation-provoking attitude; (2) Reward-dispensing and reinforcing attitude; (3) Objective-oriented and outcomes-achieving attitude; (4) Flexible and fluid attitude; (5) Enthusiastic and encouraging attitude; (6) Satisfier of students' needs and desire, and salesman-minded attitude; (7) Sincere and ethical, and straightforward attitude; (8) On-top-of-things and on-the-cutting-edge attitude; and (9) Rapport-establishing and relationship-building attitude. He provides methods and related activities for achieving each of the outlined motivation principles. For instance, in the pragmatic, problem-solving, and participation-provoking attitude, Lantos implies that applications-oriented problem solving in the classroom requires encouraging in-class participation through interactive teaching. He indicates that students should be encouraged to problem solve, plus talk, discuss, and write. He concludes that each possibility is an individual choice made by the individual student which instructors can only hope to influence by having the attitude of the PROFESSOR. Komarraju (2013) examined ideal teacher behaviors that motivate students. In his research, both instructors and students identified six desirable teacher behaviors which include being interesting, knowledgeable, approachable, fair, respectful, and having realistic expectations. Preferable teacher attributes include being sociable and intelligent; however defensive and neurotic were perceived as undesirable teacher behaviors.

Conclusions

The following tentative conclusions can the made from the concepts and research findings presented in the previous section.

1. Many instructor misbehaviors are either directly or indirectly the result of verbal or nonverbal communications.
2. Verbal communications and nonverbal communications may affect student motivation and learning either positively or negatively.
3. The impact of verbal and nonverbal communications on student learning may be moderated by personal characteristics (e.g., sex, race, national origin and age) of the instructor and student.
4. The impact of verbal and nonverbal communications on student learning may be moderated by other variables, such as student engagement, and tolerance for ambiguity.

These tentative conclusions suggest additional research is needed to better understand the relationship between instructor-student communications and student engagement and learning.

Additional Proposed Research

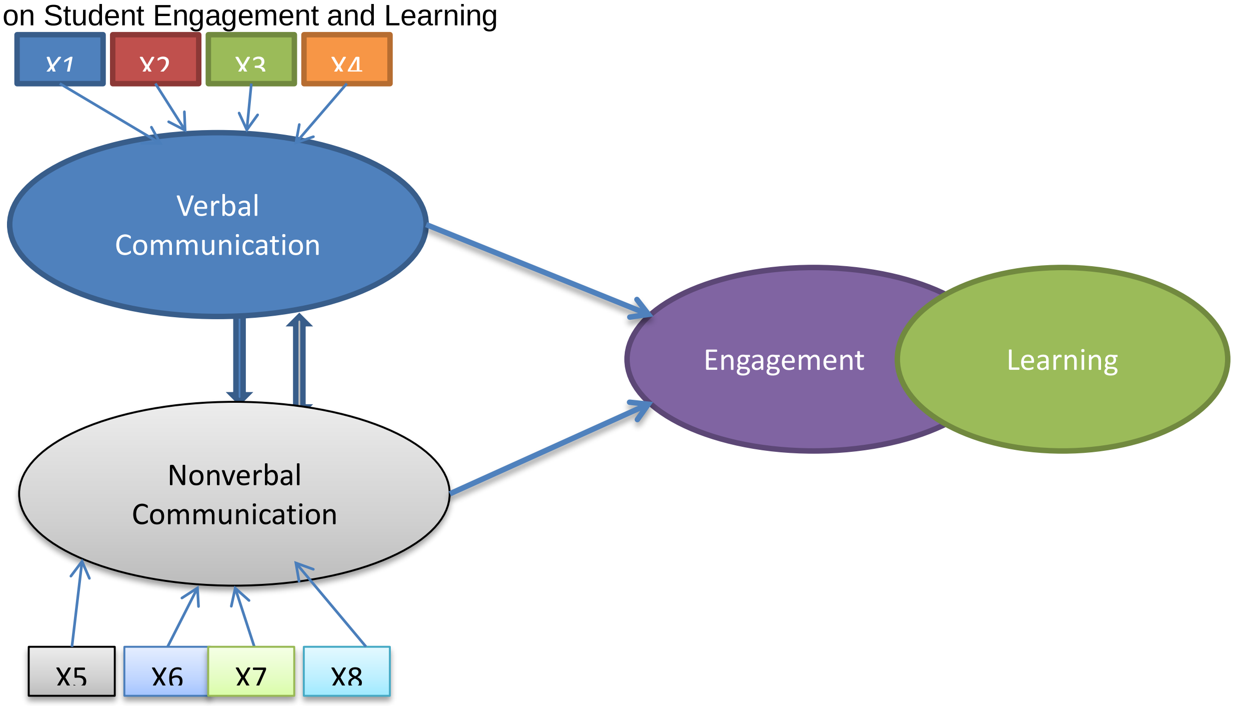
Additional research needed is summarized in the research framework shown in Figure 2 below. The model suggests that many verbal communication factors affect student engagement and learning. Factor X1 represents an inappropriate tone or vocal cues used by the instructor. X2 represents inappropriate language. X3 represents verbally abusive language such as humiliating, embarrassing, and insulting students. While X4 represents the use of monotone, boring, or the ineffective use of language such as an instructor's lack the ability to speak English effectively, or a heavy accent.

The model suggests that many nonverbal communication factors affect student engagement and learning as well. Those factors are represented by factors X5 through X8. X5 represents proxemics. Proxemics is a situation whereby an instructor gets in a student's private space, and is very confrontational to the point of intimidating students. X6 is kinesics. Kinesics is characterized by an instructor's body movements, gestures, facial expressions that portray negative signals to the student. X7 is the instructor's attitude. While X8 is the instructor's ethical standards that include violating a student's trust in the instructor, unfair grading, and other violations of ethical principles.

The framework suggests several research questions that need to be addressed.
1. What verbal communications affect student engagement and learning positively/negatively?
2. What nonverbal communications affect student engagement and learning positively/negatively?
3. What is the impact of communication on student engagement and learning when verbal communications and nonverbal signals are inconsistent?
4. Does a student's "tolerance for ambiguity" moderate the effect of inconsistency between instructors' verbal communications and nonverbal signals on student engagement and learning?

This model will be used in future research to access the impact of verbal and nonverbal communication on student engagement and learning.

Figure 2: A Prospective Model to Determine the Effect of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication on Student Engagement and Learning



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Impression Management in the Classroom:
A Case Study in Migration from Corporation X to Academia

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Abstract

Part narrative, part prescription, this paper will serve as advice worthy of reflection for those professionals considering teaching at the college level. And, we hope it will inspire seasoned instructors to take new adjuncts into their confidence to ensure positive first years for both the new adjuncts and the students who want to learn from them..

Introduction

Each year, new adjuncts enter the workforce at colleges and universities. Many of them are baby boomers who have either resigned, been resourced, or want a change. And many would be leaving corporate positions to step into a classroom of Millennials. In the corporate environment certain attitudes and behaviors are practiced and fostered that may not be especially valued in the classroom: e.g., abbreviated speech patterns, never appearing vulnerable, engaging in direct confrontation to name three.

Regardless of the validity or fairness, adjunct future contracts and longevity at an institution often rest to a large degree on the Teacher/Course Evaluations given by students; therefore, the generational differences between Millennials (most of the present student body) and Baby Boomers (many of the corporate retirees entering academia as adjunct) is related subject matter to investigate.

Moreover, the performance element of presiding over a classroom fits in nicely with Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective of everyday life being a series of performances. Impression management figures heavily into any career management practices. Impression management is defined as "the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them" (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1995; Priyaadharshini & Sandhya, 2010).

The multi-layered challenges—the cultural migration from corporation to academia, intergenerational differences between Boomers and Millennials, expectations regarding course evaluations—can serve to discourage new/recent adjuncts. Clearly the described situation is rife with possibilities for misunderstandings, missteps, and flawed performances. This paper shares the case of one such adjunct.

The paper will proceed as follows: First, a brief review of the salient components of impression management, next an overview of Baby Boomer and Millennial characteristics, then the narratives of two baby-boomer adjuncts (one the newcomer to academia, the other the mentor experienced in the culture of academia), and last, lessons learned along with recommendations for future new adjuncts.

Background: Theoretical Underpinnings

Impression Management

Definitions for impression management are replete across the disciplines, from sociology to psychology to business. One that we favor: “Impression management is the way people influence how others think about something else, usually themselves. People usually do this either to get something they want from others or to establish an independent identity. (Vitez, 2012). In both the corporate and academic environments, people who manage impressions well gain respect from colleagues or students and establish themselves as subject matter authorities.

Certainly, a seminal figure in the concept of impression management is Erving Goffman, author of The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959). He has been designated as the sixth most-cited author in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences by The Times Higher Education Guide. His dramaturgical model identifies daily interactions as, essentially, performances and the humans involved in them as actors who both give (intentionally) and give off (unintentionally) information. Moreover, a collaborative aspect exists in impression construction. In sum, we don’t “do” impressions alone. “We are not only gregarious animals, liking to be in the sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favourably by our kind” (William James, 1890, p. 293). Whether by accident or design, we are all always shaping impressions formed about ourselves. As actors, we then manage those impressions.

The preface to POSIEL indicates that Goffman believed his impression-management concepts could be widely applied “to any concrete social establishment, be it domestic, industrial, or commercial” [or, we might add, “corporate or academic”]. He goes on to say “the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them” (1959, preface).

Dramaturgy

“Dramaturgy,” representing the main components of a drama on a stage, is a term created by Gotthold Lessing in the mid 1700’s. Goffman then applied the concept of dramaturgy to everyday life. We are born onto the stage of life; we are actors playing our roles in the company of others who are also acting out their roles. For our purposes in this paper, we believe this dramaturgical model applies especially well to the situation of corporate citizen morphed to adjunct instructor. It is a major role change. And, the audience members for these “plays” also shifted dramatically from corporate minded colleagues to, largely, students (with all that implies: different interests, activities, and lifestyles, and often, a different generation).

Inter-Generational Values

Generation theory (Howe and Strauss, 2007) posits that generations form a cohort that adopts attitudes, values, and a personality based on shared events they experienced during their formative years. Michael Meeks’ work then takes generation theory and places it in the undergraduate classroom (2014). He asserts that we should not be surprised when friction, misunderstandings, or challenges occur. Baby Boomer instructors from the post WWII "cohort" and its end-of-the-world perspective, who were raised with scarce resources, whose parents were recovering from the trauma of war, who were competitive and driven and independent would be instructing Millennials from a cohort that was raised with the perception of infinite resources and technology, were involved in the family's decision making, were told that they were special, whose parents were often helicopter parents, and expected coaching, positive reinforcement, and instant access/gratification (Meeks, 2014).

According to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, Millennials process information selectively, quickly and not always completely. This organization declares that it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure Millennials "get it" and "get it all"! They offer a few ways to do just that, including offering multiple options for viewing information, requesting email confirmations that information has been received, using technology to stay in pretty much constant communication.

Case Study:

The narratives below present the personal experiences and perceptions of Author C ("C"orporate) and Author A ("A"cademic). Certainly we do not wish to imply that our stories are universal. However, some commonalities exist BETWEEN the narratives and possibly those commonalities could be relevant to any corporate Boomer now stepping into the Millennial classroom. Those commonalities will be discussed after the narratives.

Corporate (Author C's) Story. While my individual case is not universal, it is likely not unusual: A child of the 1950's, Baby Boomer, small-town America, educated, absorbed the message that I needed to succeed, no one directly mentored me, individualism/intelligence/purpose were highly valued.

Many of we Boomers enjoyed a childhood of respecting the authority of "THE" teacher in the classroom in which the only "in-touch-ness" occurred in the form of whispering and note passing. Parents insisted on deference to authority and tended not to coddle us to any great degree. This was the era of walking to school without fear of being snatched, riding bicycles without helmets, building forts in the back woods without parental supervision, and a general feeling of safety.

In the college classroom of the 1970's, instructors lectured to a large degree and I did a great deal of "figuring it out" for myself (with the "it" being navigating the academic environment as a student). Challenging a professor about a grade was rare. And the singular time I did so, it was with deference to professorial authority. Unlike the social meeting places of coffee shops where instructors and students "hang out," having an instructor take one out for coffee in the 1970's was rare.

Based on the environments described, for this author the message, whether overtly stated or covertly implied, was "play hard, study hard, work hard" and largely on one's own. After a decade of my own personal roaring twenties (Baby Boomers survived the 60's and 70's and valued exploration, liberalism, finding ourselves), I entered an international technology corporation at the bottom. It soon became apparent that to succeed, one had to play the game and that game included managing an image of competence, working strong but largely alone, and accomplishing things. Little emphasis was placed on collaboration at that time. Granted, some silos within the corporation (e.g., engineers focused on a project) would have established collegiality, and certainly my team and I interacted, but the focus was on individual accomplishment. I witnessed executives interacting and noted the assertiveness, at times aggressiveness, at times confrontations that made it clear you had to be tough. Nurturing was not on the menu

Organizational Culture

In corporations, image matters a lot. Individuals are promoted or let go based on the impressions they have managed either well or not so well. At the highest levels, corporate elite need to “look like they can command more of the organization’s resources . . . look like they can bring something that is valued from outside into the group . . . seem to have access to the inner circles that make the decisions affecting the fate of individuals in organizations” [emphasis mine] (Kanter, 1977, p. 169).

As with other organizational structures, an organizational culture develops and competence in navigating that culture is valued. In an earlier publication (2000, p. 13), one of this paper’s authors states: “Couching your corporate discourse in politically correct terminology and timing can be seen as displaying sophistication: You not only come across as a positive force, but also indicate that you know the game rules and how to astutely execute them” (2000, p. 13). As further support for the notion of cultural competence, Fey points to three additional sources: 1. Gumperz (1982, p. 43) believes that skillful usage of the verbal conventions of a position is often as important for acceptance as is learning the technical aspects of a position; 2. Ochs (1992) asserts that cultural values provide the basis for gaining your communicative competence; and 3.Wardhaugh (1992, p. 295) states that: ‘Part of a professional ‘face’ is being able to handle the language and ‘tools’ of a particular calling with assurance. To succeed and be accepted, you need to show you belong. Moreover, little (if anything) in regard to corporate cultural competence, including appropriate communicative competence, is overtly stated. You need to observe body language, behaviors at meetings, what is and is not said, and the reactions of others to same. in industry, one could excel as an individual and arms-length was where we generally kept our colleagues. And how to speak the vague generalities and acronyms of corporate speak.

“Part of a professional ‘face’ is being able to handle the language and ‘tools’ of a particular calling with assurance” (Wardhaugh 1992, p. 295). Our task (or at least mine) was to learn to navigate the ambiguity of the corporate culture “with assurance.” It was all quite subtle and non-explicit although extremely present.

More Corporate (Author C) Story. After leaving the corporation which had trained me so well in competence, personal distance, assertiveness, well-placed sarcasm, bowing to hierarchical superiors, and producing at all costs, I walked into the undergraduate classroom.

Within the world of industry, the do’ers, the buy-in was great that “Those who can do, and those who can’t teach” (George Bernard Shaw, 1903). So I was done “doing” and my expectation was, sad to say, that this classroom gig would be a cake walk, an easy avenue to a bit of an income that would eventually lead into retirement. In shameful retrospect, I reluctantly admit this belief. Unfortunately, it is true and I would assume others leaving the doing world of industry will think the “non-doing” world of teaching will be less demanding.

My expectations of how students would view and interact with me were based on prior experiences. The notion that I would naturally be considered an expert and deferred to seems pretty reasonable as did the expectation that students should not be coddled and should be held “out there” so as not to get too close. As a result of the background and beliefs, my initial behaviors included the following:

• Talking down to students
• Employing sarcasm
• Focusing on what needed to be fixed
• Not encouraging office hours or personal interaction
• Not staying in touch
• Extremely terse emails (“go figure it out for yourself”)
• Lack or positive statements or encouragement
• When unsure of an answer, speaking in vague generalities (the “corporate speak” of old)

After a decades-long corporate career, I was used to finding information and processing it and not relying on someone to look over my shoulder to ensure I had not missed something. When students would email me with questions that had been explained in the syllabus, or that had: instructions that had been posted on line, I would get frustrated and, candidly, a bit angry. My impression was that they were being irresponsible and immature, and it was not up to me to parent them. A response I might send would have sounded like this “Joe, The instructions were posted online. Did you not read them? Dr. X.” I was simply not comfortable with the degree of coaching (or, as I thought of it “hand holding”) that the students wanted.

Academic Story (Author A). Much like my corporate-trained friend, I grew up a few years earlier, with similar ground rules for the acceptable and expected. My parents sacrificed to send me to an excellent liberal arts college where I became an English Major. In the late 1960s, teachers didn’t offer much response to papers, and I remember no instruction in methods of analysis or phrasing for maximum impact. In fact, our writing was devoted exclusively to enthused admiration for whatever our professors chose to assign us.

Just before graduation, the head of the English Department called in all the female English majors and recommended we attend Katharine Gibbs Secretarial School, telling us, “You’ll never get a job if you can’t type.” I resisted that, instead earning a Masters’ degree and teacher certification at the same time; I taught second grade for seven years before stopping to raise a family.

When my children were 12 and 14, I had to return to work. What could I do? Proffering a Master’s degree in Children’s Literature, I asked my local college’s English Department if they needed someone; fortunately, they needed a teacher for one section. It soon became apparent that earning a degree in a subject and teaching that subject are very different tasks, even though I had kept up with children’s books as my own children grew up. The day before the semester started, the department head called me in. Could I also teach two sections of composition? I answered honestly, “No.” The next day, of course, found me teaching 70 composition students.

On that first day, I misspelled the word “English” on the chalkboard, not an auspicious beginning, since I blushed and sputtered. My friend, a therapist (but not mine), suggested that a teacher should model the desired response to error. Together we decided that a good writer would want to fix the error, thank anyone who identifies it for the editorial help, avoid defensive moves, apologize if the error cost anyone money or time, and simply move on. When explaining this response to students, I start walking at the “move on” part. It turned out to be liberating for me: I could make an error in front of my students and teach them something valuable at the same time. For the first few semesters, I scheduled mistakes, but it soon became obvious that error would occur, scheduled or not. I then simply waited for the teachable moment.

Academic Culture

While Author C was observing and soaking in the corporate culture, I was doing the same in academia. The notion of cultural competence is one part of corporate life that migrates well into academic life. The values of academia might be somewhat different than that of the corporation. Still, a new academic must demonstrate that she belongs. “Self-presentation is an ineluctable fact of modern life in general and of organizational life in particular [be it corporate or academic], and may often be an excellent way for people to achieve their goals” [brackets mine] (Baumeister, 1989, p. 59). Twenty years ago, my college-teacher transformation started from the outside in: I learned to dress the part first, then began acting the part before actually teaching much.

Whereas Author C focused on the value placed on impressions in the corporation, I found that in academic culture, teachers’ impressions, and thus salaries, are at least partly based on Teacher/Course Evaluations, which locally employ a confidential questionnaire asking students for opinions about the class and the teacher (http://tce.arizona.edu/content/performance-appraisal). This survey addresses faculty effectiveness and student learning. The results are then used in “annual reviews, promotion and tenure dossiers, and employment-related decisions” for the teacher. The assumption is that the questions lead to “evidence-based reasoning and decision-making” about the teacher and the course, with excellent teachers rated highly, but the site itself recognizes the “limitation of student ratings as a measure of teaching effectiveness and teacher quality.” While a good teacher may be highly rated, a highly rated teacher may not be a good one. Anecdotally, local students self-report giving higher scores to instructors who are “fun” and likeable. Our programs require strong recommendations from TCEs.

And, while Author C was finding that arms-length was the appropriate mental and physical distance to maintain in the corporation at that time, I found that in the classroom demonstrating care and concern for individual students was important. Having a good relationship with students is essential.

The present

The ordinary work contexts of corporation and academia provide the contexts for this paper. Based on our experiences in both, we believe the practice of impression management to be an essential element to the success of the actor in both situations. The identification of a mentor/practitioner in these contexts can help the actor (individual) know what constitutes appropriate behaviors and appearances. These “sign vehicles” as designated by Goffman (1959, introduction) help all actors involved to define the situation. The lack of a mentor/guide condemns the primary actor (corporate employee or academic instructor) to a nebulous practice of trying to “figure it out for herself” . . . rather like feeling one’s way down a dark corridor guessing about what one is feeling and where to step next.

The dramaturgical model supplied by Goffman is especially applicable to the classroom with instructor filling the role of actor; lecture/presentation as performance, and students as audience. Nevertheless, Author C’s performance as instructor (actor) was off base. She misunderstood her student audience, assuming they would be as she had been at their age. AND she lacked tools for actually conducting her “performance” in the classroom. The first couple years of Author C's teaching did not return confidence-building evaluations. It was obvious to her that the skills that had served so well in the corporate environment might not be working so well with a student audience. What to do? Fortunately, Author A, who had not worked in corporate America and who was a successful instructor respected and beloved by her students, agreed to provide some pointers.

Improving your impression in the classroom

We've found that implementing the following suggestions increased our student approval rates, but also enhanced our own satisfaction with teaching, perhaps the more important of the two.

Recommended behaviors:

1. Sell the course: convince students that your class will offer them something they need to succeed in the world of work, and that every level of writer will benefit, from the beginner to the advanced. The students who are admitted to Business School are accustomed to success in writing, so they may not perceive a need to change. Without the conviction that this writing class is somehow different from previous ones, students may be unwilling or unable to identify and adopt new strategies. One way to achieve that is to analyze real business letters, pointing out the ways that writers use the basic principles of effective business writing.

2. Learn students' names right away and use them frequently in class. Because communication classes are so teacher-intensive (written comments take time), these classes are usually smaller than others; you may be the only faculty member who knows these students by name. Take student pictures, make a cheat sheet, and study the names. Consider using a tent card on the desks with first and last name for the first few days to help. Challenge yourself to memorize the names by the end of the third class. In addition, establish eye contact around the room as you talk. These actions create a personal relationship between teacher and student.

3. Assign a regular Personal Introductory Memo on the first day that presents the student's brief biography, activities, and goals. Make notes about these items of information. Remember salient facts about individuals such as their home town or team memberships. Then you'll have topics to generate social talk with individuals.

4. Have compassion for the students who cannot imagine that their writing is not perfect. Also, have compassion for those who have no idea what to do. Some Millennials have had regular one-on-one contact with adults and expect to charm and impress their teachers, perhaps believing the self-esteem-building praise that was so popular in their childhood. Others have never had face-time with teachers. Either may find detailed feedback either insulting or overwhelming. A pleasant attitude and a lack of shaming can help frame critique as help.

5. Reinforce the behaviors you want to see in class. It doesn't have to be gushy, but a nod, a thumbs-up, or simple "Yes!" can make the student who contributed a perceptive idea to the class want to produce more. Others will emulate that behavior. If students stand out for some reason, let them know.

6. Invite students who don't do well on an assignment to come to office hours to get a tune-up for skills they need. Consider giving them a second opportunity on an assignment for additional points or even a new score. Office hours are underused, and a few private lessons can cure some bad habits as well as help a student get on the right track.

7. Encourage students to ask questions. Even when we Boomers think we have given very explicit instructions, Millennials may not understand our language or intentions. Think of a question as an aid to more than just the question-asker—many students are afraid to ask anything for fear of looking stupid. Don't treat them that way. Write an email thank-you to students who ask questions. Assume that if one student wants to know an answer, more do, also; it may be worth posting email answers to the class listserv or website.

8. Model good behavior when error [inevitably] occurs: fix the error, thank the finder for the editorial help, apologize if the error cost someone money or inconvenience, and move on. Help your students practice this behavior.

9. Make your criteria for evaluation understandable. Some students have never seen a good paper, nor have they doctored a bad one. Consider saving examplars of each to have students compare, improve, grade, or dissect (a student sign-up sheet allowing you to use work in future classes is appropriate here). Never identify work by student name. Ask students to pair up, discuss the work, and make suggestions, then discuss as a whole class. Ask students to articulate reasons behind their judgments. When students assign grades, compare your grades with theirs and explain your thinking.

10. Look at office visits as a chance to enhance learning, not a drain on your time. Some students need more reinforcement to learn than others do. Tell students that helping them is an exchange: in return for help, students must listen to an explanation. If you worry about becoming someone's personal editor, give feedback on only part of the assignment. Start by smiling and greeting the student. Make this a pleasant social occasion.

11. Include humor when possible in class activities. You can google, collect, and characterize jokes to insert in PowerPoints. You can collect stories to tell in class, avoiding ones that demean or disparage other students (since students will correctly predict that they may be a part of your next semester's stories).

12. Schedule one-on-one conferences. Even though these take time, they are worthwhile. Listen to students. Allow them to direct the help you give them.

13. Accommodate special needs. A working student should be allowed to sign up for conferences first, since work schedules are usually compromised by class times already. A learning-disabled student may need more help at the beginning of an assignment, or a sick one may need an extra help session to catch up. Everyone appreciates being seen as an individual.

14. Being kind doesn't mean being a pushover. Build consequences into your syllabus, such as taking a point off a semester average for each absence over two. If there are consequences for turning in late work, explain those in the assignment, preferably in writing. Teach students to read assignments, showing them how they can confirm that they meet the requirements. That way, if a student doesn't live up to expectations, you don't need to feel let down or angry; the students have the opportunity to earn a grade, and sometimes they don't choose to do that.

Our local Millennials are not a monolithic group: they are multi-cultural, especially in the business school, and they include local and foreign non-native speakers as well as both high and low achievers. They have multiple attitudes toward learning and success. They grew up with technology and increasingly communicate only by texting and social media sites, many rarely using email. Business students at our University are motivated to do well, but may lack the skills to acquire the information they need to succeed. Rather than being a homogeneous group, the Millennials we know and teach are individuals. While research has categorized them as everything from truly great to whining complainers, they are, simply, young people. And we are the lucky adults who get to both model and encourage their adult behaviors. While doing so, we should maintain a persona that is accepting and patient. The return is a student who is engaged and learning . . . And a satisfied, motivated teacher excited to be connecting to her/his students.

Summary

This paper has examined one particular case of a formerly corporate citizen moving into an academic, traditional classroom. The case, while not universal, is common in that adjuncts frequently migrate into teaching from prior careers. Nationwide, approximately 70 percent of the faculty engaged in instruction is made up of adjuncts and the trend continues to grow. (June, 2012.) It is reasonable to expect that as more Baby Boomers continue to work to build their nest eggs for retirement, corporate employees will continue to join the ranks of adjuncts.

Further, we discussed the expectations that are likely to accompany those corporates-now-adjuncts with expectations having been built on decades of demonstrating cultural competence in industry and a typical Baby Boomer childhood. Again, we do not assume that all Boomers had identical familial experiences, nor do we assume that about corporate culture. However both have been studied and written about sufficiently to identify some commonalities that were applicable to this paper.

Dr. Meeks' work on the unsurprising clash between Baby Boomers and Millennials constituted another dimension of this paper. His work served as a springboard into the ample literature discussing the characteristics of the Millennial generation.

To the readers who are still left wondering "So, did Corporate Author C ever revise her expectations and behaviors? Did she ever get it together and connect with her students? And did her teacher evaluations increase?" We can confidently reply "Yes!". Academic Author A's recommendations and sage advice did prove to be helpful. Most especially the practices of praising and appreciating the students where appropriate and true. As a result, Instructor C's perspective has shifted from "Bothersome student, you are keeping me from my work" to "You ARE my work".

Impression management research surrounding the Boomer – Millennial interactions online, especially within the vehicle of email, is our next venue to explore.

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Why Do Good Employees Leave a Good Organization? Communication, Commitment, Satisfaction, and Empowerment

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Abstract

Our paper addresses voluntary turnover decisions in a manufacturing organization and the close connection of leader communication to the final decision to leave. Business communication researchers have emphasized how poor organizational communication leads to "lower staff commitment, reduced production, greater absenteeism, increased industrial unrest, and higher turnover" (Hargie, Tourish, & Wilson, 2002). Furthermore, communication satisfaction is positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, both antecedents in the turnover decision (Madlock, 2012). Organizational commitment, empowerment, and job satisfaction were other variables examined in our study. An international manufacturing company (N=670) located in a central city in Mexico was the focus of the study. The company's human resources department made available to the researchers exit survey data taken over a period of three years (2012-2014) and the database was analyzed for the study. Results from the exit surveys, however, did not support our research question of a close relationship between leader communication and the turnover decision. Instead, the reasons for turnover appeared to be a labor market mentality existing in the region. When companies establish their production facilities and plan operations based on the low-wages average, they introduce new positions with low salaries, resulting in the high turnover problem. That is, employees "abandon" their work for employment in a new company in hopes of improving their work conditions, although they may have satisfactory leader communication in their current position. The researchers plan a second phase of the study which will examine in detail the relationship between leader communication and the turnover decision.

Voluntary turnover decisions persist as a primary concern for managers in today's business organizations. High costs of recruitment, expenditures for training, and general outlays related to employee assimilation negatively impact the organization's economic bottom line. Moreover, when long-term employees leave, their exit creates a gap in know-how or institutional knowledge which effects the long term economic well being of the enterprise. To address the complex turnover life cycle, Peterson (2004) developed a useful longitudinal model that presented an array of variables leading up to an employee's final decision to leave. The model provides a theoretical foundation to guide communication researchers on the topic of turnover. We utilize variables from her model in our research.

Peterson (2004) described pre-entry attributes (such as personality characteristics) as antecedents to initial organizational entry, identified employee expectations and motivations (intentions, goals, commitment, and satisfaction), and cited other attributes that are filtered through the employees' organizational experiences. These organizational experiences include important relationships and activities which integrate into the employee's experience on the job and relate directly to the turnover decision. In essence, the model represents a "life-cycle" of employee turnover. Our research omits these pre-entry attributes and considers employee expectations and motivations of leader communication, employee commitment, job satisfaction, and the employee's feeling of empowerment on turnover in an international company. Our data analysis did not examine pre-entry information from respondents and instead focused on organizational experiences of employees. Specifically, we believed effective leader communication would emerge in a dominate relationship as an antecedent variable impacting turnover. We also analyzed whether other prominent antecedent variables of employee commitment, job satisfaction, and employee empowerment, would remain significant under scrutiny in an international context. Will analysis of these variable relationships shed new insight on a high turnover issue in an international context?

Communication

Measurement of organizational communication has been featured in the literature for decades (Jacobson & Seashore, 1951, Hargie, Tourish, & Wilson, 2002). "Communication audits" popularized this trend in 1979 with the publication of the International Communication Association (ICA) communication audit instrument (Goldhaber & Rogers, 1979), a multidimensional 100-plus item assessment that revealed high validity and reliability. These early communication assessments emphasized quantitative aspects of communication, such as time spent reporting information, timeliness of information, and sources of information. For researchers, measuring frequency and quantity of information made the "soft skill" of human communication easier to quantify. For employees involved in the audit, the lengthy and complex audit assessment created "fatigue bias," leading Barnett, Hamlin, & Danowski (1981) to offer "a new and more precise method of measuring organizational communication than the one currently used in the ICA Communication Audit and other similar audit systems" (p. 470).

Within the same time period of the development of the ICA Audit, Downs and Hazen (1977) and Downs (1988) developed similar, shorter instruments to assess qualitative communication and communication satisfaction. Many of these instruments included items on job satisfaction and the instruments measuring organizational communication rightly placed high importance on communication as core to the success of an enterprise (Conrad and Poole, 2012). New management terms appeared in the literature, such as *communicative health*, *vertical* and *horizontal* communication flow, properly functioning *communication systems*, and *blockages* in communication *channels* (Hargie, Tourish, & Wilson, 2002), yet few studies assessed the impact of the organizational communication variable as an antecedent to turnover. Other researchers agree that employees' voluntary decisions to change jobs is complex and the final decision involves a variety of factors (March and Simon, 1958; Porter and Steers, 1973; Steers and Mowday, 1981). Several antecedent variables have emerged to the forefront in those investigations.

The comprehensive model of Peterson (2004) briefly addressed communication variables as part of organizational experiences. Communication included interactions with managers, interactions with co-workers, and information gathering and decision making by employees, all of which compartmentalized communication as part of job satisfaction. Other communication factors were mentioned, such as positive group and leader relations, participative management, consideration of employees, and "procedural justice" (for procedural justice see Lau and Wong, 2009; Rhoades, et al., 2001).

Extensive evidence supports how effective leader communication increases organizational commitment and job satisfaction, yet little evidence directly addresses the impact of leader communication on turnover, especially in international cultures. Our study addressed in part the influence of leadership relationship on turnover rate in a manufacturing company as reflected in exit survey data. Our findings will help solve a pressing problem in our city and give human resource managers direction with training in their individual companies. Our results can also be applied in the classroom by business communication instructors when addressing organizational communication.

Turnover and communication

Leader communication as a key variable in the turnover decision has been addressed, yet lacks extensive investigation on the employee's decision itself to leave; Hargie, Tourish, & Wilson, 2002; and Thomas, Zolin, and Hartman, 2009). Hargie, Tourish, & Wilson (2002) emphasized how poor organizational communication leads to "lower staff commitment, reduced production, greater absenteeism, increased industrial unrest, and higher turnover" (p. 415). Thomas, Zolin, and Hartman (2009) reported on positive connections among trust and quality and quantity of communication by examining the issue of communication in developing and maintaining trust among employees, which in turn leads to greater employee involvement. Turnover was not measured specifically. Further, Madlock (2012) examined the influence of cultural congruency on Mexican employees' communication behaviors, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. His findings revealed how communication satisfaction was positively related to the job satisfaction and organizational commitment, both antecedents in the turnover decision.

A concluding question from Peterson gave reason to include leader communication in our study: "To what extent do managers of employees at all levels in the organization have appropriate skills in general managerial principles, communications, group dynamics, and team building?" (p. 255). Apparently, effective communication is integral throughout the life-cycle of the employee through the turnover decision. Our intent is to measure more than quantity of communication, such as frequency or amount, and to assess quality of communication.

Empowerment

Employee empowerment became an important topic in the early 21st century in academic literature and the subject of much discussion in boardrooms. A growing literature suggests that proper employee empowerment by leaders in public and private sector enterprises can positively affect employee task performance and result in higher overall job satisfaction, organizational commitment and loyalty. We believe that employee empowerment is one of the crucial factors that influences turnover in companies and that through the proper empowerment of employees, human resource managers can decrease the turnover rate in their companies.

Conger & Kanungo (1988) define empowerment as an intrinsic construct meaning "enabling", rather than a simple empowerment of subordinates with power and resources. This definition implies that employees are not just given more responsibilities but more authority in decision-making and problem solving, resources, information and respective rewards. They become engaged in company operations on a deeper level and it increases efficiency (Sigler & Pearson, 2000) and effectiveness in the company as well as loyalty and job satisfaction of employees.

Scholars have considered empowerment as a unidimensional construct that can be measured using a single factor (e.g., Lee, Cayer, & Lan 2006; Mesch, Perry, & Wise 1995; Perry, 2004; Pitts, 2005; and Wright & Kim 2004). However, it is possible to find a useful multidimensional approach in the works of Bowen and Lawler (1992,1995) as well as Thomas & Velthouse (1990) where researchers propose four dimensions of empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. They refer to *meaning* as an individual's perception of the goals, objectives, and values of the work based on that person's own value systems and standards.

Raub & Robert (2013) characterize empowerment as increased employee autonomy and reliance on teams when supervisors delegate authority and employees share information, citing empowerment research by Blanchard, Carlos, and Randolph (1999) and Randolph (1995). We adopt Raub & Robert's conceptualization and measurement of empowerment for our study.

Background of Problem

Motivation for our study began when a human resource manager approached our school of business on the issue of high turnover in companies located in and around our city of approximately one million population. The HR manager commented how challenging it was to retain the employees despite all of the efforts to create special benefit programs incentives and offer valuable training. Apparently, the widespread problem of above average turnover is unique to our city and she requested we examine the problem.

The HR manager said high employee turnover was one of the primary problems they face day-to-day in their company. She emphasized how high turnover creates critical issues because of the direct and indirect costs to the employer. The greatest cost of exiting employees was realized in the resulting costs of recruitment and training. In many cases, when turnover occurs, the former employees carry with them specialized training and institutional knowledge received from their position. The company loses its financial investments as well as its time and efforts. A different individual who is a Chief Financial Officer for a German-based company employing 21,000 employees in Mexico across various plants, commented to one of the authors that his company experiences 30 percent turnover among new employees within their first few months of employment. He said the company sometimes responds by hiring several employees for each new position, knowing that at least one will work out over the long run.

The background of our study also concerns location. Our city of approximately one million people is located near the geographical center of Mexico and situated on one of the primary north to south highways. Industry is drawn to the area because of its strategic location. Labor market dimensions are often a factor (external variable) in employee turnover and one of the major factors for companies to come to the area was the possibility to have an access to the highly qualified rather than cheap talent pool. However, the HR managers said high qualifications seemed to magnify the high turnover problem.

The government characterizes the city as economically highly diversified and existing with an infrastructure that has the potential to sustain industrial development for many years to come. Investors believe this characterization and are told they have access to 76.0 percent of the Mexican GDP (Secretary of Economic Development, 2014) because of geographic location. Additionally, the city has many established factories from Europe, United States, Japan, Korea and China. Foreign Direct Investment is attractive for multinational companies because of tax exemptions, abundant tax-free land, and adequate infrastructure for their plants. While the range of industries present in the city's industrial area is extensive, employment has been helped by the formation of aeronautics and automotive industries, clusters which are driven by a large General Motors assembly plant and the recent acquisition by the state government of a BMW plant.

Research Questions

R1: What are the main reasons why employees leave a good company?
R2: What degree of influence does leadership communication, job satisfaction, employee commitment and the employee's feeling of empowerment have on the employee's decision to leave the company?
R3: What are the major demographic patterns of employees who leave the company in Mexico?

Methodology

Data collection for this research is planned to be conducted in two stages: January 2015 and late spring 2015. The first data set is reported in this paper and focuses on employees that already left the company. The second data set is scheduled to be obtained in the same company and several other manufacturing companies in the industrial zone of our city.

The first data set was intended to give a preliminary perspective on the problem of turnover and test basic assumptions of our research. Data were collected from the 465 employees who voluntarily left their positions between the years 2012 – 2014. As a part of company human resource policy, every employee who is leaving the company is required to complete a brief 10-item survey. Resulting data are coded into a spreadsheet by the HR office for analysis to be used in company reports. The researchers were provided with this data directly by the Human Resource manager of the plant for research purposes and analysis. The manager required them to sign a letter indicating complete confidentiality with handling the company information. The enterprise itself is medium-sized Mexican-owned steel manufacturing plant located in the central part of Mexico. Brief analyses of the data revealed an alarming 30 percent annual turnover rate in 2014 in the plant of 670 production line and administrative personnel as of December 2014.

Survey

The content and scaling of the exit survey were created by HR department. The survey begins with the general demographic information of the employees who have left. The database begins with the names of the employees. For research purposes, we created an additional gender variable that was not present before with female and male employee differentiation.

The next section of the database presented the data of the first day of employment and the last day of employment and the total time of the employee in the company. We grouped all the answer in five major sections: employees that were employed in the company

1) Less than 3 months
2) From 3 to 6 months
3) From 6 to 12 months (1 year)
4) From 1 to 3 years
5) More than 3 years

Another interesting demographic variable was the age of the employees. We grouped ages in five major categories: less than 20 between 20 and 24, between 25 and 35, from 36 to 49 and more than 50.

The actual survey starts with asking employees to indicate their motive for ending employment, such as voluntary resignation, end of contract, withdrawal before the stated date of termination on the contract, or other reasons. About 10 demographic information items, group together in a box without numbers, followed this initial query about motive. Next, the researchers examined the remaining survey questions to determine whether the items were related to job satisfaction, leader communication, or empowerment. Q1 asked respondents about their principal motive to leave the company. Respondents could choose from a list of 10 options or choices, included salary, personal problems, relations with co-workers, and relationship with supervisor, difficulty with transportation, problems with working shifts, change of the company, the end of the contract, routine (not challenging job responsibilities), relationships between the direct manager, job abandonment (the data registered by human resources personal). Researchers believed one option, *relationships with co-workers*, related to job satisfaction as well as the option of transportation issues, issues with the working shifts. Two other Q1 options related to leader communication, including *relationship with immediate supervisor* and As well be could see the relationship between the empowerment variable and routine job activities of employees.

The next question in a survey asked whether employees were satisfied with responsibilities and activities that they were performing in the organization. There were only two options to answer these questions: yes or no. We related this question to job satisfaction variable.

As we have mentioned earlier, we related the question of how routine are the job responsibilities of employees with empowerment. In this question once again there were only to options for the answer: yes or no.

One of the most important questions for our research was about the relationships of employees with their immediate boss. A three-point interval scale was used to evaluate this question with options: Extremely satisfied, satisfied and regular.

Another question that we related to empowerment was whether the employee was given all the necessary training, tools and equipment to perform well in the job (Yes or no answers). And finally the last three questions focused on empowerment. The first one is whether the employee was given an orientation from his immediate boss during his time in the company (Yes or no answers) and whether the employee had a chance to implement this suggestion (yes or no answer). And the last question asked if opinions and suggestions of employees were taken into consideration in the company. It was measured with a Likert scale as well and the answers ranged from generally yes, regularly and never.

Results

Demographic analysis revealed the average age of those who had left the company voluntarily (N=372) during 2012-2014 was 31 years. No employee were less than 20 years old, 58 (15.7%) were 20-24 years of age, 224 (60.5%) were 25-35, and 86 (23.2%) were 36-49 years of age. Two employees (0.5%) who exited were over 50 years. Thus, 84% of those who left indicated their ages between 25-49 years. Although human resources did not collect data related to gender, the researchers conducted a review of first names appearing in the data and determined 266 males (72%) and 106 females (28%).

The researchers also examined the length of time employees had worked prior to leaving the company. Information about the exact number of years and months the employee had worked prior to leaving was given to the researchers along with their responses to the survey. Because the original data contained one unique date for each employee and were not organized into periods of employment, the researchers condensed the array of times into five categories reflected in Table 1. Not unexpectedly, over one-third (32%) left the company within the first three months and 71.7 % (267 of 372) left within the first 12 months.

Table 1

Length of Time Employed Prior to Exit	N	
0 – 3 months	143	38.4%
> 3 – 6 months	69	18.5%
> 6 – 12 months	55	14.8%
> 1 yr. – 3 yrs.	62	16.7%
> 3 years	43	11.6%
TOTAL	372	

This next section will briefly focuses on the results of the survey questions related to our variables under investigation. Q1 gave employees 10 different options to indicate their principal motives for leaving the company. Analysis of respondents' answers were limited because scaling was in nominal data format. Interestingly, the option selected most was "abandonment of work" (N=91). We mentioned earlier that "abandonment of work" was defined as an employee who left work one day and did not return. An HR department member later would complete the initial section of the exit survey, including age, first day of employment, department, immediate supervisor, total time at the company, and last date of employment. Other motives most selected were *salary* (N=84, 23%), *personal problems* (N=74, 20%), and "other," which will be discussed in the conclusions. Interestingly, one of the lowest selected options was *relationships with co-workers* (N=6), perhaps implying satisfactory relationships with co-workers on the job.

Q2 addressed job satisfaction by asking, "I felt satisfied performing the functions and activities of my work." Although the scaling allowed only yes or no answers for respondents, nearly all indicated "yes" (98.1%) and few responded with no (1.9%).

Q4 related directly to leader communication by asking, "What was the degree of relational satisfaction did you have with your immediate supervisor?" Respondents were given a four-point scale from very satisfied to unsatisfactory. Approximately one-third were very satisfied (N=69 32.1%), others satisfied (N=89, 41.1%), and average (N=57, 26.5%), indicating three fourths of the sample expressed satisfaction with the relationship of the immediate supervisor. No respondents indicated an unsatisfactory relationship. Results from the next three survey questions relating to empowerment were are reflected in Table 2. Over 80% of exiting employees believed they received the necessary training and tools to do their jobs and were able to implement that training into the work process. They also believed they received proper orientation for their work.

Table 2

Responses to Empowerment Questions	Y	N
Q7 Company provided training & tools to perform work	193 (86%)	31 (14%)
Q8 Employee received proper orientation to perform work	182 (81%)	42 (19%)
Q9 Employee implemented training & tools into work	190 (85%)	33 (15%)

Finally Q10 appeared to be a clear empowerment question. Respondents were asked, "How did the company respond to your suggestions and comments to improve working conditions?” They were given three options: *Most of the Time, Some of the Time, and Never.* Overwhelmingly, 88% respondents indicated the company responded to suggestions and comments most of the time (38%) and some of the time (50%).

Conclusions

Our first research objective sought to identify the main reason why employees leave a Mexican company. Research in the field of human resources suggests that monetary remuneration of employees is not always the main factor in the decision making process of employee when he or she considers leaving the company. Thus, the researchers did not consider salary as important in influencing the employee’s decision to leave as variables such as leadership communication, job satisfaction, employee commitment, and the employee’s feeling of empowerment. However, the results of our statistical analysis showed that salary is the second major factor that affects the turnover in the company. Salary accounted for 23% of the respondents, implying that almost a quarter of employees were not satisfied with their salary and left the company in search of better salary and benefits. The researchers believed this result was significant because one of the main competitive attractions of city for companies is an inexpensive and well qualified labor force.

We can interpret this finding in several ways. First, the perception of this advantage is actually harming the labor market in the state. When companies establish their production facilities and plan operations based on the low-wages average, they introduce new positions with low salaries resulting in the high turnover problem. Another significant problem for a company that wants to use the low wage advantage is that it may decrease the cost of production in the begging, but latter the same enterprise will endure additional direct and indirect costs resulting from the high turnover.

Our data showed that a third, major motive for turnover in the company were “personal problems” (20%). We consider this percentage very high, but the database provided for the researchers did not shed light on exactly what kind of personal problems influence the employee’s decision to leave and whether it is possible for the company to influence these variables.

Interestingly, the research showed that the main reason behind the high turnover in the company (25%) is “abandonment of work”, a category that was not mentioned in the research of other authors. We defined “abandonment of work” as a situation when an employee one day stops coming to work and never comes back to finalize officially the relationship with the employer. Though the part of this percentage may be related to mortal accidents and any kind of health, personal or legal problems, our perception is that abandonment happens because of the poor work ethics and work culture. Possibly, it is related to the level of education of this employees and social background. This issue can be alarming for the new coming companies like BMW and its tier one and two suppliers. This is why we plan to focus on this problem more in the second part of our study.

Our second research objective was focused on identifying the influence of leadership communication, job satisfaction, employee commitment and the employee’s feeling of empowerment on the employee’s decision to leave the company. Surprisingly, these motives were almost insignificant in the decision of employees to quit the company. What is more, 98% of respondents were satisfied with functions they were performing at work, 72% of respondents were satisfied with their relationships with immediate their supervisor, and no respondents indicated unsatisfactory relationships. Ex-employees commented as well that they were provided with all the necessary tools and training to perform their work (86%), that they were getting the proper orientation (81%) and they were able to implement their ideas (85%) and that their suggestions were taken into consideration (88%). We can conclude that the results of the company in terms of leadership communication, job satisfaction, employee commitment and empowerment are positive and that these are not the main reasons for the high turnover.

Concerning research question three addressing the demographic profile of an employees who leave the company, they are male (72%), aged early twenties (60.5%), and quit the job within the first 6 months after being hired (56.9%) due to personal reasons or in search of the higher salary. We believe that this is the category of employees that should be carefully analyzed in our second part of research.

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How is the Use of Social Media Impacting Communication in the Classroom?

Marcel M. Robles

Eastern Kentucky University

Abstract

The use of social media in the classroom can increase student engagement and student learning if it is integrated effectively. Educators need to take advantage of the engagement that students currently have with technology and transfer that engagement to student learning. Further advantages of incorporating social media include increased student interaction, communication, motivation, involvement, and collaboration. As technology continues to change the face of teaching and learning, the effective integration of social media into the classroom via Skype, wikis, blogs, Twitter, YouTube, RSS feeds, Facebook, and other virtual sharing tools, enables educators to enhance student engagement that will promote increased student learning.

Statement of the Problem

Today's generation of college student is more fluent in technologies than any previous generation because they have grown up with digital media and are accustomed to sharing everything online. As educators, we need to make use of that engagement that students have in technology and shift their engagement toward student learning using that technology.

Introduction to Social Media

Web 2.0 is the "social use of the Web" that allows users "to collaborate, to get actively involved in creating content, to generate knowledge and to share information online" (Grosseck, 2009, p. 478). Facebook was created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 and is one of the most popular social networking sites used by college students (Roblyer et al., 2010). Social networking allows individuals to personalize a web site and interact with others based on their interests and activities (Kwong, 2007). Facebook is a social tool that allows people to connect, or "friend," other people—regardless of geographic distance. Millions of people use Facebook every day to communicate with friends; share links, photos, and videos; and learn more about other people they meet (Facebook, 2014). The mission of Facebook "is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (Facebook, 2014, p. 1). Facebook pushed social media into the mainstream with a diverse community of users at all education levels and areas of society, including companies and universities (Roblyer et al., 2010). Little research has been done on the trends, acceptance, and use of social media in education (Roblyer et al., 2010).

Social Media is one of those *buzzwords* that can be broken down to define the compound term:

- Social – activities where people spend time together through conversation
- Media – communication format to the masses

Then, a few adjectives need to be added to combine the two words for the accurate technological definition of the compound term:

- Social Media –*online* communication format to one other person or to the masses in which people *connect virtually* with others by *creating and sharing texts, photos, videos, audios, and other content electronically.*

Bradley and McDonald (2011) developed a similar definition of social media as an online environment opened for purposes of mass collaboration; in which all participants can create, post, rate, discover, use, and share content without a direct intermediary.

Social media use in education can improve communication and establish a sense of community that is user friendly, quick and timely, easily accessible, centralized, flexible, and more effective than traditional forms of message delivery (Klein, 2008); and students already know how to use Facebook and Twitter (Young, 2010). Community is “an increasingly online or virtual behavior” (English & Duncan-Howell, 2008, p. 597) and is an accepted and inherent part of the lives of young people today.

With the integration of various Web 2.0 technologies in the teaching and learning process, technology is improving student learning (Grosseck, 2009; Young, 2010) and impacting communicative behaviors of students (English & Duncan-Howell, 2008).

Although social media was designed for “social” use, Karlin (2007) found that approximately 60 percent of students who use social media discuss education, and more than 50 percent discuss school work on their site. Even as early as 2007, the huge growth in website popularity focused on collaboration and social activities (e.g., Facebook) (Abbitt, 2007).

Social media comes in many forms that can be used for communication in and outside of the business communication classroom. Commonly, e-mail, Blackboard or Moodle (or another online course delivery software), Wikis, Dropbox, Twitter, and YouTube may be used in today’s classroom. Alternatively, other choices are available for the same or different uses. Each student could practice using Skype from home one class period per semester to envision the reality of a virtual business meeting. Likewise, Elluminate could be used to create a virtual collaboration among teams (this could also be done in Blackboard or using Webcams). WordPress is ideal for creating blogs or web sites. In addition to YouTube, TedTalks has excellent video resources available for classroom presentations, discussions, and/or assignments.

Several Advantages to Integrating Social Media

Several methods that are advantageous to using social media in the business communication classroom include the following:

- Facilitating student interaction
- Improving student motivation
- Involving all students, anywhere, anytime
- Generating ideas from students
- Sharing student opinions
- Gaining student interest

- Encouraging candid responses
- Dialoguing with students
- Increasing student engagement
- Promoting student collaboration
- Enabling Socratic-based teaching
- Building knowledge bases (Crook et al., 2008; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Griffith & Liyanage, 2008; Rifkin et al., 2009)

Further, especially in graduate classes, students may want to use social media for informal communication with cohorts, document sharing with team members, and formal discussion with co-researchers.

Additionally, students can stay abreast of current events through Twitter, LinkedIn, RSS feeds, article links, and up-to-the-second posts.

A side benefit of social media for educators outside of the classroom is the ability to reach out to one's own social network of professional colleagues who are willing to share resources and expertise, especially if teaching a course for the first time. Teaching peers are usually more than willing to share syllabi, course assignments, teaching methods, and ideas.

Social Media Has Its Disadvantages

Challenges that occur with social media use in education are growing:

- Students are unsure of copyright use and plagiarism.
- Students are on information overload.
- Students have trouble separating technology, life, and studying.
- Technology takes a lot of time for the student and the faculty.
- Some faculty have difficulty staying current with technology and integrating it into the classroom (Jones et al., 2010).

Other disadvantages that could occur from using social media effectively in the classroom include distractions/interruptions, lack of credibility if students are disclosing too much or “letting off steam,” and students often incorrectly think they can multitask well.

Unique Teaching Methods for Integrating Social Media into the Classroom

Several forms of social media can be incorporated into various classroom activities. The following are categorized into the type of social media technology (Edmodo, 2012; Edublogs, 2012; TeacherTube, 2012).

YouTube

- Post lecture videos to YouTube and track the number of students who watch the videos (similar to tracking the number of student views in Blackboard).
- Use TeacherTube as an alternative to YouTube. TeacherTube was created “by teachers for teachers” to incorporate multimedia into the classroom.

Wikis and Blogs

- Blogs can be used as discussion boards/forums to keep students engaged both inside and outside of the classroom. Professors can incorporate blogs into their lesson plans by blogging assignments to students that require them to write and keep a blog.

- Wikis/blogs are effective for student journaling, project or idea collaboration, creative or reflective writing, and organization and sharing of documents and resources (Grosseck, 2009).
- Edublogs is a blogging platform designed exclusively for teachers and students to create e-portfolios, class web sites, wikis, discussion forums, and class projects. The edublog can be made private so that only members of the class can view it.
- Class blogs can be compiled for ease of tracking and allowing quick feedback to students. They provide students with a network to encourage peer review and a centralized location for questions/answers, announcements, and assignment posts. A wiki could also be used to create a “frequently asked questions” (FAQ) site for students (Grosseck, 2009).
- A social networking community site can be used to communicate daily newscasts. Teachers can use blogs to interest students in various topics (O’Hanlon, 2007).

Twitter

- Educators can network with peers near and far to stay current of latest technology, teaching, and pedagogical trends by subscribing to #educhat hashtag.
- Because Twitter enables a real-time, dynamic sketchpad of class discussion and student interaction, allowing students to tweet about the current topic during class time increases student engagement. Some of the 50 teaching tips for using Twitter in the classroom that were provided on the Teachers Alliance website are listed (Miller, 2014):
    - Use Twitter’s 140-character format to force students to apply concise business communication skills.
    - Require students to set up Twitter lists following relevant feeds to their major area and career goals.
    - Use Twitter to track hash tags to determine how trends spread and the ways people use social media to communicate ideas.
    - Post a daily business trivia question.
    - Poll students during class.
    - Have students summarize learning and questions for the next class period (140-characters maximum).
    - Microblog a daily writing sentence problem for students to rewrite and tweet back the rewrite to you.
    - Have students conduct research by asking executives questions and recording responses.
    - Explore career choices and opportunities by having discussion with business executives in their area of interest.
    - Connect with another class/professor from a different culture and collaborate on projects using Twitter to communicate.
    - Retweet journal articles and other facts relevant to current topics as a supplement to class lecture.
    - Have students post concise responses to a research question and begin discussions with others.

Facebook

- Post announcements for your courses.
- School libraries should have a Facebook page to promote their library services. Additionally, the library could have Facebook pages for specific classes to assist students with specific research assignments for that course.

- An example from English and Duncan-Howell (2008): one professor set up a Facebook group for only her teacher practicum students to join. Students attended class during an initial computer workshop to learn how to access the group page and participate in online discussion. Students posted to “the wall” (the front page forum in Facebook for friends to post comments about one another on the group page). They found encouragement, solutions, reinforcement, renewed excitement, advice, teaching resources, and camaraderie during this social media experiment.
- Instructors can use social media to post assignments or have online office hours for students to send a private message with questions about homework. The Facebook wall can be used as an online discussion board. Specific time slots can be designated for students to log in and have online class discussions.
- The instructor can also create a Facebook fan page to avoid private interaction with students. With a fan page, private messaging capabilities are not available between the page administrator and students; only public messages are displayed on the Facebook wall (Marketing Savant, 2011). Therefore, no unintentional special treatment is given to certain “friends” (students); and students can opt-in by “liking” the fan page to get updates, but they do not necessarily have to “like” the instructor or become a fan in order to see the fan page (Marketing Savant, 2011).
- Edmodo is another secure social learning network for teachers and students. It is similar to Facebook, but with more security features; and access is limited to teachers and students. Edmodo has several communication, assignment, and grading tools.
- Students could also be required to post appropriate assignments to a Facebook group (Young, 2010).

Additionally, using an array of social media tools can particularly engage students. For example, students could role play on a social media site by each setting up a Facebook page for a historical business figure (e.g., managerial theorist). They could post daily status updates of their Schools of Thought and re-enact their study on Twitter and/or YouTube (e.g., Time-Motion Studies, Hawthorne Effect).

Implications for Education and Business Communication

Much discussion has occurred regarding the uses of social media in higher education (Dale & Pyman, 2009; Hamid et al., 2010; Hemmi, Bayne, & Land, 2009).

How technology is used makes a difference in the classroom—not *if* it is used or not. Social media can be used as an effective pedagogical tool, and some social media tools are designed specifically for educational purposes. Social media technologies are changing the face of teaching and learning in higher education via the use of Skype, wikis, blogs, RSS feeds, websites, media sharing, tweets, YouTube videos, and other technological tools. As the next generation of student is growing up with technology, educators must incorporate these technologies into the classroom to keep students engaged. Many educators have used online course delivery software to promote student participation and interaction in discussion forums for their students to build community, discuss learning objectives, and share interests (English & Duncan-Howell, 2008).

As noted, YouTube, Skype, and Twitter can be valuable tools in the classroom. If Twitter, for example, is built into classroom assignments, students have been shown to increase student learning (Twitter 101, 2012).

Social technologies including blogs, wikis, social bookmarking sites, photo sharing, video sharing and social networking sites have been widely used to facilitate online social networking (Hamid et al., 2010). Social media sites can help students in their studies for teamwork, study groups, research projects, and academic support. It can also promote interaction between teacher and student. Social networking has the potential to be appropriated and repurposed to support teaching and learning delivery in a formal learning environment (Hamid et al., 2010). The possibilities for integrating social media into the classroom to promote student learning are endless.

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Media Selection in Managerial Communication: Exploring the Relationship between Media Preference, Personality, and Communication Aptitude.

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ASSOCIATION FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
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March 12, 2015 (Thursday)

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Arboretum 5

ABC – SWUS Breakfast

All ABC-SWUS presenters and members are invited to enjoy a complimentary continental breakfast.

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Arboretum 5

SESSION A Management and Media

Session Chair: **Kathryn O'Neill,** Sam Houston State University

Media Selection in Managerial Communication: Exploring the Relationship between Media Preference, Personality, and Communication Aptitude
Mark Leonard, Stephen F. Austin State University
Marsha Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University
Timothy Clipson, Stephen F. Austin State University

The Most Popular Social Media for Business Communication and Why They are Essential to Customer Contact Strategies
Lorelei Ortiz, St. Edward's University

Status Update: What's Going On with Social Media in My Office?
Laura Valenti, Nicholls State University
Marily Macik-Frey, Nicholls State University

Just Like the Book Says
John Davis, Hardin-Simmons University
Doug McIntyre, Hardin-Simmons University

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Market Place Exhibit Hall

FBD Coffee Break

Please make plans to visit the exhibits for information on the latest books and newest educational technologies. Let our exhibitors know how much we appreciate their presence and continued support!

Great Door Prize Drawings take place at **10:15 a.m.** in the Exhibit Area. *Must be present to win.*

March 12, 2015 (Thursday)

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Arboretum 5

SESSION A **Recruitment, Hiring and the Job Search**

Session Chair: **Lucia Sigmar,** Sam Houston State University

Establishing an Interview Anxiety Baseline
Lori Boyer, Clark Atlanta University
Raphael O. Boyd, Clark Atlanta University

Reasons for Turnover in Latin American Companies: Human Resource Manager Responses
Roger Conaway, Monterrey Institute of Technology, San Luis Potosi, Mexico
Velery Chistov, Monterrey Institute of Technology, San Luis Potosi, Mexico

Exploring the Relevancy of the Cover Letter in a Digital World
Gail D. Johnson, The University of Texas at Tyler
Rochelle McWhorter, The University of Texas at Tyler
Jennifer Martinez, The University of Texas at Tyler

Strategic Use of Social Media in the Hiring Process
Ashley A. Hall, Stephen F. Austin State University
Carol Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University
Judith Biss, Stephen F. Austin State University

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Arboretum 5

SESSION A **Management and Communication**

Session Chair: **Laura Valenti**, Nicholls State University

Small Business Leaders: Soft Skills for Communicating Change
Michelle Region-Sebest, St. Edward's University

Crisis Communication in the Organization: Lessons from the Trenches
Debbie DuFrene, Stephen F. Austin State University

Developing Change Management Communication Awareness
James (Skip) Ward, Fort Hays State University

Taking Best Practices from Corporate America: Integrating Coaching Skills into the Classroom
Deborah Roebuck, Kennesaw State University
Geraldine E. Hynes, Sam Houston State University
Kathryn S. O'Neill, Sam Houston State University

March 12, 2015 (Thursday)

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Market Place Exhibit Hall

FBD Coffee Break

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3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Arboretum 5

SESSION A **Business Communication in the School of Business**

Session Chair: **Traci Austin**, Sam Houston State University

Soft Skills across the Business Core: The Range of Communication-Based Performance Measures in Standard Business Courses
Lorelei Ortiz, St. Edward's University
Michelle Region-Sebest, St. Edward's University
Catherine MacDermott, St. Edward's University

Weaving Accreditation Standards throughout a Business School's Curriculum, Specifically Communication Skills: A Pilot Study
Margaret S. Kilcoyne, Northwestern State University
Brenda Hanson, Northwestern State University
Begona Perez-Mira, Northwestern State University
Carmella Parker, Northwestern State University
Julie McDonald, Northwestern State University
Sue Champion, Northwestern State University

Business Communication: An Essential Skill for Business Students
Dana F. Bible, Sam Houston State University
Kathy L. Hill, Sam Houston State University
Britany Vinsant, Sam Houston State University

Impression Management in the Classroom: Case Study in One Instructor's Migration from Corporate Culture to Academia
Gail Emily Fey, University of Arizona
Sue Smith, University of Arizona

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Market Place Exhibit Hall

FBD Presidential Welcome Reception - Everyone is invited to attend this FBD conference-wide social event. Visit with long-time friends and make new ones as you enjoy light appetizers and live music. A cash bar is available and a limited number of drink tickets will also be distributed. Stop by to relax and wind down from the day’s conference activities before heading out to other association and cultural events or dinner.

ENJOY YOUR EVENING IN HOUSTON!

March 13, 2015 (Friday)

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Regency

ABC – SWUS and ABIS Joint Breakfast

All ABC – SWUS and ABIS presenters and members are invited to enjoy a delicious breakfast

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. – **Joint Meeting ABIS** Regency

SESSION A **ABC and ABIS Joint Session**

Session Chair: **Geraldine E. Hynes**, Sam Houston State University

The iPad Classroom: Results from a Pilot Project
Billy Earnest, St. Edward's University

A Business Communication Challenge: Technology Readiness
Chynette Nealy, University of Houston – Downtown

How is the Use of Social Media Impacting Communication in the Classroom?
Marcel Robles, Eastern Kentucky University

Be Visible in the Invisible Learning Context: How can Instructors Humanize Online Learning
Wanju Huang, Eastern Kentucky University
(recipient of the Association of Business Information Systems
McGraw-Hill Education Distinguished Paper Award)

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Market Place Exhibit Hall

FBD Coffee Break

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March 13, 2015 (Friday)

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Arboretum 5

SESSION A **ABC SWUS Business Meeting**

Presiding: **Traci Austin**, ABC-SWUS President
Sam Houston State University

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. **Lunch on your own**

ABC – SWUS Executive Board Lunch –Library
By Invitation Only

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Arboretum 5

SESSION A **Communication Style**

Session Chair: **Kelly Grant,** Tulane University

Using Message Design Logics Theory to Analyze Supervisors' Corrective Feedback
Geraldine E. Hynes, Sam Houston State University
Kathryn S. O'Neill, Sam Houston State University

An Exploratory Investigation of the Role of Communication in Student Engagement and Learning
John H. Williams, Texas Southern University
Bettye Rogers Desselle, Texas Southern University

Can Knowing Myers Briggs Help Increase Overall Faculty Satisfaction within a Department?
Susan Jennings, Stephen F. Austin State University

The Professionals' Guide to Relevant Grammar: The Sequel
Traci Austin, Sam Houston State University
Lucia Sigmar, Sam Houston State University

March 13, 2015 (Friday)

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Market Place Exhibit Hall

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3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Arboretum 5

SESSION A **Diversity and Business Communication**

Session Chair: **Kathy L. Hill,** Sam Houston State University

It's a Great Big World Out There: Teaching Students Intercultural Communication Skills for Working in a Global Economy
Ashley Hall, Stephen F. Austin State University

Different Problems, Similar Goals: ESL Students and the BCOM Writing Course
Marla Mahar, Oklahoma State University
Lydia Powell, Oklahoma State University

Exploring Gender Differences in Written Business Communications
Gerald Plumlee, Southern Arkansas University
Doris Wright, Troy University
Alan Wright, Southern Arkansas University

Sweet Tea, Math and the Beatles: The Only Recipe for a Southern Company's Success?
Susan Luck, Pfeiffer University

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