



Executive Certificate in Management
McIntire School of Commerce
University of Virginia

Communicating Effectively as Managers

Faculty Information

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Course Description & Learning Objectives

Companies consistently describe writing and speaking competencies as major factors in hiring and promotion decisions. Managers who communicate effectively greatly enhance their ability to achieve desired results for both themselves and their organizations. Today's rapidly developing communication technologies also expose managers and their firms to significant reputational and operational risks. This course will take a strategic approach to management communication, providing participants with the tools they need to immediately improve their workplace communication.

The course will offer a framework for making effective communication choices in varied situations. The instructors will share examples to highlight best communication practices when writing and speaking. Participants will learn how to design high-value business messages that convey information in clear, concise, and easy-to-follow ways for diverse audiences. Woven throughout the course will be discussion of the risks the current digital environment poses for business communicators today, as well as suggested ways to mitigate those risks.

By the completion of the course, participants should:

- Understand the information needs of business audiences and the importance of developing a strategic approach to communication
- Be able to create messages that are highly readable and appropriate in tone
- Know how to structure a presentation and deliver information orally in an effective, engaging way

The instructors require participants to engage in the discussion forum on a weekly basis. Participants will be expected to apply the concepts presented in various weeks to their individual work environments, draw parallels between their work and the online presentations and discuss the application of course materials to issues and challenges in their workplaces. Using the course's

Web-based message board, participants are encouraged to submit questions to the instructors, who will respond in a comprehensive and timely manner.

Course Materials

Supplied and available to all participants via Internet online sources

Discussion Forums and Assessments

Discussion Forums. Participants are encouraged to assemble in informal virtual teams to share the application of the course learnings to current issues and challenges in their workplaces and as a requirement, must post a minimum of 4 perspectives on the Discussion Forum during the course.

Weekly Assessments. We provide weekly practice assessments at the completion of each week's on-line class (e.g., lectures, slides, and other materials). The practice assessments consist of 19 multiple choice questions and one essay (minimum 500 words). The purpose of the assessments is to determine whether the participant has sufficient command of the materials and has met the learning objectives. Participants may attempt the weekly assessments as often as they choose during the course.

Week 4 is designed to provide a review of all the materials from the previous three weeks. The audio-video review presentation will connect the theory, instruction, and the learning objectives to the questions participants have posed.

Final Assessment. The final assessment consists of 25 multiple-choice questions. Participants will have 45 minutes to complete the final assessment. Participants have 3 chances to receive a passing score on the final assessment. In order to receive the program completion certificate, participants must pass the final assessment.

Course Outline

Session 1: Developing a strategic approach to workplace communication

The purpose of this session is to:

- Help participants understand the strategic communication framework and variables
- Increase participants' ability to identify the most important choices they face while communicating
- Enhance participants' understanding of the types of credibility communicators have

Session 2: Assessing and understanding the needs of business audiences

After completing this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand target and real audiences
- Determine an audience's needs and what motivates them
- Assess channel choice and be aware of risks in the current digital environment

Session 3: Organizing messages to get results

This session will enable participants to:

- Structure a message to increase the likelihood of getting wanted results
- Understand the difference between direct and indirect structure
- Know how to use BLUF and roadmap statements

Session 4: Writing for clarity and quick comprehension

After completing this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the need for Plain English in business contexts (also called "Plain Language")
- Communicate concisely with clear, precise words
- Create clear, direct sentences
- Structure effective paragraphs

Session 5: Managing the tone of messages to build and keep relationships

After completing this session, participants will be able to:

- Recognize the ways spoken and written messages can differ in terms of tone
- Consider the importance of managing the tone of messages
- Understand the techniques of "you-attitude" and "positive emphasis"
- Employ "language from the center" and "language from the edge" as appropriate

Session 6: Delivering bad news effectively

After completing this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand bad news messages and learn from real examples
- Use the communication strategy framework to plan an effective bad news message
- Structure a message effectively and use language that respects the audience's feelings
- Communicate in a way that maintains goodwill and helps avoid negative reactions to the news

Session 7: Planning and structuring a business presentation

After completing this session, participants will be able to:

- Apply the communication strategy framework to plan a business presentation
- Structure a business presentation in a clear, engaging, and organized way
- Develop content that will communicate ideas clearly and specifically
- Create PowerPoint slides that will complement the presentation's content

Session 8: Developing high-impact presentation delivery skills

After completing this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the key delivery skills that help keep audiences engaged
- Understand best practices of group presenting and handling Q&A
- Consider ways to can improve presentation delivery skills and reduce public speaking anxiety

Session 9: Putting it all together: A communication case challenge

The purpose of this session is to:

- Help participants apply the lessons in Sessions 1-8 to a real-world corporate communication challenge
- Consider more fully the complexities inherent in communicating with various stakeholders
- Evaluate an example of a leader's effort to handle communication during a crisis, when the stakes are high.

Session 10: Review and Assessment