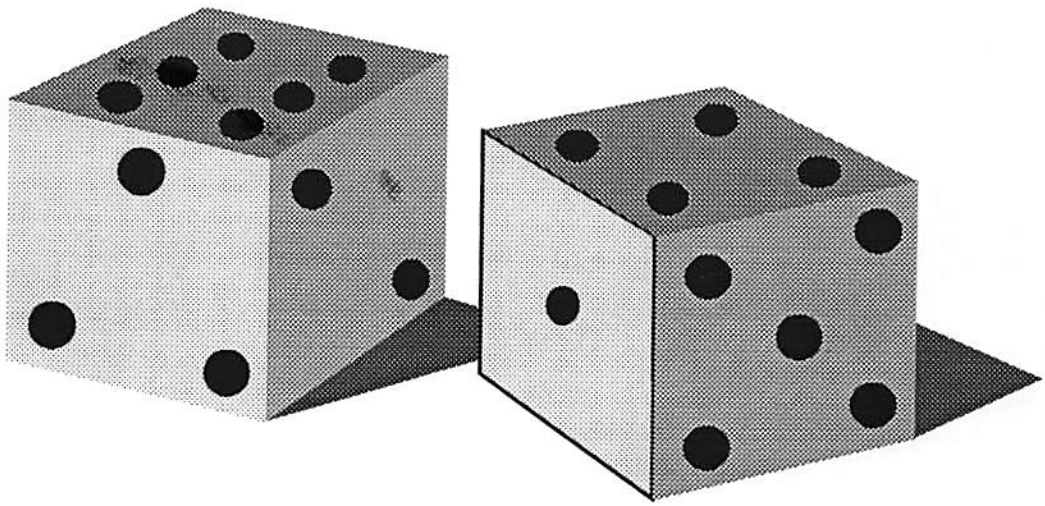
REFEREED PROCEEDINGS FOR THE 1998 SE-ABC CONFERENCE

Communication in Business: Chance or Knowledge?



Binford Peeples, Vice President Southeast
Jeanette Martin, Conference Chair
Bobbie Krapels, Program Chair

Grand Hotel Resort, Tunica, Mississippi
April 2-4, 1998

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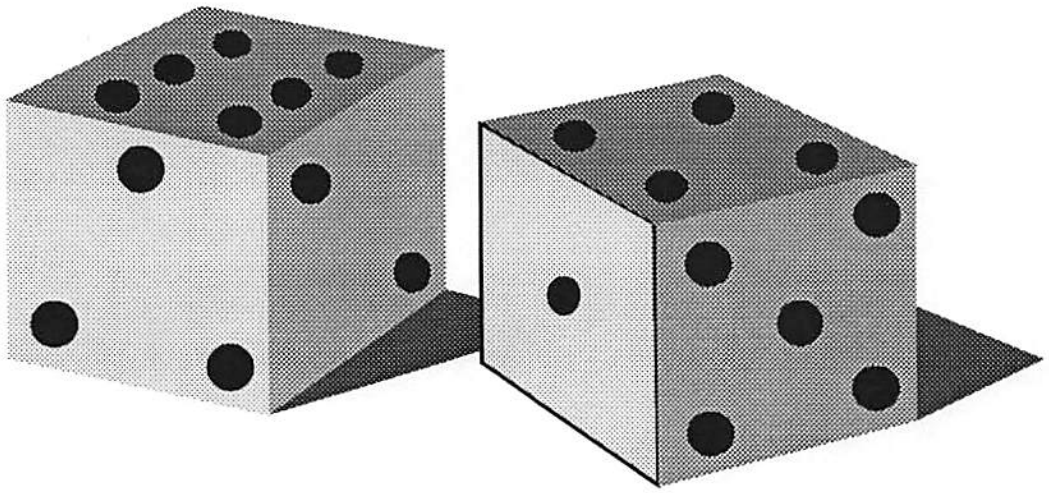

Edited by
Roberta H. Krapels
University of Mississippi

FROM THE EDITOR

Your 1998 SE-ABC Conference has been planned by two people: Jeanette Martin, Conference Chair, and Bobbie Krapels, Program Chair. As professors of business communication at The University of Mississippi, the setting was chosen to provide a less expensive conference hotel than usual and to represent the newest industry in the State of Mississippi. The site is easily accessible from Memphis, providing sensible airfares for most presenters.

Publishing a *Proceedings* for the conference provides a permanent record of several of the best ideas that have been presented. The publication also offers an outlet for prospective authors in the field. The acceptance process for this publication is not as rigorous as that of journals; however, submission of a paper should not be considered an automatic publication. The review process is being refined each year, and hopefully in the future, our *Proceedings* will gain credibility in disciplines outside of communication in business.

Almost 40 presentations are included in the program this year. These authors were invited to submit a paper based upon their contribution to be reviewed for publication in the *Proceedings*. Twelve presenters submitted articles. The submissions were double blind reviewed; two individuals at institutions that differed from that of the author(s) reviewed each paper. If two reviewers disagreed regarding publication of a paper, a third person was asked to review that paper. Three submissions received one 'publish' and one 'not publish' review. These papers were reviewed again by a third person. Overall, ten submissions were accepted for publication, resulting in an acceptance rate of 83%.

The reviewers were under a demanding schedule; they were expected to read and evaluate the submissions in a very short time period. Forms that had been sent to the reviewers were to be faxed to me within 10 days. The form this year included the following variables for rating each paper: following directions, background information, justification for need of information offered, presentation or organization of information, evaluation of conclusions or future considerations, usefulness of information to the profession, and grammar plus other writing skills.

My thanks to the following ABC reviewers: Vanessa Arnold, Martha Balachandran, Sandra Bevill, Lillian Chaney, Barbara Davis, Glynna Morse, Terry Roach, and Bob Stowers and to Leslie Corbitt, a consultant in Oxford, Mississippi, and Jeanette Martin, who served as the third reader for papers receiving an initial mixed review (one publish; one not publish).

If you have suggestions regarding the publication of *Proceedings*, please contact me via e-mail (krapels@bus.olemiss.edu) or by phone (601-232-5455). Your comments will be appreciated.

Bobbie Krapels

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ATTITUDES TOWARD TEACHING: BUSINESS COMMUNICATION TEACHERS VERSUS OTHER BUSINESS TEACHERS

Terry D. Roach, Arkansas State University, Jonesboro

ABSTRACT

Do business communication professionals in academia perceive their teaching career in the same way as other professors within other business disciplines? This question was the focus of a survey of 100 members of the Association for Business Communication. Professors of other business disciplines were found to be less concerned with the teaching aspects of their position that were business communication professors.

INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION

Writing in Research in Higher Education, Gmelch and Wilke (1989) present an interesting thought concerning professors. It is this: "Although academicians eagerly study other professions, they seldom find the time and interest to investigate their own."

With this idea in mind, survey forms were mailed to about 100 members of the Association for Business Communication to determine what they liked about their jobs, what they did not like about their jobs, and what methods they were using to change the things they did not like. Although the recipients of this study were not randomly selected, the forms were sent to teachers in both large and small universities, located in all regions of the United States of America.

The responses indicated several commonalities. Of particular interest is the amount of dedication to one's task that all of the respondents revealed. Interestingly, an analysis of the responses showed the prevalence of four terms: (1) students, (2) teaching, (3) subject matter, (4) classroom activities. Indeed, the responses revealed that the respondents are totally focused on "teaching" when it comes to the aspects of their jobs that they enjoy the most. And, equally significant, other than grading papers, there was little that these respondents did not like about their jobs. In fact, these professors were so resolutely positive about teaching that the focus on the investigation—to determine what they did not like about teaching business communication and what they were doing to change the things they did not like—became a moot point. Instead, since some of the respondents noted that business faculty in other departments in their schools did not appear to like students and teaching, the same survey forms were mailed to a number of them to see if the same positive responses in regard to teaching would be as predominate. For instance, some respondents noted that he most negative aspect of their jobs was serving on committees with other business faculty who were not concerned with students and their education.

They were not! In fact, the terms "students," "teaching," "subject matter," and "classroom activities," were noticeably absent from their returns. The emphasis, instead, was on flexible hours, autonomy in the use of time, and collegiality—with little mention of students and the process of teaching. One respondent wrote: "Although I saw my function on dissertation committees as helping students, some faculty members in other departments seemed to see their function as blocking a candidate's path."

According to Dunn and Dunn (1979) teachers tend to teach the way they were taught or perhaps teach the way they learned. Hence, a popular speculation is that those business teachers who have had a strong learning background in pedagogy are more concerned about their students' learning than those faculty who lack any pedagogical training. From conversations with several business communication professors at professional meetings, it was learned that many business communication professors have degrees from business education programs or other educational degree programs. Therefore,

the business communication professional would presumably have the pedagogical skills needed to write objectives, teach the content, and effectively evaluate students' learning outcomes.

If words are a function of thought as is generally believed, the results of this survey suggest that business communication teachers are more dedicated to students and their education than the generality of teachers in other business areas. Moreover, their responses reveal that they are convinced that the subject they are teaching is the most important subject their students will take in their collegiate programs.

Do business communication teachers enjoy their jobs? In a word: absolutely! Does this mean that they are more effective in the classroom than teachers who have an instrumental attitude toward teaching (this is, it is something one does in order to the things one really likes)? The answer cannot be a definitive "yes" based on the informality of this survey. What can be said is that in their responses, business communication teachers exhibited a positive attitude toward teaching. And, if 17th century dramatist Ben Johnson's dictum, "language most shows a man, speak that I may see thee, " still holds true, then many teachers in other business disciplines do not appear to put teaching very high on their lists of things they like to do.

A comparison of the responses shown in Figure 1 with Figure 2 appears to show that there is a significant difference in the two groups' attitudes toward teaching. Moreover, it is believed that this phenomenon warrants further study in a more structured manner. From this study, 85 business communication teachers returned their surveys while 75 teachers in other business disciplines returned the forms. Each respondent identified three to five items that he or she considered the most interesting aspects of professional career.

In these figures, similar responses have been grouped together. For instance, "interesting subject matter" was mentioned in similar wording some 70 times by business communication teachers, while "autonomy" was each mentioned in some format some 60 times by other business faculty.

CONCLUSION

Why this seeming difference in attitudes toward students and teaching as indicated by these responses? Why did business communication teachers emphasize students, teaching, subject matter, and classroom activities in their responses when teachers of other business subjects did not? (Again, no claim is noted that this study was purely scientific. It was a study of how 85 business communication teachers and 75 other business teachers communicated their feelings about their jobs.)

The answer may lie, in part, close to home; that is, in the functions of the Association for Business Communication. The publications of the association, for example, emphasize both methodology and research. And in the research studies there is always the underlying theme of their practical pedagogical applications. Most of the presentations at ABC national and regional conferences offer new methodology to go along with traditional methods of teaching. Further, throughout each year, some twenty committees are compiling information for dissemination to members. But do not other academic associations perform the same function? This paper does not address this question. However, if one agrees with Normal Douglas' statement that "you can tell the ideals of a person by his words," the comments listed in Figures 1 and 2 are very revealing.

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Figure 1 WHAT BUSINESS COMMUNICATION TEACHERS LIKE ABOUT THEIR JOBS

Response	# Responses
Interesting subject matter	70
Interaction with students	50
Diversity of subject matter	35
Knowing the subject is important to a student's career	35
Opportunity for creativity in teaching	25
Favorable feedback from current and former students	20
Watching students' skills develop	20
Challenges of classroom management	20
Putting research into practice	15
Professional involvement in ABC	15
Colleagues	10
Opportunities for consulting	8
Good feelings about teaching	5
Writing for professional publications	5

Figure 2 WHAT OTHER BUSINESS TEACHERS LIKE ABOUT THEIR JOBS

Response	Number of Responses
Autonomy	60
Flexible hours	60
Opportunity for research	30
Discussing research with colleagues	25
Involvement with other scholars	20
Opportunities for consulting	15
Course load of six hours each semester	12
Minimal advising duties	12
Process of forming research questions	12
Opportunities to develop my own interests	10
Challenge of staying current in my field	10
Summers "off"	10
General life-style—no time clock	10
Participating in my academic association	7

COMMUNICATION PRACTICES BETWEEN MEXICAN AND U.S. BUSINESSPEOPLE

Jeanette S. Martin, University of Mississippi
Roberta H. Krapels, University of Mississippi
Lillian H. Chaney, University of Memphis

ABSTRACT

The following is a preliminary report identifying communication interactions of U.S. and Mexican businesspeople. Questionnaires were mailed or faxed to approximately 450 U.S. firms and 200 Mexican firms. Responses were received from 106 firms. Findings indicate that English is the dominant language of business between the U.S. and Mexico. Mexican and U.S. businesspeople hold many discussions and negotiation sessions each month; however, only a third of the firms hold discussions with government representatives. Facsimiles are used regularly by both Mexican and U.S. firms to transfer information.

INTRODUCTION

The interaction of businesspeople from Mexico and the U.S. has increased significantly with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In fact, about 50% of U.S. exports to Mexico became duty-free on January 1, 1994, the first day NAFTA took effect; U.S. exports to Mexico increased almost 10% during the first three months of the agreement (Bosrock, 1995). The purpose of the following study was to determine characteristics of communication interactions of businesspeople working for firms doing business between Mexico and the United States.

Mexico is the third largest trading partner of the U.S. (Beifuss, Campbell, Hirschman, McKenzie, Kelley, Wolff, & Obermark, 1996). In addition to direct imports and exports between Mexico and the U.S., the Maquilas (Maquiladoras), border industries where U.S. investment employs Mexican labor, have increased contact between businesspeople of the two countries (McKinniss & Natella, 1994). Maquila operations are Mexico's largest foreign exchange earners. In 1992 and 1993 around 2000 maquilas existed, employing 500,000 Mexican workers, foremen, supervisors, and professionals for US$3.1 billion in foreign exchange (Nolan, Woznick, LeGro, Alexander, Shippey, Hinkelman, Vera, & Pasero, 1994; McAlmon, 1995).

The business cultures of the U.S. and Mexico vary in many ways. Mexicans view the actual business transaction as a secondary consideration of the personal interactions involved in socializing and getting to know someone with whom they might do business. While both countries have elected officials, the government officials of Mexico are much more involved in owning and running industries in the Mexican states than U.S. officials are within their domain. The primary languages of the two countries differ–Spanish for Mexico and English for the U.S. Even the Spanish used in Mexico differs from Castilian Spanish many U.S. businesspeople learned in school. A number of cultural stereotypes have added to the communication problems between the two countries. Mexican stereotypes include the mañana attitude and the machismo attitude of Mexican males. U.S. stereotypes include being workaholics and being overly concerned with time and money. In addition, there are many actions that U.S. businesspeople take that may cause Mexican professionals to take offense–such as doing manual labor, being standoffish or acting unfriendly and cold, making decisions based totally upon objective facts with no consideration of personal feelings or social relationships, and conveying a sense of personal and country superiority by their actions and attitudes in general (Chaney & Martin, 1995).

Mail has not been reliable from Mexico for a number of years, and telephone calls to Mexico are very expensive when compared to long distance telephone calls to Canada, the other NAFTA associate. Although there is evidence the mail service may improve, private overnight carriers and private express

companies dominate the mail industry within Mexico at the present time. (Chaffin, 1996). Because of these difficult communication conditions, the researchers attempted to identify the ways in which information passed when Mexican and U.S. businesspeople when they were doing business. The objective of the following survey was to determine the types of communication interactions that were being practiced by both Mexican and U.S. businesspeople in their business associations.

SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data are from an ongoing study of communication issues between Mexico and the U.S. To avoid translation problems, the U.S. survey questions were first translated into Spanish by a Mexican business student at the university and then tested by several Spanish-speaking persons. Then the survey was discussed with a U.S. businessman who had been the head of a major corporation in Mexico for 12 years and had retired only six months previously. Changes in wording were made to reflect more colloquially accepted language within the business community of Mexico. Surveys were mailed, faxed, forwarded by trading partners, and hand delivered to over 600 individuals to obtain the current results.

Demographic Description of Respondents

The total number of surveys returned thus far is 106, for a return rate to date of 16.3%. The current results involve 29 Mexican respondents (14.5% return rate) and 77 U.S. respondents (17.1% return rate). Most of the respondents were male with only 8 indicating they were female. This is not unexpected, since Adler (1993) noted few international human resource managers in the U.S. were willing to hire females due to the cultural bias of other nations toward women in the workforce. The Mexican culture only recently has begun to accept women in managerial levels of business, and generally these are in family-run firms.

The businesspeople who responded were asked to indicate the area of business in which they were employed. The majority, 70.8%, were involved in administration, management, marketing, or sales, as can be seen in Table 1. Several individuals marked more than one response, with four marking all categories. However, the production and development area response was lower than expected when one considers how many U.S. companies have production operations (maquiladora or joint ventures) in Mexico. Since these companies tend to send people to international locations first to set-up offices and production operations and later to develop a sales base for the company to become multinational, the production-oriented positions were less than expected. This may have resulted from the fact that, in the U.S. sample, many of the recipients held the title International Sales Manager and these individuals did not see the need to ask someone in production to complete the instrument.

Table 1. Functional Area of Business in which Respondent is Employed

Business Area	Percentage
Administration/management	37.8%
Marketing/sales	29.2
Both Accounting/finance	7.5
Human resources/personnel	7.5
All categories	6.6
Both Adm/mgmt and Marketing/sales	3.8
Both Marketing/sales and Accounting/finance	1.9
Production/development	1.0
Other	4.7
Total	100.0%

Respondents were also asked to indicate the number of years they had worked in international business and the number of international positions they had held. Only 10% of the respondents had been in international positions for less than five years, with the majority (66%) having more than 11 years experience in the international arena. The unexpected response of 'none' by 24.6% of the respondents for 'number of international positions held' could possibly be explained by the individual interpretation of an international position. Many businesspeople have considered an international position to be one in which the individual lives and works in a foreign country. Using this interpretation, a job in one's home country in which international business is conducted could not be an international position. The percentage of businesspeople who had held more than two international positions totaled 62.4%.

To determine the ability of Mexican and U.S. business associates to understand each other in conversations, the respondents' degree of competency with both the English and Spanish languages was asked. Although all but one Mexican was fluent in English, U.S. businesspeople did not possess a similar ability. Only 19.6% of the U.S. respondents reported they were fluent in Spanish, while 25% said they did not speak the language at all..

English has, by default, become the language of business between Mexican and U.S. firms. Even though many articles have been written on the necessity of being able to communicate in the host country language, the majority of U.S. businesspeople have remained monolingual. Individuals from U.S. firms involved in the international environment have consistently been selected using their previous home-based business experience in the workplace with little or no consideration given to language skill (Krapels & Chaney, 1993). One businessperson commented that, within his firm, employees who speak anything other than English in the U.S. workplace are fined.

Oral Communication Practices

Because NAFTA is a relatively a new agreement, it was hypothesized that the respondents would also be communicating with government officials within the foreign country. Also, Mexico has long had a reputation of requiring businesspeople to arrive at agreements with local officials in order to continue operating within the country. Respondents were asked how many times a month they participated in a discussion or meeting with a government official representative from the other country. Both Mexican and U.S. businesspersons responded similarly to the question with over 65% of the businesspeople from each country indicating no discussions with government officials in the foreign country, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Discussions Involving Government Officials

Number of Discussions	U. S. With Mexicans	Mexican With U.S.
None	66.7 %	67.7%
5 or fewer	27.7	32.3
6-10	3.7	0.0
11-15	1.9	0.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%

The method employed for communication with a business associate in the other country was of interest. Respondents were asked how many times a month they participated in a personal discussion or meeting with a businessperson from the other country. A separate question asked how many times a month they took part in negotiations with each other, with negotiations described as defining prices, arranging delivery schedules, identifying terms in a contract, or other similar activities. The responses to

these two questions are combined in Table 3 and Table 4. Each table reports the responses to both questions by businesspeople from the specific country.

The responses indicated a very active dialogue between Mexican and U.S. business associates. A majority of the U.S. respondents (58.3%) reported 6 or more discussions or meetings with their Mexican business associates per month. A slightly higher percent of Mexican businesspeople reported this number of meetings or personal discussions, with 66.6% responding they had discussions or meetings with U.S. associates 6 or more times a month.

Negotiations between business associates of the two countries was reported in a less consistent manner. Only 23.2% of the U.S. businesspersons reported being in negotiations with their Mexican business associates 6 or more times a month, while 55.2% of the Mexican business respondents reported negotiatory discussions with U.S.businesspeople 6 or more times a month. This discrepancy may have resulted from the Mexican businessperson viewing any decision making process as a negotiation while the U.S. respondents perceived negotiations as those discussions relating directly to a contractual agreement of some sort.

Table 3. Number of Discussions And Negotiation Sessions by U.s. With Mexicans

Number of Disc or Neg	Disc With Mexicans	Negotiations With Mexicans
None	9.0%	26.8%
5 or fewer	32.7	50.0
6-10	18.2	10.7
11-15	18.2	12.5
16-20	5.5	0.0
21 or more	16.4	0.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4. Number of Discussions and Negotiation Sessions by Mexicans with U.S

Number of Disc or Neg	Disc With U.S.	Negotiations With U.S.
None	3.4%	10.3%
5 or fewer	30.0	34.5
6-10	26.7	20.7
11-15	13.3	34.5
16-20	13.3	0.0
21 or more	13.3	0.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Written Communication Practices

Respondents were asked how many times a month they sent faxes to and received faxes from a business associate in the other country and what language was used. Tables 5 and 6 give the results of the use of facsimiles and the language used in those communications with a business associate from the other country. U.S. businesspeople used faxes more than the Mexican businesspeople; however, faxes are used extensively by both as shown in Table 5.

A slight discrepancy can be noted between facsimile usage between the two countries, with 76.4% of the Mexican businesspeople reporting they received 6 or more faxes per month from U.S. business associates while only 67.2% of the U.S. businesspeople reported sending 6 or more faxes each month. The most notable reporting difference is with the facsimiles that travel from Mexico to the U.S. While 64.3% of the Mexican businesspeople report sending 6 or more faxes to the U.S. per month, only 31% of the U. S. business respondents estimate that they receive 6 or more facsimiles from Mexican business associates each month. A similar difference occurred with those reporting no faxes sent or received. While only 3.6% of the Mexican respondents reported sending no facsimiles to U.S. business associates, 31% of the U.S. businesspeople reported receiving no faxes from Mexicans. This disparity is more than likely due to the different business people who responded. These respondents were not necessarily doing business with each other. Some businesses communicate more often than others within the U.S. as well.

Table 5. Use of Facsimiles

Number of Faxes	U.S. Send to Mexico	Mexico Send to U.S.	U.S. Received from Mexico	Mexico Received from U.S.
None	5.5%	3.6%	31.0%	2.9%
5 or fewer	27.3	32.1	37.9	20.6
6-10	23.6	14.3	20.7	23.5
11 or more	43.6	50.0	10.3	52.9
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The common language for faxes in both directions was English. Over 75% of the Mexicans reported sending faxes in English, possibly in deference to the lack of foreign language skill of the U.S. business associate. Only 11.5% of the U.S. business respondents reported sending a facsimile that included any Spanish language, with only 3.8% replying that faxes were sent in Spanish.

Table 6. Language Used in Sending and Receiving Facsimiles

Language of Faxes	Received in Mexico	Received in U.S.	Send from Mexico	Send from U.S.
English	85.2%	80.0%	75.5%	88.5%
Spanish	11.1	4.0	17.0	3.8
Eng & Span	3.7	16.0	7.5	7.7
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

FUTURE RESEARCH

With the implications of increasing trade between Mexico and the United States, more detailed research in the area of intercultural communication with NAFTA country businesspeople needs to be conducted. Overcoming the obstacles of conducting research between these two countries can be challenging to university professors. In Mexico, the personal relationship applies to survey responses. Even with including a letter from a former U.S. expatriate who was a well-known and respected senior operations manager for a major multinational corporation in Mexico for 12 years, the response rate on the first

mailing was below 5%. By traveling to Mexico and scheduling personal meetings with several businesspeople from that first mailing, the return rate has been increased. In international business communication studies, a convenience sample might become the method by which a larger sample size can be achieved. The Mexican businessperson whom the researcher meets with personally would be much more likely to recommend a fellow Mexican associate as a participant. In this way a larger number of Mexican businesspeople might be contacted.

U.S. businesspeople need to become aware of the expectations of their Mexican associates in business interactions, whether personal or electronic. Businesspeople from both countries report numerous conversations, negotiations, and faxed documents between the two countries. With the high number of interactions reported each month, chances of misunderstandings in communications are great between associates whose first languages are different. In some cases, a misinterpretation could result in irreparable harm to business transactions in the future. As this research progresses, it will be interesting to see if the results reported thus far change in any way–if a higher percentage of U.S. businesspeople report speaking Spanish fluently, if more interaction with government officials is reported, or if females show greater involvement in international operations between the two countries.

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E-MAIL COMMUNICATION IN THE CLASSROOM: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The use of e-mail as a method of communication between professional colleagues has grown dramatically. Likewise, e-mail communication in and around college campuses has experienced tremendous growth. Many professors have begun requiring their students to get an e-mail account and submit assignments through this method. Communicating via e-mail has grown so quickly that little research has been done relative to how students view this method. This paper presents findings from a survey of senior business and MBA students to determine their perceptions about the use of e-mail communication with their professors and fellow students. The survey reveals that most students have used e-mail to submit assignments and communicate with their professors and other students. These students see many advantages to this type of communication, primarily convenience and time factors; and they believe communicating via e-mail has enhanced both their classroom learning and their interaction with other students.

INTRODUCTION

Most of us can easily remember when we first began using e-mail a few years ago and perhaps did not envision, at that time, how quickly this type of communication would become part of our everyday lives. Actually, this type of communication has grown so rapidly, it is estimated that "soon 80% of all business communication will occur electronically" (Steed, 1997, p. 60). By the year 2000, according to Schafer (1997), over one million people will use e-mail to conduct their business; and she points out how quickly e-mail has changed from a "quirky novelty to a business necessity" (p. 1). Clearly, organizational communication has been dramatically changed by computer communication (Bordia, 1997).

Of course, business organizations are not the only ones that have discovered the benefits of e-mail communication. Some universities arrange for their student teachers to communicate with each other and with their professors via e-mail (Schlagal, Trathen, & Blanton, 1996). Many faculty, having recognized the convenience and growing importance of electronic communication, encourage or require their students to submit assignments via this method. To what extent is this form of communication being used, and how has it affected the student-professor relationship? Although the faculty may be very familiar and comfortable using e-mail to conduct classroom business, students may be experiencing this medium for the first time. As e-mail becomes more common on university campuses, the use of this relatively new technology in the student-teacher relationship and its possible effect on student learning need to be addressed.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine student perceptions regarding electronic mail in learning situations. Some of the questions addressed include (a) frequency with which e-mail communication is used and/or required in class, (b) whether students feel more comfortable "talking" to their professors via e-mail than in person and why, (c) whether this type of communication tends to enhance classroom learning and/or group interaction and/or collegiality, and (d) what advantages and disadvantages the students perceive with e-mail communication related to their college classes.

METHOD

A total of 91 business students at a regional university completed surveys to determine their perceptions regarding e-mail as it relates to classroom learning. Of the respondents, 73 were senior

business majors enrolled in business policy, the College of Business capstone course; the remaining 18 were MBA students. Senior and MBA students were selected in order to have respondents who were likely to have had the greatest opportunity to have used e-mail in their classes.

Of the 91 respondents, 13 reported that they had not used e-mail in their classes. Their responses were used only as they related to the use of e-mail with other students and for demographic purposes. Thus, for most of the questions, 78 respondents' answers were used.

The demographic information was optional and all respondents did not answer all of the questions. Of the 86 responding to this section, 52 were male and 34 were female. Fifty-six of the respondents were between the ages of 18-25; nineteen were between 26-30; ten between 31-39, and one over 40.

RESULTS

After indicating whether they had been required to use e-mail in any of their classes, the students were asked to indicate, on the average, how many assignments in each class required the use of e-mail during the semester. Sixty-five of the students responded to this question. Somewhat unexpected was the fact that a slightly higher number of the respondents indicated that they were required to submit over seven assignments via e-mail. According to the respondents, twenty-five were required to submit one to three assignments, fourteen were required to submit four to six assignments, and twenty-six were required to submit over seven assignments via e-mail.

A more expected finding was that students are also using e-mail to communicate with professors for purposes other than submitting assignments. The students were given four possible reasons to communicate with their professors and asked to check all that apply. They were also given an opportunity to write reasons they e-mail professors that were not listed on the survey. Table 1 shows that the majority of students e-mail their professors to ask for additional information on assignments; however, many also write to ask questions pertaining to majors, advising, and/or careers. Discussing a grade was the most frequently written-in reason that students e-mail their professors. Other reasons given multiple times include reporting progress on an assignment or internship.

Table 1. Reasons Students E-mail Professor (Other than submitting an assignment) N=78

Reason listed on survey	Percentage
Ask for additional information	39
Explain reason for absence	29
Ask for assignment after absence	18
Ask questions pertaining to majors advising, and/or careers	13

When asked if they preferred "talking" to professors via e-mail, 72 percent of the students said no. However, twenty-eight percent said they did feel more comfortable talking to their professors via e-mail. After this particular question, the students were given space to comment on why, if they answered yes, they felt more comfortable with this type of communication. As shown in Table 2, most of the responses can be grouped under two broad categories: Convenience and Intimidation. Samples of students' comments for each are given.

Table 2. Reasons Respondents Feel More Comfortable Communicating With Professors Via E-mail (some individual responses include)

Convenience
Don't have to go to professor's office
Don't have to worry about whether they have office hours that day
Intimidation
Intimidation in voice is not in e-mail
Professors can be intimidating because they hold your grades and your future in their hands
Easier to think without professor staring at you

Of the students who were required to use e-mail in their classes, slightly over half, 52 percent, said they think the use of e-mail has enhanced their classroom learning. The students were also asked if they had used e-mail to communicate with classmates.

Forty-eight of the 78 students responding to this question indicated that they had corresponded with classmates via e-mail. When asked whether e-mail enhanced or made easier group communication relative to classroom assignments, 96 percent (46) of the 48 respondents who had used it said it did enhance group communication. Thus, according to this survey, the students believe that the use of e-mail has enhanced their classroom learning; however, they strongly view e-mail as having made group communication easier. One possible reason for this could be the number of commuter students who find meeting after class in person difficult yet communicating via e-mail much easier.

The respondents were asked to list the advantages and disadvantages of using e-mail to communicate with their professors and fellow students. Table 3 shows examples of students' responses for each of the categories.

Table 3 Advantages of E-mail Communication (Student Responses)

Convenience	
Don't have to drive to campus to turn in assignment	
May have classes during professor's office hours	
Opportunity to "leave message" if professor isn't in	
Great for emergencies on student's part	
Convenient way to have a record of communication	
Time Factor	
Be "in touch" all the time	
Fast and efficient means of communication	
Don't have to run around and look for the teacher	
Able to get a message to everyone at same time	
Others added:	Cheaper than calling professor long distance
	Cheap way to talk to friends at other universities
	Can talk to my professor about anything

Because the answer was open-ended, the responses were not identical. However, the majority of the responses could be categorized under the following: Convenience and Time Factors. A few of the other advantages the respondents wrote in are also listed.

Clearly, then, according to their responses, the students see many advantages to communicating with their professors and/or classmates via e-mail. Do they see any disadvantages? When asked to list the disadvantages, less than half as many students did as those who listed advantages. Most of the disadvantages could be categorized under Computer problems. Table 4 lists some of the responses to this question.

Table 4 Disadvantages of Using E-mail Communication (Student Responses)

Computer related	
	Not having easy access to a computer at home
	Server being down
	Professors not checking their e-mail regularly
	Mail may be intercepted by those not sent to
Others	
	E-mail may not indicate importance of problem
	Not as good as face-to-face communication
	May or may not get an answer
	Lack of nonverbal feedback

CONCLUSIONS

Eighty-six percent of the students surveyed have been required to use e-mail to communicate with their professors. Thus, as in the business world, the use of e-mail communication appears to be a common method of communication. Many professors are requiring several assignments to be submitted via e-mail according to our study. Over 61% of the respondents were generally required to submit more than four assignments via e-mail.

Although students are communicating via e-mail with their professors for reasons other than submitting assignments, much of this communication appears to center around assignments (e.g., requesting additional information, getting assignments after an absence). Frequently, however, students also communicate with their professors to seek advice on majors or careers, as well as to discuss grades, reasons for absences, and progress on various projects.

Students believe e-mail communication has enhanced their classroom learning and either enhanced or made easier their communication with fellow students. Probably, this is because the students see so many advantages of this type of communication, most of which center around convenience and time factors. Of the disadvantages listed, most were related to computer or server problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the responses from the students who were surveyed, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Professors should examine their courses and, if appropriate, consider requiring at least one assignment be sent via e-mail. In view of the growing use of this medium of communication in the business world, experience with e-mail should be advantageous to students after graduation.

2. Professors should consider encouraging their students to contact them via e-mail. According to the responses, some students feel more comfortable "talking" to professors via e-mail. Also, because of conflicts of schedules, many students have a difficult time making office appointments. Additionally, for many students, communicating with professors in this manner is "less intimidating."

3. Professors should check their mail regularly. This was one of the few disadvantages of communicating via e-mail with professors that the students listed.

4. Professors might also consider encouraging groups/teams within the class to communicate via e-mail. Over ninety-percent of the students responding to this question indicated that communicating via e-mail had enhanced group communication.

5. Additional research should be done in this area. Although the results of the survey seem consistent with the literature, additional research with a larger, broader sample would be beneficial to confirm the results.

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EMPLOYEE ASSIMILATION: INTEGRATING NEWCOMERS INTO ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

A knowledge of how an organization assimilates neophytes is necessary to provide an environment where the transition process is successful for both employee and organization. Researchers and authors take either a stages or a techniques approach to assimilation. While both alone provide valuable insight to assimilation, studied together they are a more powerful tool. This paper explains the four stages of assimilation and demonstrates how an employee can be assisted through the stages. Proper assimilation should enhance retention and save money by helping organizations understand the continuum a new employee travels along on the way to complete assimilation and the formal as well as informal techniques that can aid in the transition.

INTRODUCTION

Bringing an outsider into an organization has been likened to transplanting an organ into a human. In some cases the organ becomes an intricate part of the organism, and the organism and the organ sustain life and grow. In other cases the system rejects the foreign object and both suffer (Duda, 1992). A transplanted, new employee runs much of the same risk of rejection, and organizations can take steps to ensure that employees brought into an organization flourish.

Proper employee assimilation, however, reaps additional rewards for an organization. The financial burdens associated with employees not becoming acclimated to culture provide further incentive to initiate quality assimilation programs. Merck & Co., the pharmaceutical giant, places the cost of employee turnover at 1.5 times an employee's annual salary (Hequet, 1993). A rule of thumb many service industries apply to measure the cost of employee turnover is replacing an employee costs four times the monthly salary of that position (Hoffman, 1996).

Any organization seeking a successful assimilation program needs to be aware of not only how employees become assimilated but also how organizations can use knowledge of the process to bring employees into the fold. The majority of the literature on employee assimilation looks at the phenomenon of assimilation in one of two manners. Authors take either a stages or techniques approach to assimilation. The stages approach outlines periods along an assimilation continuum. An understanding of the stages approach allows organizations to monitor a new employee's metamorphosis from initial contact with the organization until the newcomer is a full-fledged member. The techniques approach focuses on the methods an organization can use to socialize employees. While both alone provide valuable insight to assimilation, studied together they are a more powerful tool.

ASSIMILATION AND CULTURE

Eisenberg and Goodall, in *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint* (1993), explain that assimilation is the process by which a person unfamiliar with the rules, norms, and expectations of a culture becomes a member of that culture. Assimilation, then, focuses on a new employee learning "the ropes" of an organization. Here-in lies much of the problem in assimilation because, where job skills can be learned and carried with the employee from place to place, culture is unique to each organization. It is because of these unique cultures new employees often have trouble assimilating.

Organizational culture can be defined as a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by organizational members (Martin & Van Eck Peluchette, 1989). An organization's culture communicates how members should behave. Ott (1991) also described the culture of an organization as the composite of understanding

that becomes the fabric of an organization, which is passed on from older to newer generations of employees through nonverbal or implicit communications. Culture is the holistic body of patterned knowledge, ways of doing things, perceptions, beliefs, values, and understandings a person needs in order to survive, get along, or do well in an organization. As these definitions of culture imply, a newcomer must be made aware of the culture and act accordingly to be accepted and to perform within the organization.

WHY AN UNDERSTANDING OF ASSIMILATION IS IMPORTANT

Armed with an understanding of assimilation and organizational culture, one may ask why the entire process is not allowed to simply run its course. The definitions suggest as new employee becomes aware of beliefs, values, and a way things are done, the newcomer will accept the culture and assimilate into it. In fact, new employees will begin to evolve as they have initial contact with a organization but not necessarily in a healthy direction.

Unwritten and often unspoken understandings of organizational culture develop among new employees to help them cope with complex ambiguities and make sense out of new organizations (Ott, 1991). Organizational activities and interpersonal relations offer cues regarding appropriate and inappropriate behavior, convey values and priorities, and foster beliefs regarding roles, whether the new individual seeks such information or not (Gundry & Rousseau, 1994). New employees are going to try to fit in by gaining clues from all types of sources, including those that may not put forth the image the organization wants as a prompt for employees. Cues are often available on which neophytes can base their understanding of an organization, but organizations that believe new employees understand the culture and pick up only positive cues to performing their jobs within the organization are doomed to failure in assimilation (Bridges, Hawkins, & Elledge, 1993).

Employees depend on other employees for information and collaboration to accomplish tasks and objectives. Willingness to share and collaborate is influenced by the extent to which a person feels a part of the culture (Ott, 1991). New employees need to understand how the success of others is contingent on their performance. Productivity is often lost because employees can not understand their contribution to the organization (Bridges et al., 1993).

Finally, a new employee's acceptance by members of the organization depends, at least partially, on that employee's willingness to conform to the culture's norms and expectations. This conformity involves giving up some individuality in exchange for acceptance into the culture (Ott, 1991). To be part of a group, a person has to act in a manner prescribed by that group, conforming individual expressions and actions to meet with and represent those of the established group culture. The process of an employee trading individuality in exchange for fitting in to the culture is difficult for some employees and often requires organizational intervention.

Organizations must know that new employees gather information through formal, informal, verbal and nonverbal channels. Knowledge of the channels employees use and an understanding of how organizational structure mandates socialization provide a solid foundation for the study of the processes of assimilation. Also, being cognizant of the fact that new employees must sacrifice some of their individuality in exchange for membership into a culture should make organizations aware of the difficulties an employee faces in assimilating. The complexities of these issues makes it easy to understand why much of the recent literature on assimilating new employees states that organizations have a tendency to spend all their energy on attracting new people, but not in retaining them or helping them become an important part of the system (Bridges et al., 1993). In her February 1992 article in *HR Magazine* titled "The Honeymoon Is Over for Corporate America," Duda states one *Fortune* 50 company head estimates the failure rate of newly placed executives to be close to 50 percent. Considering the cost of recruitment, interviewing, putting a new employee to work, and the costs of losing an employee, one can quickly see the importance of keeping employees on the job after they have been recruited and hired.

THE TWO APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ASSIMILATION

With a definition of key terms and an understanding of the importance of successful employee assimilation in hand, a study of the stages and techniques approaches to assimilation seems merited. While each approach has been studied and will be reviewed independently, it is important to realize the two overlap.

Stages of assimilation

Stage models provide valuable insights into the changes that occur during assimilation. While there are different stage models that explain an employee's process of assimilation, they are all similar in that they cover a series of steps that begins with gaining information from preliminary sources through a final phase of complete assimilation. Perhaps the easiest stage approach model to understand is Brody's, discussed in his 1986 article "What Do You Do With A New Employee?" His four-stage system goes from 1)an anticipatory stage to 2) a formal stage to 3)an expectation learning stage to a final 4) role acquisition stage. The stages mark a gradual process of assimilation the new employee experiences by gaining information about the organization, peers, and culture. The stages proceed from those less painful and risky as the newcomer begins to gather information to stages that are progressively more dangerous as employers have less and less control over cues.

Assimilation begins with the anticipatory stage. This stage extends from first awareness of the organization through the employment process. External impressions are supplemented by written and oral data that is provided by personnel departments and interviews. This early stage involves the process of neophytes learning specific information about the organization (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993). Learning takes place before the first day of work and is typically conveyed through organizational literature and interactions with other job applicants, interviewers, and employees.

Discussions of this stage tend to carry a warning. Newcomers can develop naive expectations of an organization and its culture because of hearsay (Brody, 1986). Interviewers tend to oversell organizations, and recruiting literature often offers idealized images of an organizational culture (Moravec & Wheeler, 1989). Employers should be careful to present accurate information about the organization to the new employee, or the organization may be fostering false expectations.

While false impressions of the organizations can develop during the anticipatory stage, organizations can utilize the first meetings with a new employee to everyone's advantage. Printed recruiting and follow-up material distributed to possible employees and in recruiting areas such as campuses, as well as first interviews, offer organizations the opportunity to begin an employee's assimilation into the culture before the job ever starts (Moravec & Wheeler, 1989). A prime example of an organization using early contacts with possible employees to help assimilation into the culture is Microsoft's use of brainteasers in interviews. Microsoft fosters a culture where intelligence and problem-solving are prized. To introduce employees to this intellectually-focused culture, Microsoft asks problem solving questions and riddles of applicants. Not only does this introduce applicants to the culture and begin the assimilation of those applicants that are later hired, but it also serves as a screening device through which Microsoft can eliminate those applicants it feels will not fit in, solving assimilation problems before they start (Filipczak, 1992).

The second stage of employee assimilation is the formal stage. This stage involves an employee being exposed to a deluge of oral and written messages concerning required behavior, much of which is packaged in orientation programs and accompanying documentation. These formal messages are readily accepted along with objectives, task assignments, schedules, codes of conduct and superior-subordinate relationships. Brody warns against unspecified, ambiguous or implied promises concerning promotion and other factors during this stage. When these are inserted casually by managers into conversation during the formal stage, they tend to become "ticking time bombs."

The third stage involves newcomers learning the expectations of colleagues and is called the expectation stage (Brody, 1986). Organizational culture becomes a primary determinant of conduct, and modeling of

peers and their norms and values provides cues to cultural boundaries. These informal values and organizational norms are as important to employer and new employee as the strict requirements presented during the formal stage through orientation. Newcomers learn the requirements of their roles and what members consider to be normal behavior and thought (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993). This third stage is crucial to a new employee becoming an accepted member of the organization. The culture here is established by those that form it not by formal literature and speeches covering an idealized system, and the pressure to conform is high. New employees must learn informal norms to which organizational members adhere or risk being ostracized throughout the organization (Gundry & Rousseau, 1994).

The final stage of assimilation, the role acquisition stage, is reached when realistic beliefs have supplanted naive expectations (Brody, 1986). Formal and informal expectations are known, and necessary behavioral adjustments have been accomplished. Feeling comfortable with the culture, individuals begin to put their own personal stamp on the job, developing a unique voice and behaving in ways that may be in conformance with the culture but which also may be interpreting it. Upon reaching this stage, an employee truly understands the culture and not only reflects it but comprises it. This stage is the culmination of the assimilation, and upon reaching this stage, an employee is fully assimilated.

Left to their own devices, employees will usually attempt to assimilate into an organization by going through the four stages. The study of the stages of assimilation, however, does not suggest how an organization can make neophytes aware of and conform to culture. The stage approach, as its name implies, only outlines the metamorphosis process an employee goes though along an assimilation continuum. An organization that wants to speed employees through the stages and insure that the culture learned is the one the organization wants to foster would benefit more from a knowledge of the second approach to studying new employee assimilation. The second approach consists of the formal and informal techniques an organization can use to assimilate employees. Researchers study specific techniques and methods of helping employees feel comfortable with an organization's culture, and this information may be more practical to those responsible for assimilation because it focuses less on theory and more on practice.

Organizational techniques of assimilation

In *Cultural Perspectives on Organizations* (1993), Alvesson states the creation of a sense of culture in an individual requires direct interaction between the organization and the new individual. In other words, creating meaning and making sense of it implies activity on the part of both subjects. Taking into account Alvesson's mutual exchange approach to assimilation, one can see how organizations can not simply leave assimilation to the new employees.

The two main organizational-initiated assimilation techniques include formal orientation programs and mentor programs. Both provide new employees with an environment where they can learn the culture from an established base within the organization, but they speak to different stages in the four-stage approach and, thus, offer different positive and negative aspects.

Few organizations provide any type of structured on-sight assimilation program during the anticipatory stage of the stage approach. Literature and documents, as well as remarks made during interviews or by persons outside the organization about the organization, are usually distributed in an environment not controlled by the organization. While some companies, such as Microsoft, may offer an introduction to the culture through literature and interviews, there are few attempts to actually assimilate employees during this stage. But the second stage of assimilation, the formal stage, coincides directly with and is contingent on an organizational assimilation technique.

Many organizations have developed orientation programs to direct new employees through the formal stage of assimilation. Orientation programs provide newcomers with scheduled interaction with trainers and supervisors where company objectives, philosophies, values and expectations can be communicated directly (George & Miller, 1996). Orientation programs can include seminars, videos, pamphlets, booklets

and posters, as well as opportunities for new employees to be coached by supervisors. Presented correctly, the programs offer employees a clear sense of direction (Klein & Taylor, 1994).

Assimilation has been described as a process requiring shared ownership by new hires and supervisors (George & Miller, 1996). With that in mind, many organizations with successful orientation programs try to involve those within the culture as much as possible to ensure that dialogue can develop between people new to the culture and the employees that act it out. Orientation programs simply comprised of videos and literature do not provide employees with an accurate view of the culture. Instead, they demonstrate an idealized image of what the organization might hope the culture could become. By developing orientation training internally with employees close to the culture, organizations can ensure they provide newcomers with a true taste of the culture (Bridges et al., 1993).

While there is little doubt that a quality orientation program speeds employees through the formal stage of assimilation, organizational implemented programs are not without their drawbacks. Company-wide orientation can overwhelm new employees (Comer, 1989). These programs tend to require new employees to digest a large amount of information in a short period of time. Newcomers may not be able to make sense of vast amounts of material presented over a three day course, limiting the usefulness of extensive orientation programs. Secondly, formal orientation programs may result in less than candid information sharing, undermining assimilation objectives (Duda, 1992). In these settings, employees feel inhibited to ask questions before a crowd of new hires, and trainers may not feel comfortable revealing negative aspects of the culture. Also, employees may feel that asking questions would make them seem unable to comprehend the intricacies of their jobs. Another problem with formal orientation programs is they limit new hire contact with the organization to the trainer and other new employees. If trainees spend all their time communicating with the trainer and each other, they may not be able to break ties and form new relationships within departments (George & Miller, 1996). One can see how after spending the first week on the job in an orientation program, new employees could learn the culture of the program and not that of the organization in general or that of their department specifically. Finally, companies may not have enough money to implement an orientation program (Duda, 1992; Martin & Van Eck Peluchette, 1989). Orientation programs require trainers and materials, as well as a location and logistics that can make the programs expensive.

A second type of organizational initiated assimilation technique called peer matching, however, answers directly to some of the concerns with formal programs and helps new employees enter into the third stage of assimilation–the expectation learning stage. This stage consists of new employees learning organizational culture from peers. Peer relationships allow new employees to ask questions without fearing ridicule from supervisors, learn about idiosyncrasies of bosses that might spare embarrassment or punishment, and become acquainted with how things are done within specialized groups (Comer, 1989). While peer relationships will sometimes develop without any greater influence from the organization, organizations that recognize the value of them create programs in which mentor-new employee bonds are made. Mentors help new employees develop quickly and adapt to culture, and organizations, realizing this, have established several methods of forming these relationships.

Buonocore, in "Reducing Turnover of New Hires" (1987), describes an assimilation technique where mentor programs progress through three stages. Employee and mentor meet prior to beginning work, keep in contact during the first two weeks, and establish an open-door policy thereafter. Through this method, mentors can remedy anxiety in newcomers and provide them with knowledge of the culture that may prevent frustrating, costly, and lengthy trial-and-error misadventures (Comer, 1989). A mentor in this sense is an employee who will perform the role of host, friend, confidant, and advisor for a period beginning prior to reporting to work and ending at a time when the assimilation has been completed (Buonocore, 1987).

While mentoring provides an atmosphere open to questions from the new employee, organizations also establish mentor programs where employees simply "shadow" a mentor and learn culture through observation. Microsoft assigns new employees to mentors who simply thrust newcomers into a project with the mentor's team. The new employee learns behaviors, norms, and culture by becoming part of the

organization (Filipczak, 1992). The mentor tells the newcomer how to fit in during the process of the neophyte actually trying to do so.

Finally, some organizations establish programs where new employees meet with each other and learn culture through an ongoing program with peers and mentors. The National Semiconductor Corporation has established the College Hire Assimilation Program (CHAP), an approach to assimilating employees newly graduated from college. The College Club convenes frequently to help new employees meet peers and sets up monthly outings that establish acquaintances the new hires may find helpful in dealing with the assimilation process (Moravec & Wheeler, 1989). The program has proven successful in attracting and maintaining those employees who are genuinely interested in the vision and organizational culture of the company.

While mentor and peer programs do solve some of the problems that can hinder formal orientation programs from achieving positive results, mentor programs are not without flaws. As newcomers join an organization, they discover the underlying norms of the workplace by observations and by interpreting key events (Gundry & Rousseau, 1994). Mentor programs place employees in the position to not only learn from positive behaviors and attitudes of peers but also from those behaviors detrimental to the organization and its culture. Organizations must be careful new employees do not learn to cut corners and undermine the organization through association with the wrong peer groups (Comer, 1989).

CONCLUSION

An employee's job satisfaction, commitment and ability to cope is directly related to his/her ability to assimilate into an organization's culture (Saks, 1996). Assimilation is equally important to the organization in that assimilated employees work within the boundaries of the organization and follow established norms, abide by organizational values, and subscribe to company beliefs. Any organization that brings in new employees needs a solid understanding of how employees assimilate into an organization and how an organization can make sure the assimilation is successful. An understanding of the four stages an employee goes through on the way to becoming fully cognizant of the culture is important because it provides organizations with a road map along a continuum of assimilation to judge the success of programs and meet the needs of employees. With a knowledge of the stages of assimilation, an organization can utilize an understanding of established assimilation techniques to speed new hires through the crucial two middle stages of assimilation to a point of them reaching the final stage where they accept their role within the culture. By capitalizing on the inherent positive aspects of each technique and being aware of the negative aspects of each, organizations can insure they are doing their best to bring employees into the fold. Much as in organ transplant, careful planning and a strong base of knowledge can go a long way in avoiding complications in employee assimilation.

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The Office Professional as Designer and Publisher: Desktop Publishing Skills Needed

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ABSTRACT

The role of the office professional is constantly changing. Today, office professionals are asked to be both designer and publisher of documents that used to be created by graphic designers. Using a nationwide survey of members of the Professional Secretaries International®, this research examined what desktop publishing, if any, office professionals were asked to do. In addition, other topics were examined including the types of documents being created by the office professional, what hardware and software is being used, and how they are learning their desktop publishing skills. From the results, recommendations are made on ways the business communication instructors can assist the office professional with producing both attractive and effective organizational documents.

BACKGROUND

Two changes in the last decade have affected desktop publishing for today's office professional: (1) the inclusion of desktop publishing features in word processing software and (2) the tendency for employees to compose as well as create documents using desktop publishing outcomes.

Originally, office employees used stand-alone desktop publishing software such as Pagemaker® to produce documents. As word processing software became more sophisticated, recent versions of WordPerfect® and Microsoft Word® added features once offered only in the stand-alone desktop publishing programs. Today, the lines have blurred between what is word processing and what is desktop publishing. The modern expanded word processing software programs also are more user friendly than software specifically designed for desktop publishing, reducing the amount of time needed to learn the software.

The office professional's role is expanding every day . . .Increasingly, one of the latest roles he or she must play is that of designer and publisher of organizational documents (Davison, L; Brown; & Davison, M., 1993). As these documents may be the first communication between the organization and its public, management expects these documents to be perfect not only in content but also in form and design. How can the office professional meet that goal?

More and more office employees are self-directed in the origination, creation, and completion of documents. In a survey (Supervision, 1991) of 725 upper and middle managers, 96 percent reported they produced their own visuals using desktop publishing. Those managers may have meant the visuals were produced in-house rather than as an individual effort. Many of those managers may have had administrative support staff producing the actual desktop documents; however, an increasing number of executives are doing their own desktop publishing.

Other studies confirm the use of desktop publishing within organizations. Davis and Gonzenbach (1995) reported that 51.4 percent of ARMA managers used desktop publishing in their organizations. In a study of 150 personnel and business managers, Anderson (1992) found that 21.4 percent were using desktop publishing in 1989, but 57.1 percent of those managers projected desktop publishing would be used in their organizations by 1995.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research was to determine if office professionals are being asked to assume the role of graphic designer and publisher. In addition, if they are taking on that role, what types of documents are office professionals producing utilizing desktop publishing, what hardware and software is being used, and how are the office professionals learning these new skills?

SCOPE AND METHOD

The survey instrument was sent to active members of Professional Secretaries International© (PSI)©. Members of PSI© were chosen as the population because they are usually one of the first groups in an organization to learn and use new technology.

The researchers designed the survey instrument. Members of a PSI© chapter in Georgia pilot tested the survey instrument. One thousand randomly selected members of PSI© throughout the United States received the revised survey instrument, a cover letter, and a stamped, return envelope. Three hundred thirty-five members responded - a 33.5% response rate.

FINDINGS

Respondents

Of the 335 people who responded to the survey, 208 (62.1%) of them use desktop publishing to create organizational documents. The largest percentage of respondents was employed with an organization in the manufacturing field (21.9%) and in an organization with more than 500 employees (36.7%). The largest percentage has been employed with the organization from five to 10 years (25.7%). The largest percentage of respondents reports to only one person (67.1%), and does not have a person reporting directly to them (77.6%).

Documents

The respondents were asked to mark all the types of documents produced with desktop publishing. As shown in Figure I, the responses ran the gamut from announcement/flyers (71.2%) to business cards (24.1%).

Figure 1. Documents

Types of Documents	Percent
Announcements / Flyers	71.2
Business forms	64.9
Newsletters	60.1
Brochures	52.4
Programs	49.1
Manuals	47.1
Invitations	40.9
Business cards	24.1

Hardware Used

The respondents to this survey were IBM-compatible (Compaq, Packard Bell, etc.) users (55.8%) and IBM users (34.6%). Only 11.5% of the respondents were Apple/MacIntosh users. There were even fewer Radio Shack (1.4%) or AT&T users (1.4%).

However, desktop publishing requires more than just a computer. A variety of hardware peripherals were also represented in the survey. Black and white laser printers (84.1%) and the mouse (73.6%) were cited most often by the respondents, while the plotter (6.7%) was cited the least often. Figure 2 shows the hardware peripherals used by the respondents when creating documents with desktop publishing. The respondents were asked to mark all hardware that applied.

Figure 2. Hardware

Hardware Peripherals	Percent
Laser printer - Black/white	84.1
Mouse	73.6
Laser printer - color	31.7
CD-ROM	29.8
Scanner	27.9
Ink jet printer - color	24.5
Trackball	11.5
Ink jet printer - black/white	9.6
Plotter	6.7

Software

The responses were almost evenly split between Microsoft Word (49.8%) and WordPerfect 6.0/6.1 (46.6%) as the software used most often for the desktop publishing projects. However, many respondents marked more than one software package so WordPerfect 5.0/5.1 had some users (25.5%) as did PageMaker (17.8%). When asked if they would consider changing their software package and, if so, to what package, 42.8% responded that they would not change. Thirty-two percent said they did not know if they would change, 10.6% said they would change to WordPerfect 6.0/6.1, and 8.2% said they would change to Microsoft Word.

Instruction

The respondents learned to use desktop publishing in a variety of ways and in many combinations. However, the self-taught method had the greatest percentage of response (81.3%). Figure 3 displays the different methods of instruction, and the respondents were asked to check all methods that applied.

Figure 3. Instruction

Instructional Method	Percent
Self-taught	81.3
On-site workshop	33.2
Off-site workshop	30.8
Continuing education class	16.4
College course	14.9

DISCUSSION

Clearly, office professionals are called upon to be designers and publishers of important organizational documents. Despite being self-taught, they are producing everything from announcements to business cards. But because they are self-taught, they may not be producing documents that communicate as well as they could. Business communication instructors can provide the necessary knowledge and skills these professionals should have.

For the Future Professionals

When discussing the proper formatting of business documents, business communication instructors should venture beyond letters, memos, and reports and discuss the design and production of documents such as brochures, flyers, and newsletters because organizations are requiring their creation. Some of the topics to discuss should include the proper use of fonts, space, artwork, and layout. Because the black and white laser printer is the most dominant hardware peripheral in use, designing in black and white and grayscale should also be covered. However, as color printers and scanners continue to come down in price and move up in popularity, business communication students should also understand the proper use of photographs and color in document design.

In addition to formatting, business communication students should be taught how to evaluate different situations when deciding what type of document to create and shown how choosing the wrong type can negatively impact the message they are trying to send. This discussion would blend well with the topic of audience analysis as well as the topics of external, internal, upward, downward, and lateral communication in organizations.

Even though this research indicates these topics need to be covered, many business communication instructors find it difficult to add additional topics to the crowded business communication curriculum. Web-based instructional materials focusing on desktop publishing skills may be the answer to this dilemma. Students could be directed to these materials and could have hands-on practice without taking time out of the classroom.

Though business communication instructors are used to the ever-changing saga of hardware and software, hardware and software should not be a hindrance this time as the instructors demonstrate desktop publishing skills. The findings indicate that regular PCs and the popular WordPerfect® and Word® software packages are still dominant in organizations and there appears no plans to change that in the near future.

For the Current Professionals

The respondents did not indicate why workshops and formal classes were not used very frequently. Possibly, no classes were offered at convenient times or locations. Maybe the cost was prohibitive. Maybe the respondents did not feel the need to attend. Or is it a case that most PSI members traditionally have

been learning new software packages on their own or with the use of tutorial? For whatever reason, these respondents were self-taught. Yet they are the ones who may be in the most need of the knowledge that business communication instructors can provide. How can the business communication instructor help those who are teaching themselves?

There are different avenues that business communication instructors could explore. These avenues could include writing articles about desktop publishing topics for such magazines as The Secretary® or for the local paper. Instructors could volunteer to speak at the next PSI® meeting and present a reading list of desktop publishing books. They could conduct a "brown-bag" lunch series at various organizations. For the very ambitious business communication instructors, creation of a desktop publishing video-tape or CD series or the development of a web-based course that the office professionals could access at their convenience would be very innovative. Ways to help those currently in the field are limited only by the instructor's imagination.

CONCLUSION

Office professionals are continually asked to take on responsibilities that can either positively or negatively impact an organization's image and even its bottom line. As the research showed, designing and producing documents using desktop publishing has definitely become one of those responsibilities. Business communication instructors have the knowledge and skills that can help those professionals produce attractive and effective documents. Now is the time to share that knowledge by reaching out to those current professionals as well as incorporating it into the business communication curriculum for those future professionals.

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PRESENTATION DRESS AND CREDIBILITY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Presentations, including leading meetings, making corporate presentations, and conducting training, are a regular part of a manager's day. Effective presentations reflect personal success as well as project an image of the organization. To determine employees' perceptions of appropriate presentation attire and the impact of dress on a speaker's credibility, a survey of selected employees at Mid-South firms, schools, and health care facilities was conducted. A series of ANOVAs was performed to determine statistical differences between each aspect and demographic variables of age, gender, classification of employer, and status. Significant differences ($p<.05$) existed between demographic factors on four of the ten elements regarding female presentation attire and on six of the elements for male attire.

INTRODUCTION

According to Axtell (1992), "whatever the business situation, today's successful businessperson when speaking before an audience, must come across as intelligent, articulate, confident, and likable" (p. 2). He also emphasizes that how people look when speaking to a group largely determines whether they and their organization are perceived as credible. Gray (1993) concurs; he says that "expert public speakers recognize that a believable appearance conveys trustworthiness, dynamism, and expertise" (p. 137). Whether addressing a large or small group of people, whether speaking inside or outside the organization, your clothing must convey a clear message of authority. Your attire should give the impression that you have something important to say and that you are someone worth listening to. In addition, being dressed appropriately will boost confidence and make a person more at ease before a group (Axtell, 1992; Harcourt, Krizan, & Merrier, 1996). Presentation dress is also related to respect. Some listeners will make judgments about your message based on their interpretation of the respect you are showing them by your choice of attire.

Since people form impressions of others within 30 seconds to a minute, dress and appearance are important nonverbal elements. Leary (1995) points out that "whether we like it or not, people's reactions to others are affected by their physical appearance" (p. 93). Becker and Becker (1994) caution that "your clothes may speak louder than your words" (p. 48). Presenters should remember that dress and appearance includes not only their clothing but their jewelry and briefcase as well. Listeners will notice and judge a person=s complete appearance, including hair style and grooming (Becker & Becker, 1994).

ASPECTS OF PRESENTATION DRESS

The consensus of the literature on the meaning of dress in society is that powerful messages are communicated by clothing, accessories, grooming, and hairstyles.

Clothing can project credibility and power. According to Rafaeli and Pratt (1993), people who wear suits, whether male or female, are perceived as more professional than those who wear any other type of attire. Molloy (1981) concurs and recommends wearing serious clothing when you wish to be taken seriously: very dark suits in charcoal gray or navy blue pinstripe for men. Mandel (1993) agrees that a dark blue or gray suit in a single or double-breasted classic style is the safest attire for male presenters. Shirts should be selected to complement the suit. A white cotton shirt for men is usually associated with high credibility, while a navy, dark brown, dark green, or black shirt is inappropriate for business (Baldrige, 1993; Molloy, 1981; Gray, 1993). Shirts and blouses should be lighter than the jacket (Axtell, 1992). For men, white, pastels, and pinstripes are most acceptable (Stewart & Faux, 1994). All shirts for men should, of course, have long sleeves which extend 1/2- to 1-inch below the jacket sleeve (Stewart & Faux, 1994; Yate, 1996).

Molloy (1996) states that while women naturally have a higher credibility than men, women who do have credibility problems should choose a medium-range blue suit with a white blouse, "the highest credibility outfit a woman can wear" (p. 65); a navy blue suit with a white blouse is the next best choice, followed by a beige suit with a light blue blouse. Even when wearing an appropriate color of suit, women can damage their credibility by wearing skirts (or slits in skirts) ending in the thigh area (Lyden & Chaney, 1997).

Fabric also makes a statement. Fabrics of pure fibers (silk, wool, and cotton) convey higher status than such synthetic fibers as polyester (Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). Molloy (1996) recommends that women buy suits made of wool rather than silk; he states: "When you have suits made of any material other than wool, . . . you are taking a chance" (p. 65). The recommended fabric for men's suits is also 100% wool (Yate, 1996).

Shoes are an important accessory. Positive impressions are conveyed by shoes that are expensive, made of leather, and are well shined and maintained. Korda (1975) recommends investing in expensive shoes since they are carefully scrutinized and their image remains in a person's mind longer than anything the person might say. He further states that dirty shoes are a sign of weakness, regardless of the person's age or culture. Shoes considered conservative and appropriate for men include wing tips, laced oxfords, leather loafers, and other types of leather slip-on shoes (Baldrige, 1993). Hose worn with a business suit should be the same color as the shoe; argyle socks are inappropriate. Stewart and Faux (1994) urge women to buy the best shoes they can afford, preferably plain pumps. Molloy (1996) recommends the traditional closed heel, closed toe pump in a conservative color to match the suit. The shade of hose usually matches the shoes, but a neutral tone is acceptable. The height of the heel depends somewhat on the length of the hemline; the height may range from one to two inches (Seitz, 1992). The general rule for both men and women is that the shoe color should match the hem of the garment or darker.

In addition to shoes, other accessories include ties/scarves, belts, pins, watches, and other jewelry. Men should choose a coordinating tie of silk or a silk and polyester blend in a medium width; it should be tied so that the bottom tip of the tie just touches the top of the belt (Gray, 1992). Mandel (1993) cautions that the traditional red "power tie" may not be the best choice for a presenter since the audience's eyes will tend to focus on the tie instead of the presenter. The pattern in the tie and the pocket handkerchief, when worn, should not be identical but should blend. Accessories that suggest activities associated with your personal life, such as class rings, fraternity or lodge pins, and religious symbols, should be avoided. In fact, anything associated with your school days makes you appear immature. The watch as an accessory is also important. According to Stewart and Faux (1994), a very expensive, plain, thin gold watch is a status symbol; the next best choice is a good-name watch with a leather band. Glasses can either contribute to a credible look or detract from it. The proper glasses, with frames of moderate size in plastic or bone (not wire), can make a woman look more authoritative and more intelligent (Seitz, 1992). Studies have indicated that both men and women are perceived to be richer and smarter in glasses (Bixler, 1992). Men are advised to choose wire, plastic, or frameless glasses that blend with the hair color. Glasses for men or women should not be shaded. Wearing half glasses (sometimes called "reading glasses") during the presentation is viewed as condescending as you are literally "looking down your nose" at your audience. Other accessories include belts/suspenders and jewelry. A leather belt to match the shoes is recommended for both men and women. Women would avoid belts that call attention to the waist, such as a belt of faux leopard. Men who prefer suspenders should avoid buying clip-on styles and should not wear a belt in addition to the suspenders (Seitz, 1992). Jewelry should be kept to a minimum and should not be distracting; it should not sparkle, dangle, or make a noise (Mandel, 1993; Axtell, 1992). Men should avoid wearing bracelets. Wearing multiple rings destroys credibility; the number of rings should be limited to two. According to Seitz (1992), the only jewelry men need is a good watch and their wedding band; she further reminds that when accessorizing with gold or silver to avoid combining them.

Attention to grooming gives the impression of respect for self and others. Two important aspects of women's grooming is makeup and nail polish. Molloy's (1996) research indicates that the best look for a woman is makeup that is understated and looks as natural as possible. Since nails are carefully scrutinized, they should be clean and well trimmed. While the color of nail polish depends somewhat on

a woman's age, long bright-colored fingernails are considered "disasters" for business regardless of age (Baldrige, 1993). The best advice is to keep the nails 1/4 inch beyond the fingertip and wear either a light shade of polish or clear (Stewart & Faux, 1994; Bixler, 1992).

Hair should be clean and styled conservatively. A woman with long straight hair lacks credibility as she may give the impression she is clinging to her youth (Baldrige, 1993). In addition, Molloy's (1996) research indicated that hair below shoulder length sends a sexual message to 10 to 15% of men and makes a woman less effective and less professional in business situations. Hairstyles that tested well for the businesswoman were no longer than shoulder length, wavy but not curly, short but not masculine. Men appear more credible with a moderate haircut with moderate sideburns (Molloy, 1988). While the concept of a moderate hair style changes over the years, including the length, hair that is shoulder length, even when tied back in a ponytail, damages credibility. Mustaches and beards, when worn, should be professionally trimmed.

To determine employees' perceptions of appropriate presentation attire and the impact of dress on a speaker's credibility, a survey of selected employees at Mid-South firms, schools, and health care facilities was conducted. Demographic information was requested to determine whether significant differences ($p<.05$) existed between demographic factors and responses.

SURVEY FINDINGS

A 20-item questionnaire (10 questions related to women's attire and 10 for men's attire) was developed following a literature review. One hundred seventy-five employees at Mid-South firms, schools, and health care facilities were asked to indicate on a five-point scale (with 5 representing high credibility and 1 representing low credibility) their perception of the extent to which each of the items listed would affect a speaker's credibility. Respondents were also asked to indicate their gender, age, type of organization, and job classification. The mean responses to the 20 items on the questionnaire are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Aspects of Dress/Appearance Affecting Speaker Credibility

	Elements	Mean
Women=s Dress	White silk blouse	3.97
	Leather navy pump with a 2-inch heel	3.72
	Neutral-colored hosiery with navy shoes	3.66
	Gold watch with an expandable band	3.20
	Navy suit with hemline 4 inches above the knee	2.76
	Long, straight hair 10 inches below the shoulder	2.47
	Two rings on each hand	2.39
	Bright red nail polish	2.21
	Dangling earrings	2.11
	Wide belt with leopard skin print	1.59
Men=s Dress	Navy two-button suit	4.14
	Gold watch with leather band	3.65
	Black leather slip-on shoes	3.54
	Argyle socks	2.84
	Paisley tie with matching pocket handkerchief	2.81
	Pale blue polyester shirt with button-down collar	2.61
	Burgundy belt	2.53
	Fraternity/lodge pin in lapel	2.43
	Gold bracelet	2.24
	Shoulder-length hair tied back in a ponytail	1.65

Respondents' Demographics

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender, age, classification of employer, and job status. Of the 170 indicating their gender, 119 (70%) were female; 51 (30%) were male. Of the 169 indicating their age, 10 (5.9%) were under age 25; 79 (46.7%) were 25 to 39; 67 (39.6%) were 40 to 54 years of age; 13 (7.7%) were 55 or above. Most respondents (118 or 69.8%) were from business; 7 (4.1%) were from education, 8 (4.7%) were classified as government employees; 27 (16.0%) were from medicine; and 9 (5.3%) were classified as "other." The largest percentage of the 170 respondents indicating their job status (59 or 34.7%) were professional/technical, 50 (29.4%) were clerical/secretarial employees, 35 (20.6%) were middle-level managers, 11 (6.5%) were upper-level managers, and 15 (8.8%) indicated "other."

Statistical Analyses

An SPSS Statistical Package was used to analyze the data. To determine statistical differences between each aspect and demographic variables of age, gender, classification of employer, and status, a series of ANOVAs was performed. As shown in Figure 2, significant differences ($p < .05$) existed between demographic factors on four of the ten elements regarding females and on six of the ten elements for males. Furthermore, gender and classification seem to make the greatest difference in responses to these items; five elements differed significantly according to each of these demographic factors. Status made a significant difference in responses to four of the elements of presentation dress, and age was significant with regard to responses to two of the elements

Discussion

Significant differences were found for various elements of female presentation dress. Three elements differed by gender. Specifically, Scheffe post hoc analyses revealed that females ranked neutral-colored hosiery with navy shoes as significantly more positive (mean of 3.81) than did males (mean of 3.31). Similarly, females ranked a leather navy pump with a 2-inch heel as significantly more positive (mean of 3.92) than did males (mean of 3.29). On the other hand, females found bright red nail polish as significantly less positive (mean of 2.08) than did males (mean of 2.47). These responses reveal that females are more likely to be aware of the existing standards for presentation dress for females according to experts (as discussed in the literature) than are males. One female presentation dress element differed according to age: leather navy pumps with a 2-inch heel. While Scheffe post hoc analysis revealed that no two groups differed specifically, the impression seemed to become less positive the older the respondent. For instance, the mean responses with regard to females wearing leather navy pumps with a 2-inch heel were as follows: under 25: mean of 2.70; 25-34: mean of 2.20; 35-44: mean of 2.13; and 45 or above: mean of 2.08. One element of women's dress also differed according to classification: wide belt in a leopard skin print. Specifically, those respondents employed in business rated the element as significantly less positive (mean of 2.12). Perhaps business employees are given more training on the correct standards of presentation dress than are those in the medical field. Two of the elements of presentation dress for females differed according to status. Post hoc analyses demonstrates that those respondents who were upper-level managers ranked neutral-colored hosiery with navy shoes as significantly less positive (mean of 2.45) than professional/ technical respondents (mean of 3.73), middle-level managers (mean of 3.80), or clerical/secretarial employees (mean of 3.78). An overall significant difference was also found with regard to females wearing a wide belt in a leopard skin print with regard to status; however, no two specific group mean responses differed significantly.

For male presentation dress, two elements differed according to gender, one according to age, four differed according to classification, and two differed with regard to job status. A navy two-button suit was perceived as significantly more positive by females (mean of 4.23) than by males (mean of 3.92). While both genders found this as the most positive element for male presentation dress, females were more generous in their rankings. With regard to differences according to age, mean responses to men wearing argyle socks differed between those respondents under 25, who ranked this element higher (mean of 3.80) than those aged 40 to 54 who had a mean response of 3.62. Understandably, younger men view wearing argyle socks (quite appropriate in their college days) as more acceptable than older men who have had wider experience with business dress and would probably agree with Molloy (1988): "Business socks should

Figure 2. ANOVA Results, Presentation Dress Elements and Demographic Factors

	Gender		Age		Classification		Status	
Women=s Dress	F	P-value	F	P-value	F	P-value	F	P-value
Navy suit with hemline 4 inches above the knee	3.44	.07	2.51	.06	1.26	.29	.31	.93
White silk blouse	.13	.72	1.56	.20	1.57	.18	1.49	.18
Gold watch with an expandable band	.16	.69	1.11	.35	1.22	.30	.84	.54
Two rings on each hand	.11	.74	1.94	.13	.34	.85	1.19	.32
Neutral-colored hosiery with navy shoes	7.77	.01**	1.05	.37	1.34	.25	4.44	.00**
Leather navy pump with a 2-inch heel	13.02	.00**	3.57	.02*	1.75	.14	.31	.93
Dangling earrings	1.46	.23	1.14	.33	2.04	.09	.33	.92
Wide belt in a leopard skin print	1.70	.19	1.30	.27	3.21	.01**	2.81	.01**
Long, straight hair 10 inches below the shoulder	.06	.81	1.71	.17	1.27	.28	.95	.46
Bright red nail polish	5.21	.02*	.95	.42	.76	.56	.65	.69
Men=s Dress	F	P-value	F	P-value	F	P-value	F	P-value
Navy two-button suit	4.22	.04*	1.36	.26	2.51	.04*	.73	.62
Pale blue polyester shirt with button-down collar	.12	.73	1.23	.30	3.17	.01**	1.62	.15
Gold watch with leather band	5.17	.02*	.55	.65	1.41	.23	1.48	.19
Fraternity/lodge pin in lapel	.91	.34	.49	.69	1.91	.11	1.37	.23
Paisley tie with matching pocket handkerchief	3.10	.08	.48	.70	.39	.81	1.94	.08
Black leather slip-on shoes	3.55	.06	.42	.74	.64	.64	1.74	.11
Argyle socks	2.22	.14	3.35	.02*	1.39	.24	2.47	.03*
Burgundy belt	1.02	.31	.26	.86	3.13	.02*	2.97	.01**
Gold bracelet	.27	.60	1.33	.27	4.15	.00**	1.15	.34
Shoulder-length hair tied back in a ponytail	.65	.42	2.25	.08	1.56	.19	.68	.67

* .01 level of significance; ** .05 level of significance

be dark and over the calf" (p. 247). Four of the male presentation elements differed according to classification. Overall significant differences were found for: navy two-button suit, pale blue polyester shirt with button-down collar, and burgundy belt; however, post hoc analyses revealed no significant differences between any classifications for any of these elements. With regard to men wearing a gold bracelet, respondents classified as business employees ranked this element as significantly less positive (mean of 2.04) than did those respondents classified as medical employees (mean of 2.89). Again, it seems that those respondents in business are more aware of correct presentation attire than are those in medicine. Overall significant differences were found for two elements of dress for men with regard to status: argyle socks and burgundy belt. Post hoc analyses showed that no two specific groups differed significantly for either element.

SUMMARY

Results of the present survey generally agree with impression management experts and image consultants on aspects of attire that enhance or damage a speaker's credibility. Impressions of presentation attire often differ according to the demographics of the respondents. Survey results demonstrate the importance of

making all demographic classifications of the workforce aware of the appropriateness of certain elements of presentation attire.

Dressing appropriately for certain occasions, such as making an important presentation, may not guarantee success, but dressing inappropriately can assure failure (Bogdanoff, 1996). While Riordan (1989) cautions that "appropriate dress is highly dependent on personal, situational, and industrial standards," (p. 89) the reality is that presenters are judged on their appearance and attire even before they begin to speak. Bixler (1992) maintains that "it is a fact of life that we often judge books by their covers or people by their appearances" (p. 17).

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THE RESUME: CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROTOTYPE FOR OBJECTIVITY

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Abstract

Objectiveness in the resume screening process is discussed in this paper. Expected information in traditional and electronic resumes which could have adverse effects for some job applicants in the resume screening process is analyzed. Implications of including this expected information is examined. Additionally, suggestions for a prototype of resume content information which promotes objectivity is presented. Personnel administrators, college recruiters, business educators, consultants, etc., who give advice to job applicants in relation to this expected information are encouraged to consider promoting a resume developed similar to the prototype proposed in this paper which helps job applicants provide and prospective employers evaluate job-specific information emphasizing qualifications and abilities only.

INTRODUCTION

Kennedy and Morrow (1994) adequately describe the problem of this paper:

> It's an old story: Job seekers say they constantly are frustrated by an employment process so antiquated and subjective that, despite their obvious qualifications, they are denied fair attention from companies. Employers complain that applicants continually fight the system, thus making it difficult to identify and hire the right people. (p. vii)

The constant tug-of-war between job applicants and prospective employers presently continues. While Kennedy and Morrow (1994) suggest that applicants may encounter unfairness in selection because of an antiquated and subjective employment process, have the technological advances and innovations which appear to have revolutionized the employment process sufficiently addressed this concern?

Since the resume is usually the major factor in opening the door for job consideration (Gonyea, 1995; Kennedy & Morrow, 1994; Kissane, 1997), it is understandable why this component of the employment process receives so much attention. Tremendous investments of time and resources are expended during this initial stage of the job search by both the job applicant and the prospective employer. Fair evaluation and disclosure of pertinent information is desired by all participants for effective, efficient, suitable results.

More information is revealed from a traditional or electronic resume than many job applicants may realize information that, upon first review, seems unrelated to hiring decisions, but later could contribute to the decision-making process. In order to promote a more objective process, employers may be encouraged to eliminate more of the "expected" information from screening documents (Harcourt and Krizan, 1989).

Although some companies have embraced the "techno" revolution and initial resume screenings may be accomplished by some "robotic recruiter" (Kennedy and Morrow, 1994, p. vii.), those electronic filters were created with specific application requirements to search on keywords identified as relevant and important to the prospective employer. In addition, subsequent screenings usually revert back to old familiar procedures. Job candidates could, therefore, get in the race, but never leave the start line, nor clear the first hurdle. In order to promote objective consideration of job applicants from the initial resume review, and further along in the hiring process, a look at the possible use of some selected information usually provided on both the traditional and electronic resume might be warranted.

Demographic and social changes in the workplace have served as a catalyst for equity issues pushing the rationale that consideration be given to job-related criteria only. The more employers quantify and specify job requirements, the more objective this process can be. Resumes then could be developed which provide only information relevant for employment consideration.

The discussion in this paper involves information provided in resume components which could adversely influence the resume screening process. Alternatives to "expected" information provided in those components will be addressed and perspectives on employers' receptiveness of resumes with alternative formats is hypothesized.

EXPECTED INFORMATION

Harcourt and Krizan (1989) in a 1987 study identified resume content items in order of importance as ranked by Fortune 500 Personnel administrators and business communication instructors. Name, telephone number, degree, name of college, jobs held (titles), address, and employing company were the top seven items for each group. The other three items which ranked in the top ten positions for the administrators were major study, dates of employment, and date of college graduation. The remaining three items which ranked in the instructors' top ten positions were duties/work experience, special aptitudes/skills, and achievements/work experience.

The top ten items ranked in each group's list is information which prospective employers expect on resumes whether traditional or electronic. Embedded within those "expected" items, however, is information about the job applicant which could be used in the screening process whether the applicant cares to have the information considered or not. All information available on a resume, written or implied, is used in the decision-making process.

In a 1991 article, Harcourt, Krizan, & Merrier presented the results of a study on preferences of resume content by hiring officials versus college recruiters. Fifty percent or more of hiring officials and college recruiters ranked heading information (name, address, and telephone number), dates of employment, and education (name of college) once again among the top ten items (Harcourt & Krizan, 1991).

Hutchinson and Brefka (1997) wrote of their research on personnel administrators' preferences for resume content. . . "Not surprisingly, the present study supports the conclusions of prior research that argues to include the name, address, and phone number on the resume" (p. 72). Authors, educators, and consultants continue to currently advise all job applicants to include this same expected information. Parker (1998) writes:

> Don't mystify the reader about your gender; they'll go nuts until they know whether you're male or female. So if your name is Lee or Robin or Pat or anything else not clearly male or female, use a Mr. or Ms. prefix.

If employers are truly hiring personnel based on qualifications and abilities, the significance of some particular, expected information, according to the available research, may need to be re-evaluated by prospective employers for its relevance to the job or to determine if it meets some business necessity (The Hiring Experience).

IMPLICATIONS

"Keep in mind that resumes are used not to select people, but to reject most people" (Kissane, 1997, p. 120). Hence, expected information can result in "pre-interview discrimination" (Parker, 1998).

The Harcourt and Krizan (1989) and Harcourt, Krizan, & Merrier (1991) studies cited above indicate the potential for recruiters and hiring officials to consider information which may be irrelevant to the hiring process. Any job applicant could be affected by a lack of objectivity in the screening process. Eliminating the possibility that gender, race, disability, ethnicity, nationality, age, or other extraneous factors could influence screening or hiring decisions would benefit applicants as well as employers.

Gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic level, etc., can all be determined by information provided by applicants in the heading of a resume. Many applicants have names that are easily associated

with these demographic factors. The potential for bias based on this information is evident. Without much effort, many recruiters or hiring personnel can determine much of the same demographic information from an applicant's address and telephone number. The fact is that many zip codes and telephone exchanges identify various homogeneous neighborhoods (Neuborne, 1997).

As Geanne Rosenberg (1997) reports "firing employees is risky business when it comes to legal liability. But the hiring process is shaping up to be a legal minefield as well" (p. A1). The technological revolution is also contributing to this dilemma. Bias and its consequence of legal repercussions apparently cannot be averted through the use of resumes being posted to electronic bulletin boards or employers using resume screening software. Ellen Neuborne (1997) reported in USA Today:

> Disney is faced with a lawsuit regarding its use of a resume screening program called Resumix. Three black workers alleging discrimination say the program is culturally biased in the keywords it uses. Diversity consultants say computer programs can screen for items such as ZIP codes, which can indirectly eliminate may non-white candidates from a job pool (p. 1B).

Names of educational institutions convey connotative information. Applicant qualifications or scholastic achievement could be discounted or overrated based on the hiring personnel's perception of the degree-granting institution. Thus, while laws exist to promote objectivity in the workplace, labels or descriptors invoke data from memory which are used in the cognitive process to assess candidates.

Work experience information, when associated with demographic factors, also has the potential to result in an applicant's being screened out of consideration for a position. Company names and even some job titles could present problems. Careful analysis of position titles as well as selection of keywords to describe qualifications and responsibilities is necessary by job candidates to ensure optimum favorable consideration. Labels and descriptors which match applicants to job positions are crucial in this section. Gercken (1996) warns that "simplistic and inaccurate labels . . . often weed out perfectly good and effective candidates, either in resume screening or during the interview process" (p. 11).

While heading and work experience information, name of college attended, and dates of employment are expected, job applicants could be instrumental in providing an avenue for recruiters to evaluate resumes more objectively.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROTOTYPE

Research on resume content indicates that the items usually preferred, expected, or ranked most important can be categorized as personal (heading data), education, and work information. Some new ways to present this information are discussed here.

Heading Information

The expected heading information in the traditional or electronic resume could be less revealing. The same strategy used by prospective employers to prevent company identification is available to job applicants. Names could be omitted from the resume completely or a less connotative label provided. A post office box number or E-mail address instead of the usual street number, name, and zip code designation would present more objective information. Many job applicants now have cellular phones, voice mail boxes or pager numbers which could replace the more identifiable, traditional exchanges of many home telephone numbers.

Educational Information

Omitting the name of the educational institution just as providing a less connotative label for name in the heading information could be perceived as radical. However, Parker's (1998) comments on applicants'

specifying their gender reveals that hiring personnel gather all available information in assessing candidates. Candidates, therefore, have to make conscious decisions about whether it is to their advantage to have some information considered.

Rather than the usual name and location (city and state) of the educational institution, employers open to objectivity in the employment process might be receptive to the applicant's providing degree-specific information only. The type of degree and the applicant's major field of study provide pertinent job-related information. Applicants could also list specific courses taken within their curriculum.

For some assurance to the prospective employer in the initial screening process that the applicant's credentials are authentic, the certifications or accreditations of the academic institution could be reported.

Work Experience

The work experience section contains less opportunity for reviewers to consider extraneous information. However, applicants should be careful to provide job specific information only. If the applicant has only worked for ethnically identifiable organizations, this could be an issue with the reviewer. Additionally, certain job titles like "domestic engineer," or "family planner" may serve to establish more than generalizations in the mind of the reader. Applicants faced with this dilemma should consider omitting job titles and instead, listing their skills and qualifications under descriptive headings.

RESUME PROTOTYPE: A PREVIEW

Examples of sections which usually contain expected information are presented below replaced with more objective, or job specific information. Instead of the name, for example, such designations as aspiring accountant, junior accountant, senior accountant, etc., could be used , depending on the applicant's level of experience:

HEADING:

Aspiring Accountant
Phone and Fax: (800) 493-4986
e- mail: vibrant@cc.revenue.com

EDUCATION:

Degree:	Bachelor of Business Administration
Major:	Accounting
Minor:	Finance
Institution:	Accredited by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business
Year:	Expected, May 1998

RELEVANT COURSES:

Accounting Systems	Federal Income Tax
Auditing	Cost Accounting
Managerial Accounting	Corporate Income Tax

WORK EXPERIENCE:

1996-present

Intern, international healthcare organization
-maintained journal entry book
-maintained ledgers for subsidiary branches
-reclassed long and short term notes
-performed reconciliations
- developed amoritization schedules
- saved $54,000 in audit of subsidiary tax returns

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While hiring personnel may not use expected information to unjustly screen out prospective job applicants, the realization that this information could affect some job applicants adversely does exist. Moreover, "employers who screen out applicants for the wrong reasons . . . may be pushing their legal luck" (Rosenberg, 1997, p. A1).

Just as technology is extending the ability of employers to reach potential applicants and promoting a change in pre-employment protocol, legal ramifications relating to pre-interview issues are now nudging, but may later force changes in the resume screening process.

Examples of alternative resume content information for the heading, education, and work experience sections provided in this discussion may be rejected upon first review; however, changes of some magnitude are imminent because of shifting workforce demographics. Prospective employers who feel that applicants are "fighting the system" may want to examine the issues raised in this discussion as a hiring precaution, reexamining whether the expected information they are accustomed to receiving is essential to their business needs.

Some job applicants, as the Kennedy and Morrow (1994) excerpt indicates, may well be fighting the system; however, others may be fighting a system that, by design, is stacked against them.

Personnel administrators, college recruiters, business educators, and consultants who prefer and continue to advise job applicants to include the expected information discussed in this paper as resume content may need to seriously examine the possible consequences of this position.

The main concern of employers after all is to hire the candidate who most closely matches their job description and requirement.

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STUDENT WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE

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ABSTRACT

As an increasing number of students have access to term papers available on the Internet or the Web, teachers are concerned about potential cheating. Many sources of papers (free or for sale) are available to Web searchers. An analysis of business communication textbooks found that textbooks did address plagiarism, paraphrasing, and documentation/citation topics but in varying degrees of coverage. Suggestions are given for planning writing assignments that will accurately reflect a student's own work.

INTRODUCTION

Business communication and writing teachers have discussed student plagiarism over the years. As students have access to more information on Internet resources or on the web, many academicians fear greater cheating will be possible. This paper will discuss (1) the literature concerning cheating and plagiarism in writing assignments, (2) Web paper mill sources (3) an analysis of business communication textbooks for coverage of plagiarism and related topics, and (4) suggestions for business communication instructors and textbook authors/publishers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a study of academic dishonesty on test exams and written assignments, McCabe and Trevino (1996) found similar results when compared to students 30 years earlier. McCabe and Trevino (1996) found that 84 percent of students in 1993 reported cheating on written assignments compared with 82 percent in 1963.

The electronic age has afforded students greater opportunities for plagiarism and/or cheating on writing assignments. Recent articles (Denning, 1995; McCollum, 1996; Basinger & McCollum, 1997; Strickland, 1997) as well as a number of Web sources (DePaul University, 1997; Exley, 1997) discuss the availability of term papers for sale (or free) on the Internet or Web. Entire papers can be retrieved or files downloaded. Students do not need to copy material; instead, they can download the entire paper without even having to rekey the information.

Morse (1993) reported a study in which 26 percent of students had plagiarized by using the works of others. In addition, 36 percent admitted using fictitious or made-up sources for written work. The students in that study stated that they plagiarized because they felt the original author's words were better than their own words. Students using fictitious or made-up sources rationalized that they did so to meet instructors' quantitative requirements. A little less than half of the students (46 percent) were able to identify correct citation methods; thus, some plagiarism may occur unwittingly because of ignorance of documentation/citation procedures.

Why do students cheat or plagiarize? Howard (1995) concluded that most plagiarism resulted for two reasons: (1) "an absence of ethics" or (2) "ignorance of citation conventions" (p. 788). Davis (1992) and McCabe and Trevino (1996) suggested that instructor emphasis on collaboration may be contributing to increased cheating; when students are encouraged to work collaboratively on many class projects, they see little reason not to collaborate on individual writing assignments. The McCabe and Trevino (1996) study found that 49 percent of students in 1993 admitted unsanctioned collaboration on written assignments (up from 11 percent in 1963). Unquestionably, as more and more

students are encouraged to work in teams on approved collaborative assignments, students are accustomed to working collaboratively, even when not sanctioned.

Some literature (Sharkey, 1992; Thompson & Williams, 1995; Malouff & Sims, 1996; Bowden, 1996) did address ways for instructors to detect and/or avoid plagiarism and cheating. Malouff & Sims (1996) applied Vroom's expectancy model to prevent student plagiarism; their strategies included providing an understanding of ethical rules, giving manageable assignments, etc. Others (McCollum,1996; Basinger & McCollum ,1997) have become concerned about the number of term papers available on the web either for sale or free. McCollum (1996) suggested that professors make it easy for students to use paper mills when they assign broad report topics.

In an analysis of business communication textbooks, Morse (1991) found limited coverage of plagiarism and related terms. Only one-third of the textbooks indexed the term *plagiarism*. Sixty percent of the textbooks covered the term *documentation*, while only one of the textbooks indexed the term *paraphrasing*. Morse (1991) reported that the best examples of plagiarism, paraphrasing, and correctly documented paragraphs came from style manuals or books written specifically for research papers.

REVIEW OF WEB PAPER MILL SOURCES

To determine the availability of paper mill sources, the author ran a Web search using AltaVista and found thousands of documents when using such search terms as: *term papers*, *term paper links*, *term papers for sale*, and *term papers for free*. When searching for *term paper links*, the Web site provided additional links to electronic term paper sources. Below are a few of the many term paper sources found on the Web:

Cheat House (http://www.cheathouse.com)
Genius Papers (http://www.geniuspapers.com)
Other People's Papers (http://www.oppapers.com)
School Papers (http://www.schoolpapers.com)
School Sucks (http://www.schoolsucks.com)

Many of the Web sources offer (advertise) thousands of papers. Some of the sources are free; others are for a fee. Cheat House asks for a credit number to locate over 8,000 essays; however, the site does offer free access to a section entitled "Check Out the Best Ways to Cheat in an Exam." Genius Papers are available for user access for $9.95 a year. A number of sites offer papers free for downloading. Whether for sale or free, the sites offer papers on a variety of paper topics. For example, Other People's Papers offers information for different fields or disciplines such as Art, Economics, History, Social Sciences, etc. The topics range from Abortion and Affirmative Action to Keynesian Economics vs. Supply Side Economics. Some indicate the level of the paper (whether high school, university, or graduate); others indicate the grade or percentage the paper received.

One site, ACI Net Guide (Berman, 1997) lists term paper sources, but cautions users about the problems of using others' papers. Some of the problems mentioned included the substandard quality of papers, the possibility that others may be submitting the same paper mill copy to the professor, or that the professor may remember the papers having been submitted in previous terms. Interestingly, ACI Net Guide is a commercial site offering custom writing and research services for $40 per page with a minimum fee of $500--in other words, ACI Net Guide is providing a student with a paper written by someone else!

In the opinion of the authors, the quality of some of the papers (whether free or for sale) was questionable. Some were extremely short papers or essays. For example, a report on Thomas Robert Malthus was very short and had four references (one from Grolier's Electronic Encyclopedia and three from the same Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia).

ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION TEXTBOOKS

The authors of this paper analyzed 15 business communication textbooks to determine the coverage of the following three topics: *plagiarism, paraphrasing, documentation/ citation*. These textbooks had been published no earlier than 1996. The textbooks selected for the analysis were chosen from the copies available to the author; these textbooks do not represent all of the business communication textbooks published or necessarily the most widely used textbooks. Whether the textbooks covered these topics was determined first by checking the index and then checking the pages for coverage and content. In a few cases, a topic was not indexed but was found in pages for other indexed topics.

As shown in Figure 1, over half of the business communication textbooks covered the three topics. Both *Plagiarism* and *documentation/citation* were covered in 60 percent of the textbooks, while *paraphrasing* was covered in 53.3 percent of the textbooks.

Have business communication textbooks improved their coverage of these topics? When compared with an earlier analysis of business communication textbooks (Morse, 1991), more textbooks covered *plagiarism* in 1998 (60 percent) than in 1991 (33 percent). The 1998 and 1991 analyses found identical coverage (60 percent) of *documentation/citation*. *Paraphrasing* was covered in 60 percent of the textbooks in 1998 but in only 7 percent of the textbooks in 1991.

Figure 1. Textbook Coverage of Plagiarism, Paraphrasing, and Documentation and/or Citation Topics

Topics	No. of Textbooks	Percent of Textbooks
Plagiarism:		
Coverage	9	60.0%
No coverage	6	40.0%
Total	15	100.0%
Paraphrasing		
Coverage	8	53.3%
No coverage	7	46.7%
Total	15	100.0%
Documentation and/or citation		
Coverage	9	60.0%
No coverage	6	40.0%
Total	15	100.0%

That a textbook did cover a topic did not reflect the quality of that coverage. One-third of the nine textbooks covering *plagiarism* had only minimal coverage; the remaining two-thirds were judged either as basic or excellent coverage. Five of the textbooks covered *plagiarism* with boxed text sections, usually as legal or ethical discussions. Half of the eight textbooks covering *paraphrasing* had only minimal coverage. None of the nine textbooks covering *documentation/citation* had minimal coverage.

SUGGESTIONS FOR INSTRUCTORS AND TEXTBOOK AUTHORS/PUBLISHERS

First, business communication instructors must acknowledge that opportunities for cheating and plagiarism abound in this electronic age. Cheating may be as simple as borrowing a peer's computer diskette and making minor changes on the writing assignment or downloading a complete term paper from an Internet or web source. The question is then how do instructors prevent cheating or plagiarism in written work? Based on the literature and the authors' own experiences, the following suggestions are given for instructors to prevent cheating or plagiarism in written work:

1. Provide instruction and examples concerning citation, documentation, quoting, and paraphrasing of sources.
2. Discuss the institution's code of ethics and penalties resulting from plagiarism.
3. Devise report topics specific to your institution that are unlikely to be available on Internet sources. Change report topics from time to time.
4. Have students work on papers one section at a time with different due dates for the separate parts of the report.
5. Have students provide the instructor with print copies or full-text copies of every reference used in the paper.
6. Check Web sites offering free papers . In no way would an instructor be able to check every paper, but a spot check of topics used in class might be helpful.
7. Search the Web for *plagiarism*. Some institutions publish their code of ethics and discuss plagiarism. Wellesley College (1997) includes a section on plagiarism, including some excellent examples of word-for-word plagiarizing, summarizing, and paraphrasing.

Although business communication textbooks appear to cover plagiarism and documentation topics in greater depth today than in the past, the textbooks could provide more concrete writing examples of plagiarized, paraphrased, and quoted material.

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SUPPLEMENTING THE DELIVERY OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION WITH THE INTERNET

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ABSTRACT

During the 1997 fall semester, the author taught an evening section of Business Communication as part of the University's PM program. The course was offered on Monday evenings from 7 to 10 p.m. Ten of the thirty-eight members on the roster were working toward a degree through the University's PM program (most coursework being completed at night). The author felt a need, therefore, to supplement regular teaching with the internet. The goal was to keep the students involved with the course content, thereby overcoming the fact that we met once a week.

INTRODUCTION

In this teacher's experience, use of the internet begins with posting the course syllabus, student expectations, and grading scale through the course home page. These course components are displayed on a grid along with other hyperlinks to the University's, college's, and department's home pages, where students can access, for example, student and faculty directories, office hours, and microcomputer lab schedules. Additional hyperlinks are provided for the weekly postings of course assignments, announcements, practice exams, and related sites. Numerous e-mail communications to students supplement the internet postings. Finally, messages to students may be accompanied by attachments such as PowerPoint presentations. In turn, students send e-mail, often with homework attachments.

Reasons for Utilizing Distance Learning

Distance learning can be as complicated as using videotaped lectures, satellite programs, and teleconferencing. In this writer's experience, distance learning involves supplementing regular instruction with use of the internet and electronic mail. A review of the literature reveals numerous reasons for utilizing distance learning including reaching "older students since the proportion of older students now reaches 41%" (Altman and Pratt, 1997), addressing access issues (Griffin, 1996), bringing "continuing education to people who cannot afford to interrupt a career" (Ebeling and Bistayi, 1997), and making "self-directed learning and life-long learning achievable goals" (Charp, 1997).

During the 1997 fall semester, ten of thirty-eight members of the author's Monday evening section of Business Communication were "official" PM students. This is the University's designation for students who have declared an intent to complete degrees by taking mostly evening classes. Secondly, twelve members of the class held full-time jobs.

The author has observed, over the past twenty years, that meeting with a class once a week gives students an opportunity to forget course content and assignments in the intervening six days. To counteract that effect and to reach out to all students, including the non-traditional students, one of the course expectations was that students would check the course website on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Drawbacks of Distance Learning

Literature also reveals drawbacks to utilizing distance learning: course preparation is very time-consuming (Altman and Pratt, 1997), poor communication exists among the various levels of the culture, even about "good practice" (Connell, 1996), access to the Web may be limited (Charp, 1997), and difficulties posed by the learning curve for adoption of new technologies exist (Connell, 1996).

Access to the Web may be limited. The writer's students were surveyed on the final evening of the course, using a survey instrument they helped develop. The responses, as shown in Figure 1, indicated access to the internet was limited for three of the students.

Figure 1. Internet Accessibility

Location of Internet Access*	Number of Responses
On campus	29
At my home	9
At my office	7
In my dormitory	6
Other (including public library, in-class only, friends)	3

*Instructions on survey instrument: "Check all that apply."

Overcoming difficulties posed by the initial curve. Integrating technology began during the first evening of instruction. As the teacher's demonstration was projected on the front screen and wall monitors, students started up computers at their desks. The demonstration progressed as follows: load Windows using a networked environment; launch Netscape Gold and locate the course URL; explore the hyperlinks to the course syllabus, student expectations, grading scale, etc.; and launch Eudora to set start-up options. As a follow-up, students composed and sent e-mail messages introducing themselves to the instructor.

For many of the students, the preceding list of to-do's, even on the opening evening, was quite reasonable. For some of the students, it was overwhelming. Therefore, the sequence of steps was reviewed during the second evening. Then these new elements were added: accessing search engines and entering descriptors. Eventually, students accessed sites regularly to complete assignments, accessed resume banks and career fairs, sent e-mail attachments, and downloaded PowerPoint presentations. Each step was planned and practiced during class.

Constant Communications

The number of messages to and from students grew as the semester progressed. By December, fifty files had been saved on the author's subdirectory on the fileserver. These files ranged from weekly announcments to models of completed assignments. These fifty files had been posted on appropriate dates and then replaced by updated postings. Secondly, over one hundred electronic messages, one fifth with accompanying attachments, had been sent or received.

Excerpts from five electronic messages show the range of communications.

Example 1: August 31 Dear Student ¶ Your name is listed on my AD252-70 roster. This class meets on Monday evenings in Dempster Hall from 7 - 9:50. Since you were not in class on August 23, you may not realize that we won't meet on September 1 on Labor Day. ¶ You need to see me in my office, Dempster Hall, Room 254, this week to avoid the teacher-initiated drop card. My office hours are MWF 11-12, and my phone number is 651-2096.

Example 2: October 10 Dr. Rainey ¶ The attachment contains my rewrite of homework Ex. 8.7. I have not heard back from my partner [team assignment] so I don't have his comments. ¶ Please let me know if you get this message. This is only my second time sending an email with an attachment, and I

would like to make sure I am doing it correctly. Thank you. ¶ Student Name Attachment Converted: C:\EUDORA\ATTACH\Bus8.7

Example 3: October 23 Dr. Rainey ¶ Sorry I missed class Monday night. It was unavoidable. I was out of town for a family matter. I figured I would be back in time for class, but we had some car trouble and traffic was bad. I didn't get home until 10:30 p.m. ¶ What did I miss? I have looked at the assignment on the webpage and have a few questions. I will probably stop by tomorrow and talk to you. I was wondering if you could send me the powerpoint presentation on Chapter 10, I think it was. Also, could I still write Section 10.1 and turn it in. ¶ Well, I will talk to you tomorrow. Student Name

Example 4: October 30 You said you wanted to hear from us, sooooo- ¶ I was looking at the pretest and was confused about a couple [of items]. If you have time, could you explain? If not, I'll just wait for the answers on Monday. #5. Shouldn't a resume both provide significant details supporting the letter AND be used at all times to add info to the letter? #8. I think under references, you should list people who can verify points on which you base your appeals AND include mailing addresses and job titles, BUT not list a reference for EACH major job OR offer explanation for not including a reference. Am I wrong--should you do all of those things? I guess I better read the chapters AGAIN! Thanks

Example 5: November 3 Dear [Student] ¶ The answers to the practice test have been added to the website. When you visit the practice test site again this afternoon, you'll be able to detect that the right answer in the enumeration system has been bolded. ¶ Question #5 I can agree with your statement that a resume can present more details than a letter of application can address. I suppose the writer of the [test] question wants to emphasize that if a concept--like leadership--is mentioned in the letter, the resume can list details that support that concept. ¶ Question #8 The correct answer is E. I believe that "offer an explanation if you do not include a reference" refers to the one-liner that we used to teach: "References gladly furnished upon request." ¶ Nice to hear from you!

Mastery of Requisite Skills

Great care was devoted to ensuring that the students possessed the requisite skills for supplementing instruction of business communication with the internet. Results from the student survey, shown in Figure 2, shows the word processing and internet skills needed for successful completion of course assignments.

Figure 2. Word Processing and Internet Skills

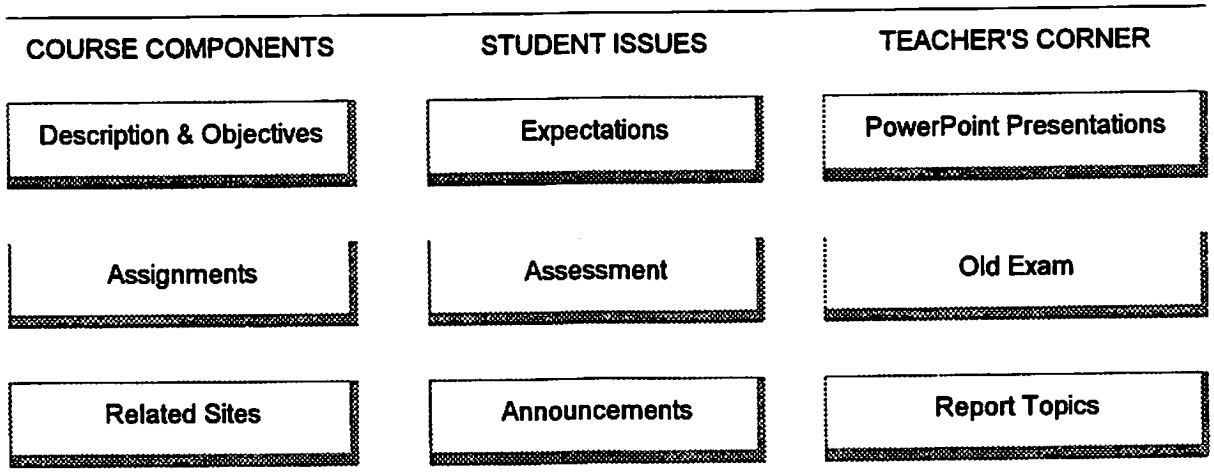
Type of Word Processing/Internet Skill*	Acquired Before Course	Acquired During Course
Created/sent e-mail attachments	8	22
Accessed resume banks	4	21
Used PowerPoint	16	20
Accessed job openings/fairs	5	19
Created/sent e-mail	18	17
Downloaded PowerPoint file from internet	12	17
Used memo templates	8	15
Accessed search engines	16	14
Used Word 6.0 or better	23	10
Used descriptors	12	10
Used Windows environment	31	10

*Instructions on survey instrument: "Check all that apply."

Course Components Available at Website

The course webpage begins with hyperlinks to the University's homepage, the College's homepage, and the departmental homepage. These images are followed by the name of the course, the current semester, and the date the page was last updated. The third group of information is presented in a grid display. As depicted in Figure 3, students "clicked" cells within the grid to access materials. For example, "Description & Objectives," was a direct link to the departmental syllabus. "Assessment" connected students to the website describing the writer's grading scale. "Announcements" led directly to weekly memos written to the class, reminding them of upcoming exams, speakers, or programs.

Figure 3. Grid Display on Course Webpage



Evaluating Instruction Supplemented by Distance Learning Strategies

Results from the student survey, shown in Figure 4, indicate students' own assessment of the value of the strategies employed during the course. Supplementing the classroom delivery of business communication with the internet requires careful planning and requisite skills of the instructor. In addition, students need access to the internet, must possess or be trained in the requisite skills to be successful in accessing information, must be given in-class opportunites to practice the requisite skills, and need constant feedback.

Figure 4. "I Learned the Most From These Sources..."

Source*	Responses
By completing assignments	24
Internet sources	23
Textbook	19
PowerPoint presentations	17
Sample tests (posted on internet)	15
Model assignments	8

*Instructions on survey instrument: "Check all that apply."

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CLASSROOM MODELS VERSUS WORKPLACE PRACTICE: INSIGHTS FROM WRITING IN A STEEL MILL

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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon previous studies/surveys of workplace writing and specifically upon my own study of the writing activities of front-line supervisors at a Midwest steel manufacturing plant, this article suggests how we may enhance our pedagogy for teaching professional writing in ways that more accurately reflect how writing is actually conducted in the workplace. Such an approach rethinks the way we teach audience analysis and collaborative writing as well as the examples of workplace writing we present to our students.

INTRODUCTION

Surveys of professional writing in the workplace have documented that writing is often a frequent activity in a variety of professions (Anderson, 1985; Faigley et al., 1981; Kirtz & Reep, 1990). As employees move up the corporate ladder, more writing is frequently required of them, and written communication skills become more important than technical skills (Roth, 1993). The type of writing these professionals perform is often varied. For example, the types of documents writers produce on the job may include regulations and procedures, not just letters, memos, and reports, the traditional staples of professional writing courses (Anderson, 1985). Professionals in organizations frequently write for multiple readers representing different viewpoints, interests, and evaluation criteria (Reynolds, 1995). Furthermore, writing on the job often involves pressures and constraints which are not easily replicated in the classroom—such as writing to varied audiences, hierarchical review of materials, and real consequences to the writer for producing poor documents (Redish, 1989).

Many professionals surveyed felt that their undergraduate training in writing was insufficient and left them unprepared for the types of writing tasks they faced on a daily basis (Redish, 1989; Spears, 1996). Frequent complaints heard about the writing of recent college graduates from readers in the workplace was not that these novice writers lacked strategies for writing, but often that they applied inappropriate writing strategies to writing tasks, such as writing reports as narratives with lengthy explanations or misinterpreting the informational needs of intended readers. In short, producing documents that were "content-oriented" instead of "reader-oriented" (Redish, 1989, p. 115).

When professionals learn how to write on the job, frequently this type of instruction takes quite a different approach than classroom methodology. Researching writing within an R & D organization, Paradis and Dobrin (1985) identified the process of "document cycling" (p. 285)—employees sending a document to a supervisor and the supervisor returning the document to the employee with notes for revision—as a common way employees learned to write on the job as well as learning about the culture of their particular organization. This type of "instruction by trial and error" has been identified in other studies of workplace writing (Spears, 1996, p. 61), along with techniques such as novice writers seeking advice from more experienced colleagues, reading business writing handbooks on their own, or, more often than not, looking to model documents within the organization as examples (Redish, 1989, p. 102).

My study involved surveying the writing activities of 60 supervisors at a large Midwest steel manufacturing plant. These supervisors had been with the company anywhere from 12 to 37 years and in their present position from one year to 15 years. In addition to surveys and interviews with some of the supervisors, I also examined the actual documents that these supervisors wrote on the job. Before examining the writing activities of two particular supervisors, a brief look at the nature of writing within the organization is appropriate.

Of the supervisors surveyed, 70 percent reported spending between eight to 14 hours per week engaged in writing. Thus, the majority of supervisors spent at least one fourth of their workweek writing, producing between seven to 18 documents per week. This figure is comparable to the frequency of writing reported in other surveys (Anderson, 1985; Kirtz & Reep 1990). Supervisors often spent equal amounts of their time communicating both up and down the corporate ladder.

The types of documents that supervisors produced were diverse and their frequency, length, and purpose varied depending on whether they were upward or downward communication (see Table 1). When communicating with subordinates, the two most frequent types of documents that supervisors wrote were short, informational documents and longer instructional documents. This first category included such documents as line ups, brief documents (mean # of words = 112) that detailed individual tasks and responsibilities for a given project, and disciplinary action reports (mean # of words = 78) that documented infractions on the part of workers with respect to company policy.

Of all the documents written to workers, those whose purpose was meant to be instructional were the next most frequently written type of document. Job procedures and job safety analysis reports fell into this category. Job procedures (mean # of words = 458) included step-by-step instructions for completing a task; job safety analysis reports (mean # of words = 346) analyzed and presented specific safety warnings for job procedures.

Supervisors wrote few memos to their subordinates, but did communicate most frequently in writing with their managers through memos. Although the subject matter of these memos varied widely, generally their purpose was to inform managers of recent developments/problems with

TYPE, DIRECTION, AND LENGTH OF DOCUMENTS

Type of Document	Direction*	No. Words $\bar{x}$
Line-ups	D	112
Disciplinary Action Reports	D	78
Job Procedures	D	458
Job Safety Analysis Reports	D	346
Memos	D	102
Formal Grievances	U & D	502
Memos	U	231
Time/Work Analysis Reports	U	167
Production Reports	U	256
Incident Reports	U	87
External Letters or Reports to Customers		148

* Note: U = Upward communication;
D = Downward communication

projects and to provide documentation concerning production, progress, etc. Supervisors were aware that managers viewed these memos as serving two purposes: to provide written documentation that the managers would in turn use when writing reports for upper management and also as a means to

evaluate the performance of supervisors. On average, supervisors wrote six to nine memos a month (mean # of words = 231) to their managers.

Short reports were the next most frequently written type of documents to managers. These included production reports, time-work analysis reports (reports that summarized how crew hours had been apportioned), and incident reports. These types of reports varied in length and involved summarizing and synthesizing information from a variety of sources. Often charts and graphs were attached, making it easier for managers to incorporate these reports into longer documents they would in turn write for upper management. In the case of the incident report, over time it had evolved into a specific form making it easier for supervisors to organize and present information.

Although supervisors spent equal amounts of time writing upward and downward within the organization, documents supervisors wrote to managers were more complex and involved synthesizing and summarizing information from a variety of sources. Document modeling helped somewhat in the writing process for novice supervisors when writing to subordinates, but it proved less useful when writing memos and reports to managers. Managers would provide supervisors with what they considered to be examples of well-written reports and memos. However, since there was not an established format for some of these documents and because some supervisors worked on projects quite different from ones detailed in the model reports, many supervisors faced difficulty translating effective features of these models into their own writing. Comments supervisors would receive from managers on their writing also proved to be less useful because they were often not text-specific enough to provide clear guidance for revision. Additionally, writing to managers was a higher-risk proposition than writing to subordinates, since supervisors were more likely to hear complaints about their writing from their managers than from their subordinates.

WRITING PROFILE OF AN EXPERIENCED AND NOVICE SUPERVISOR

As a way of understanding in greater detail the demands of writing placed upon these supervisors and how they coped with these challenges, I present two specific cases of an experienced and novice supervisor, Len and Ron.

Len has been with the company for 23 years and a supervisor for 15. In the month prior to this interview, he had written 31 documents: three job procedures; 11 line ups; six disciplinary action reports; and 11 memos and reports to his manager. Len estimated that he spent approximately four to six hours a week completing these writing tasks. As a new supervisor, he had spent anywhere from eight to 14 hours a week to complete a similar number of writing tasks.

Len stated that the amount of writing required of him had gradually increased during his time on the job, indicating that, for a variety of reasons, there currently was a greater demand for written documentation within the organization. Through the years he attended several writing seminars, but indicated he learned how to write mostly by trial and error on the job.

Len described himself as a competent writer, with the exception that he was "not perfect at grammar and those sorts of things." Of all the documents he had written in the previous month, he cited one particular job procedure and a production report to his manager as the only documents that had given him any trouble. In the case of the job procedure, Len was responsible for developing a new procedure for using a recently purchased pipe-threading machine. Even though he was furnished with adequate information from the manufacturer and was familiar with the equipment himself, this particular procedure was troubling because of the intended audience for the document. Len knew that the machine would be used chiefly by one crew composed mostly of "old-timers" who never read job procedures but instead who would "just play around with the thing until they figured it out." Inevitably, Len felt that accidents or damage to materials were bound to occur, resulting in management possibly finding fault with his original job procedure and causing him to write revisions to the procedure and a never ending chain of job safety analysis reports. As a solution to his problem, Len instituted what he called the "talk-through." He wrote

the procedure to meet his manager's deadline and then assembled the crew in question in front of the machine and asked for their input/suggestions on how to write the job procedure while simultaneously demonstrating the proper operation of the equipment. He knew the crew would never read his procedure, but he felt they would be less likely to deviate from standard operating procedure since they somehow felt a part of its creation.

The production report, intended for his manager, presented a problem because it detailed a production run that was less than successful and one that did not meet the quota. Although Len knew his manager was fully aware of the situation, he also realized that he needed to provide his manager with a report that, although accurate, put a more positive spin on the production loss. If he followed the conventional company format, which began with a summary of production figures, Len knew that this would only highlight the loss and result in the report being bounced back to him for revisions. His solution to this problem was to include most of the relevant production information as attachments and to use the opening summary part of the report for summarizing the breakdown and maintenance history of the production run (the chief reason why there was a loss in production). This strategy served to de-emphasize the loss in production while at the same time making a strong argument for increased maintenance, an item Len knew his manager had been pushing with upper management.

Len's two writing experiences illustrate someone with a keen understanding of audience analysis and the role writing plays within his organization. His successful approach to the job procedure can be attributed in part to his familiarity with the audience, knowing them well enough to know that his document alone would not communicate the information he wanted. Experience provided Len with a rich framework for understanding the constraints of audience within his organization. Additionally, Len has acquired a sophisticated sense of what goals members within his organization want to achieve and how these goals play a role in the writing process. He is able to successfully use his understanding of the context surrounding the act of writing as a tool that guides and helps to shape his writing.

Ron has been with the company 12 years and in his current position as supervisor almost one year. During the month prior to this interview, he had written 29 documents: 11 line ups, two disciplinary action reports, one incident report, two job procedures, and 13 memos/reports to his manager. Ron was currently past deadline on four additional documents. He estimated that he spent anywhere from 12 to 24 hours per week engaged in writing. Ron described himself as a "below-average writer" and reported feeling overwhelmed most days by the writing tasks required of him. Before becoming a supervisor, he had spent less than an average of two hours of his workweek on writing tasks.

One of the main problems Ron reported experiencing was writing for his manager. His manager would frequently return documents to him for revision, although on many occasions it was difficult for Ron to understand what his manager expected from him. He stated that in many instances his manager was vague and provided little to no hint as to how he wanted him to revise documents. In the absence of such direction from his manager, Ron frequently relied on document modeling as a revision aid, yet he reported that this technique was successful only about half the time. Even after Ron attempted to pattern his writing after the sample documents, his manager would still occasionally return them for revision, leaving Ron uncertain as to whether he did not successfully follow the model or if the model document would have been unsatisfactory to his manager as well.

An additional problem area that Ron highlighted from his writing experiences concerned his attempts to collaborate with other supervisors on writing projects. Because of the area he was working in, Ron frequently had to co-author procedures and other instructional documents with supervisors from other areas, many of whom had been on the job longer. The problem, as Ron identified it, was that because he was the "rookie," he often inherited the unofficial position of project manager for these documents. The main reason the collaborative process was so one-sided in this instance was that the more experienced supervisors, although willing to contribute technical information to the document, were hesitant to claim ownership of the document. As Ron soon learned, their reluctance was justified. The primary writer of the

document also took responsibility for revising it numerous times as the procedure was tested in the field.

Ron represents a classic example of a novice writer learning how to write by trial and error within an organization. Unlike his more experienced counterparts, Ron is still coming to grips with both the amount of writing required of him and with developing effective strategies for successfully completing writing tasks. What he perceives to be his apparent lack of communication with his manager further complicates his situation. Ron is unable to interpret the feedback he receives from his manager in any meaningful or productive way. In time, we can assume perhaps that repeated document cycling on the part of his manager (although a frustrating experience for Ron) will help Ron to develop a more sophisticated and more useful approach to understanding the expectations of writing within his organization.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL WRITING CLASSROOM

Issues addressed by previous studies of workplace writing and this present study of the writing behaviors of supervisors within a steel mill suggest some ways in which we can reconcile what takes place in the professional writing classroom with the type of writing that occurs in the workplace.

1. Present a concept of audience that includes considering not only traditional characteristics (background, reading preferences, technical knowledge, etc.), but one that also seeks to understand to what extent organizational context plays a role in readers' reactions to texts. As was the case with the experienced supervisors in this particular study, many had become attuned to "hidden agendas" for their documents. They created documents that met the informational demands expected of them and followed company format, but also ones that helped to further the goals of the organization as a whole or particular individuals within the organization. Frequently, it may appear that the writer is preparing documents on his or her own initiative and in accordance with acceptable models within the organization, when in reality superiors may set different goals and attempt to shape the direction and content of documents through the process of document cycling.

   To some extent, this process of document cycling already exists in the classroom in the form of instructor and peer review. Instructors and students review drafts in progress and make suggestions for revision, suggestions which writers may or may not put into effect. The difference between this experience and that which occurs in the workplace is twofold. Instructors and students usually apply a pre-established set of criteria to documents which both reader and writer are aware of in advance; by contrast, in the workplace readers may respond to documents from a viewpoint that may take into account certain political objectives or company policies (real or imagined) that may change at any given time. Secondly, there are obvious differences between the instructor/student writer relationship versus the supervisor/employee relationship. Although evaluation is a feature of both the classroom and the workplace, in the latter the stakes tend to be much higher than simply a course grade.

   Role playing during the revision process in the context of a well-detailed case study or simulation is one effective way of replicating the workplace experience in the classroom. Students responding to other students' texts with clearly defined identities in an organizational chain of command will help to transform the peer review experience into one that more closely simulates what occurs in the workplace.
2. Teach student writers that collaboration/interaction in the workplace may not always present itself as a well-structured activity with participants contributing equally to the collaborative process. Supervisors in this study had to adapt to a broad spectrum of collaborative writing experiences. Their superiors provided both oral and written feedback to help shape documents. Colleagues contributed varying degrees of both writing assistance and technical knowledge to the collaborative process, and, in some instances, collaboration extended over a period of months and years among anonymous collaborators.

   Research conducted over the past two decades has contributed significantly to our understanding of collaborative writing in the workplace. Similar to the experiences of supervisors in this study, writers

in the workplace frequently collaborate on documents, although this collaboration rarely takes the form of "formal group work" with everyone contributing equally to the writing task (Couture & Rymer, 1989; Ede & Lunsford, 1990) as is typical in the classroom. Furthermore, when the collaborative process extends up the organizational chain of command, it seldom involves an even "give-and-take" and sharing of ideas. Instead, the process is typically characterized by those higher in the chain of command establishing very specific goals for projects, with most of the actual work of writing performed by subordinates (Ede & Lunsford, 1990, p. 133).

In the classroom, we should demonstrate to students that the structured classroom writing team may not necessarily provide an accurate model for their future writing experiences. Indeed, there may be as many different models of collaboration as there are collaborative writing groups in the workplace. To replicate such experiences in the classroom, we need to develop collaborative writing assignments that focus less on "multi-authorship" that encourages equal participation on the part of all group members. Rather, we should design collaborative projects that invite students to participate in different roles and in different ways in the collaborative process.

3. Expose students to a variety of different types of workplace documents and the practice of document modeling. One of the key ways supervisors in this study learned to write on the job was through a process of document modeling–that is, analyzing documents on file and patterning their own writing after these documents. One way to simulate this activity in the classroom is to have students bring in examples of documents from their own workplaces for discussion and analysis. Such an approach serves to provide a sense of greater immediacy to the writing classroom, since the students' examples are more familiar and of greater importance to them than generic textbook examples. These documents can also be a springboard to writing assignments where the student can play the role of a newly hired employee assigned to write a similar document, thereby engaging in the process of document modeling.

4. Stress writing as an important problem-solving activity within organizations and one that ultimately produces a product that communicates information as well as one that reflects the organization's persona. Planning writing should involve talking with others within the organization to get a sense of what is expected from the document—how certain initiatives within the organization may impact the document or to better clarify how intended audiences will use the information in a document. Revision also should include gathering input from select individuals as well as testing the document on the intended audience. A greater emphasis should be placed on general strategies for planning/drafting/revising rather than on mastering particular formats. Different organizations produce different sorts of documents, and it is impossible to predict what types of documents students will be called upon to produce in their future careers.

5. The transition from academic writing to writing in the workplace is often a difficult one for students to make (see, for example, Anson & Forsberg, 1990). Early on in their academic careers, we must instill in students the sense that they will become *writers* in their fields. One effective way of accomplishing this task is to assign students a research project to develop a "writing profile" of one or two established professionals in their field. The purpose of the writing profile is for students to interview these professionals about all aspects of writing in their professional lives, including (among other things) how often they write, what sorts of strategies they have developed for completing writing tasks, and what frustrations they experience while writing. Typically, what emerges from these profiles (often much to the surprise of students) is a picture of writing much more chaotic and at times much more demanding than what students read about in textbooks.

We never will be able to exactly duplicate in our classrooms many of the constraints and pressures that writers experience in the workplace. We do, however, have to continue to think of new ways to expose students to learning experiences that will realistically prepare them as future communicators in the workplace. The more we know about how writing actually occurs within organizations, the better prepared we will be to meet this challenge.

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