Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States
2021 Refereed Proceedings
March 18–19, 2021
Virtual

Kayla N. Sapkota, *President*
Leslie Ramos Salazar, *President-Elect and Program Chair*
Lindsey Clark, *Secretary-Treasurer*
Ashley Hall, *Historian*
Carol S. Wright, *Past President*

Vincent D. Robles, *Proceedings Chair*
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## Editor's Note

Welcome to the 48th meeting of the Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States. Many thanks to the planners, presenters, and other contributors responsible for making this fantastic conference program possible. Special thanks go to Leslie Ramos Salazar, Program Chair of ABC-SWUS, who has assembled a great program that will appeal to anyone who is interested in business communication pedagogy and research.

Included in this proceedings is the program, 3 full papers, 27 presentation abstracts, and 4 poster presentation abstracts. I would like to extend thanks to the many proposal and paper reviewers.

Each year completed papers that are submitted for the program are considered for the Distinguished Paper Award. This year's distinguished paper was awarded to Laura Lott Valenti and Stavros Sindakis for their paper *A Qualitative Analysis of Top-Performing Franchise Brands' Email Communication Use in the Franchise Sales Process*. They will present their paper on Thursday, March 18 at 8:30 a.m.

In these proceedings, you will also find information on previous program chairpersons, paper award recipients, and recipients of the outstanding research and outstanding teacher awards.

Please make plans to join us next year for the 2022 conference March 2–5 in New Orleans, Louisiana. The call dates for next year's papers and presentation proposals are October 1, 2021.

We hope you enjoy the 2021 conference program and take this opportunity to share new ideas and make new contacts.

In Service,

Vincent D. Robles
Editor

## Future International and Regional Meetings

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

2021 ABC Europe, Africa, and Middle East Regional Conference
August 26–28, 2021
Vienna, Austria

Association for Business Communication 86th Annual International Conference
October 18–23, 2021

2022 ABC Southwestern United States Regional Conference
March 2–5, 2022
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

## Program and Paper Reviewers

Noah Franklin, *West Texas A&M University*
Seth Frei, *Texas State University*
Nancy Garcia, *West Texas A&M University*
Ashley Hall, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
Priyanka Khandelwal, *West Texas A&M University*
Christopher McKenna, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
Chynette Nealy, *University of Houston Downtown*
Lorelei Amanda Ortiz, *St. Edward's University*
Gerald Plumlee, Jr., *Southern Arkansas University*
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Crystal Shelnutt, *University of West Georgia*
James Ward, *Fort Hays State University*
Young-Kang Wei, *University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley*
Carol S. Wright, *Stephen F. Austin State University*

## ABC-SWUS Program Chairpersons 1973–Present

| | |
|---|---|
| 2021– | Leslie Ramos Salazar |
| 2020–2021 | Kayla Sapkota |
| 2019–2020 | Carol S. Wright |
| 2017–2019 | Kelly A. Grant |
| 2016–2017 | Laura Lott Valenti |
| 2015–2016 | Susan Evans Jennings |
| 2014–2015 | Kathryn S. O'Neill |
| 2013–2014 | Traci L. Austin |
| 2012–2013 | Randall L. Waller |
| 2011–2012 | Lucia Sigmar |
| 2010–2011 | Margaret Kilcoyne |
| 2009–2010 | Faridah Awang |
| 2008–2009 | Marcel Robles |
| 2007–2008 | Ann Wilson |
| 2006–2007 | Carolyn Ashe |
| 2005–2006 | Harold A. Hurry |
| 2004–2005 | Lana W. Carnes |
| 2003–2004 | Marsha L. Bayless |
| 2002–2003 | Betty A. Kleen |
| 2001–2002 | William Sharbrough |
| 2000–2001 | Carol Lehman |
| 1999–2000 | William P. Galle, Jr. |
| 1998–1999 | Anita Bednar |
| 1997–1998 | Timothy W. Clipson |
| 1996–1997 | Debbie D. Dufrene |
| 1995–1996 | William J. Wardrope |
| 1994–1996 | Roger N. Conaway |
| 1993–1994 | Donna W. Luse |
| 1992–1993 | F. Stanford Wayne |
| 1991–1992 | Beverly H. Nelson |
| 1990–1991 | Marian Crawford |
| 1989–1990 | Marlin C. Young |
| 1988–1989 | Sallye Benoit |
| 1987–1988 | Tom Means |
| 1986–1987 | Lamar N. Reinsch, Jr. |
| 1985–1986 | Sara Hart |
| 1984–1985 | Betty S. Johnson |
| 1983–1984 | Larry R. Smeltzer |
| 1982–1983 | Daniel Cochran |
| 1981–1982 | Nancy Darsey |
| 1980–1981 | John M. Penrose |
| 1979–1980 | R. Lynn Johnson |
| 1978–1979 | Raymond V. Lesikar |
| 1977–1978 | Jack D. Eure |
| 1976–1977 | Phil Lewis |
| 1975–1976 | Dale Level |
| 1974–1975 | Bette Anne Stead |
| 1973–1974 | Sam J. Bruno |

## Call for Papers

**Association for Business Communication Southwestern US.**
March 18–19, 2021 Virtual

Please submit a proposal or paper related to business communication topics for presentation at the 2021 ABC-SWUS Virtual Conference, held in collaboration with the Association for Business Information Systems (ABIS). Research papers or position papers related to business communication topics in the following areas are encouraged:

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

- Papers or proposals should include a statement of the problem or purpose, methodology section (if applicable), findings (as available), a summary, implications for education and/or business, and a bibliography.
- If you are submitting a proposal only, it should contain 750 to 1,500 words and must be submitted on the ABC website: http://www.businesscommunication.org. Click on the link for the **2021 ABC-SWUS Conference**.
- If you are submitting a completed paper, please submit your proposal online as indicated above. Then e-mail the completed paper as a Microsoft Word document to the ABC-SWUS website by **December 31, 2020**.
    - Personal and institutional identification should be removed from the body of the paper. Identify yourself and your institution only on the cover page. Submissions will be anonymously reviewed.
    - A cover page is required with the title of the paper and identifying information for each author: name, institutional affiliation, address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address.
    - For your research to be considered for the Best Paper Award, you must submit a completed paper rather than a proposal by the submission deadline, **December 21, 2020**.
    - Submitted papers should not have been previously presented or published, nor should they be under consideration or accepted for presentation elsewhere.
- Upon receiving notice of acceptance, all authors and co-authors are expected to **pre-register for ABC-SWUS** at http://www.fbdonline.org. Your reduced ABC-SWUS registration fee will allow you hear all ABC and ABIS presenters; if you present at the ABIS conference, you are responsible for their organizational registration fee.

Deadline: Papers and proposals must be received by December 21, 2020.
Proceedings Deadline: Accepted full papers must be received by February 1, 2021.

For information, contact Leslie Ramos Salazar, Program Chair, via e-mail at lsalazar@wtamu.edu

## FBD Outstanding Educator Awards

Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States

The award winners are as follows:

2020 Laura Valenti, Nicholls State University
2019 Traci L. Austin, Sam Houston State University
2018 Judith L. Biss (posthumously), Stephen F. Austin State University
2017 Susan E. Jennings, Stephen F. Austin State University
2016 Tim Clipson, Stephen F. Austin State University
2015 Margaret S. Kilcoyne, Northwestern State University
2014 Lucia Sigmar, Sam Houston State University
2013 S. Ann Wilson, Stephen F. Austin State University
2012 Marcel M. Robles, Eastern Kentucky University
2011 Harold A. Hurry, Sam Houston State University
2010 Geraldine E. Hynes, Sam Houston State University
2009 Roger N. Conaway, Tecnológico de Monterrey, campus San Luis Potosí
2008 Bobbye J. Davis, Southeastern Louisiana University
2007 Betty A. Kleen, Nicholls State University
2006 William Wardrope, University of Central Oklahoma
2005 Betty S. Johnson, Stephen F. Austin State University
2004 Marsha L. Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University
2003 Lillian H. Chaney, University of Memphis
2002 Debbie DuFrene, Stephen F. Austin State University
2001 Anita Bednar, University of Central Oklahoma

## Outstanding Researcher and Teacher Awards

Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States

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

2021 Marsha Bayless, Marlin C. Young Oustanding Teacher Award

2020 Ashley Hall, Outstanding Researcher Award

2018 Danica Schieber, Raymond V. Lesikar Outstanding Researcher Award

2017 Judith L. Biss (posthumously), Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2016 Geraldine Hynes, Outstanding Researcher Award

2015 Margaret Kilcoyne, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2014 Lucia Sigmar, Outstanding Researcher Award

2013 Brenda Hanson, Marlin C. Young Outstanding Teacher Award

2012 Susan Evans Jennings, Outstanding Researcher Award

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

2010 Margaret Kilcoyne, Outstanding Researcher Award

2009 Harold Hurry, Outstanding Teacher Award

2008 Roger N. Conaway, Outstanding Researcher Award

2008 Geraldine E. Hynes, Outstanding Teacher Award

2006 Janna P. Vice, Outstanding Researcher Award

2005 Bobbye Davis, Outstanding Teacher Award

2004 William Wardrope, Outstanding Researcher Award

Marcel Robles, Outstanding Teacher Award

2002 Lillian H. Chaney, Outstanding Researcher Award

2002 Jeré Littlejohn, Outstanding Teacher Award

2000 William Sharbrough, Outstanding Researcher Award

1999 William Wardrope, Outstanding Teacher Award

Betty Kleen, Outstanding Researcher Award

1998 Robert Olney, Outstanding Teacher Award

1997 Al Williams, Outstanding Teacher Award

1996 Betty S. Johnson, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Marsha L. Bayless, Outstanding Researcher Award

1995 Anita Bednar, Outstanding Teacher Award

1994 Nelda Spinks, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 Timothy W. Clipson, Outstanding Teacher Award

1993 F. Stanford Wayne, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Debbie D. DuFrene, Outstanding Researcher Award

1992 Beverly H. Nelson, Outstanding Teacher Award

## ABC-SW Distinguished Paper Award Recipients[1]

The Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States

2021 Laura Lott Valenti and Stavros Sindakis
*A Qualitative Analysis of Top Performing Franchise Brands' Email Communication Used in the Franchise Sales Process*

2020 Ashley Hall, Carol S. Wright, and Amanda Smith
*Augmented Reality in Business Communication Classes*

2019 Traci L. Austin, Lindsay L. Clark, and Lucia S. Sigmar
*Just Get to the Point: Persuasive Strategies for the iGeneration*

2018 N. Lamar Reinsch and Vicki Gates
*Communication Strategies for Human Resource Managers and Other Counselors: Extensions and Applications of Equity Theory*

2017 Jon M. Croghan and Tammy L. Croghan
*Improving Performance Evaluations: The Role of Intrapersonal Communication, Message Strategy, and Age*

2016 Melissa A. Barrett and Geraldine E. Hynes
*The Little Creamery that Could: Weathering a Crisis and Maintaining Brand Loyalty*

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

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

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

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

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

[1] Formerly called Irwin/McGraw-Hill Distinguished Paper Award

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

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

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

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

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

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

2003 Ruth A. Miller and Donna W. Luce
*The Most Important Written, Oral, and Interpersonal Communication Skills Needed by Information Systems Staff During the Systems Development Process*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Association for Business Communication Southwestern United States Conference Program**

**March 18, 2021 (Thursday)**

8:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m. General Room

*ABC – SWUS and ABIS Presidential Remarks and Welcome*

All ABC-SWUS and ABIS presenters and members are invited to attend the reception.

8:30 a.m.–9:30 a.m. Joint Session with ABIS Room 1

*ABC-SWUS and ABIS Joint Session: Best Papers*

Co-Session Chairs/Association Vice Presidents and Conference Chairs:
Eddie Horton, Northwestern State University
Leslie Ramos Salazar, West Texas A&M University

ABC-SWUS Best Paper: *A Qualitative Analysis of Top-Performing Franchise Brands' Email Communication Used in the Franchise Sales Process*
Laura Lott Valenti, Nicholls State University
Stavros Sindakis, University of Sharjah

ABIS Best Paper: *Faculty Perceptions of Technology Challenges in a University's 100% Virtual Instruction Environment During a Pandemic*
Sherry Rodriguez, University
Lori Soule, University
Betty Kleen, University

9:30 a.m.–9:45 a.m. General Room

*Virtual Coffee Break*

Please feel free to take a virtual coffee break on your own, or stay in the main meeting to network with other professionals.

**March 18, 2021 (Thursday)**

| 9:45 a.m.–11:00 a.m. | Room 2 |
|---|---|

*Prepare for Success: Designing and Teaching Methods*
Session Chair: Seth Frei, Texas State University

*Aligning Incentives and Designing Online & Hybrid Teaching on a Shoestring*
Jean Ann Edrington, Arkansas State University Beebe

*Teaching Research Methods: A Duoethnography of the Merits and Challenges*
Nancy Garcia, West Texas A&M University
Leslie Ramos-Salazar, West Texas A&M University

*Preparing Students for the Interview: A Proposed Study on the Effectiveness of Virtual Interview Preparation*
Seth Frei, Texas State University
Matari Jones Gunter, Texas State University

*Developing Teamwork at a Distance*
Karen Hardin, Cameron University

| 11:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m. | Room 2 |
|---|---|

*Workplace and Managerial Skills*
Session Chair: Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe

*The Effect of Managerial Skills Training on Scientists' Job Satisfaction in Supervisory Roles*
Jamie K. Humphries, Stephen F. Austin State University
Lucia S. Sigmar, Stephen F. Austin State University

*Are you Creating an Out-Group? The Importance of LMX Theory to Organizational Communication and Employee Engagement*
Brittany Barhite, Bowling Green State University

*Burnout Proof your Leadership*
Michael Levitt, Breakfast Leadership, Inc.

*Using a "Work Group" Model to Build Students' Teamwork Skills for the Workplace*
Ashly Bender Smith, Sam Houston State University

**March 18, 2021 (Thursday)**

11:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Room 3

*Trying Something Different: Innovative Pedagogical Strategies*
Session Chair: Leslie Ramos Salazar, West Texas A&M University

*Ungrading in the Professional Writing Curriculum: Crazy, but Effective*
Shannon Lee Denney, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

*An Analysis of Mindset Strategies in Economics Courses*
Shari Lawrence, Nicholls State University
Andrea Chiasson, Nicholls State University

*"It's Pitchy": Students Perceptions of Using PitchVantage Presentation Software*
Dana E. Bible, Sam Houston State University
Ashly Bender Smith, Sam Houston State University

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

1:30 p.m.–3:00 p.m. Room 2

*Examining Higher Business Education Issues*
Session Chair: Nancy Garcia, West Texas A&M University

*Are Business Communication Skills Transferring to an Upper Level Required Business Course?*
Marsha L. Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University
Manuel G. Guerrero, Stephen F. Austin State University

*Legal Considerations When Running Online Sweepstakes and Games*
Eric Langstedt, Mount Saint Mary College

*What Does Collaboration and Constructive Cooperation Really Look Like?: Exploring Collegiality as an Evaluation Metric for Tenure and Promotion*
Ashton Mouton, Sam Houston State University
Lindsay C. Clark, Sam Houston State University

*Needs of International Journal Editors: An Integrative Review*
Aimee Kendall Roundtree, Texas State University

3:15 p.m.–4:30 p.m. Room 4B

*ABC-SWUS Executive Board Meeting*
By Invitation Only

6:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m. General Room

ABC-SW/ABIS Keynote Address and Cocktail/Social Mixer Reception
*Defining the "Professional" in Business Communication*
Sky Marsen, Flinders University

**March 19, 2021 (Friday)**

| 8:00 a.m.–9:30 a.m. | Room 2 |
| --- | --- |

*Welcome Remark*
*ABC-SWUS Choice Pick Session*

*COVID-19's Impact on Workplace and Higher Education*
Session Chair: Marcel M. Robles, Eastern Kentucky University

*The COVID Impact: A Changing Business Environment*
Marcel M. Robles, Eastern Kentucky University
Jasmine White, Eastern Kentucky University

*Workplace Communication Post-COVID: What will be the Residential Impact and How Do We Prepare Our Students for This New Reality?*
Lorelei Amanda Ortiz, St. Edward's University

*Instructional Planning in a Pandemic: How Higher Education Institutions in Texas Adapted to COVID-19*
Traci Austin, Sam Houston State University
Danica L. Schieber, Sam Houston State University

*Communication Impacts of Covid-19 in the Short Term: One College's Experience*
Michael C. Budden, Southeastern Louisiana University
Connie L. Budden, Southeastern Louisiana University
Heather Budden, Southeastern Louisiana University

| 9:30 a.m.–9:45 a.m. | General Room |
| --- | --- |

*Virtual Coffee Break*
Please feel free to take a virtual coffee break on your own, or stay in the main meeting to network with other professionals.

**March 19, 2021 (Friday)**

9:45 a.m.–11:00 a.m. Room 2

*Technology in Organizational Settings*
Session Chair: Roxana D. Maiorescu-Murphy, Emerson College

*Stakeholder Management in the Digital Age: Quality 4.0*
Lila Carden, University of Houston
Raphael Boyd, Clark Atlanta University

*Assessing Online Perceptions of Microsoft's and Google's Sexual Harassment Scandals: A Mixed-Methods Approach*
Roxana D. Maiorescu-Murphy, Emerson College

*AR/VR Training for Emergency Response: An Integrative Review*
Aimee Kendall Roundtree, Texas State University

*#Activism: Investigating the Social Media Communication of Nonprofits during Times of Crisis*
Ashley Hall, Stephen F. Austin State University

11:00 a.m.–11:15 a.m. General Room

*Virtual Coffee Break*
Please feel free to take a virtual coffee break on your own, or stay in the main meeting to network with other professionals.

**March 19, 2021 (Friday)**

11:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Room 3

*Transformative Perspectives in Organizational Communication*
Session Chair: N. Lamar Reinsch, Jr., Lubbock Christian University

*Reviving and Revising Strategic Communicaction*
Philip Hayek, University of Illinois at Chicago

*Promoting and Protecting: The Underlying Content of Business Speeches*
N. Lamar Reinsch, Jr., Lubbock Christian University

*Sustainable Communications in the University World: A Multimodal Approach*
Jose Santiago Fernandez-Vazquez, University of Alcala

11:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Poster Session Room 2

*The Job Search During the Pandemic: A Perspective from Recruiters*
Carol S. Wright, Stephen F. Austin State University
Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe

*Boundary Spanning as Threat: A Theoretical Inquiry into Public Relations' Professional Identity*
Vivien V. Angelus, California State University, Fullerton

*Enhancing the Discussion Assignment: Asynchronous Assignment Development in Undergraduate Online Classes*
Kayla Sapkota, Arkansas State University at Beebe

*Branding 2.0 in the Era of Social Media AKA Social Media, a Broadcasting Medium for Brand Identity*
Ania A. Drzewiecka, Horizons University

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

**March 19, 2021 (Friday)**

12:45 p.m.–1:30 p.m. ABC Business Meeting Room 4B

*ABC SWUS Business Meeting*
Presiding: Kayla Sapkota, ABC-SWUS President
Arkansas State University at Beebe

1:45 p.m.–3:15 p.m. Room 1

*Joint Closing Session/Panel Discussion Please feel free to join this open discussion!*
Session Chair: Eddie Horton, Northwestern State University

*Effects of COVID19 for Face-to-Face Students During the Spring 2020 Semester*
Ronnie Abukhalaf, Northwestern State University
Weiwen Liao, Northwestern State University
Jason Powell, Northwestern State University Annabelle Parker, Northwestern State University
Ryan Johnson, Northwestern State University
Carlomango Leon Jimenez, Northwestern State University

**Make plans to join us in New Orleans in 2022!**
48th Annual Conference
March 2–5, 2022
L.A. Hilton New Orleans Riverside
New Orleans, LA

# A Qualitative Analysis of Top-Performing Franchise Brands' Email Communication Used in the Franchise Sales Process

ABC-SW Distinguished Paper Award

Laura Lott Valenti, *Nicholls State University*
Stavros Sindakis, *University of Sharjah*

**Abstract**
A franchise development executive has the role of delivering evidence of the brand's value in their communication with the franchisee candidate, which is done via emails and personal communication throughout the sales process. Therefore, the person creating the marketing communication must understand what is at stake for the brand, and the pressure to produce marketing materials to know which rhetoric to use in the marketing communication materials is critical. In forming the franchisor-franchisee relationship, the strategic use of verbiage, or rhetoric, to convey a brand's organizational identity and value is met with the desire to adequately progress a franchisee candidate through the sales process. With the average sales process being eight weeks long, little time exists to capitalize on the opportunity to sell the brand appropriately, especially in the competitive environment of franchising where market, entrepreneurial, and charismatic leadership orientation are liabilities to franchise performance. This study examines the use of such rhetoric in franchise sales process email communication of top-performing franchise brands and presents a qualitative analysis to assist practitioners in industry.

**Introduction and Model**
Theoretical approaches to understanding the use of marketing rhetoric beyond a firm's website, as with interpersonal communication, requires an extension in research in order to recognize the use of marketing rhetoric post initial engagement of the consumer and brand; this could have a potential influence on the firm's outcomes. When assessing the three constructs of the market, entrepreneurial, and charismatic leadership orientation, qualitative analyses denote the use and frequency of rhetoric. Franchise executives who work within franchise organizations are the ones to ascertain the presence or absence of the constructs themselves, which is analyzed from email communication that is used during the sales process within this study.

Franchises who perform better have a stronger competitive advantage and create superior value over alternatives in the marketplace, as indicated in their communication to do so, such as with email communication from the franchisor to prospective franchisee soliciting the business opportunity. Measuring market orientation as the generation, dissemination, and responsiveness to market information (Zachary *et al.*, 2011), the researcher posits a relationship to franchise performance.

An ongoing debate persists on whether or not franchisees are entrepreneurs, as witnessed by the literature spanning across academic journals in the areas of business venturing, entrepreneurship, and management. The majority debate that franchising is "of course" an entrepreneurial venture form of business (Hoy & Shane, 1998) with an obvious connection between the two because franchisees "do almost all functions as other entrepreneurs" (Ketchen, Short, & Combs, 2011, p. 585-586); the argument continues, stating that the very act of creating a franchise network is an entrepreneurial act (Hoy & Shane, 1998). However, entrepreneurship presents no separation of business ownership and control (Combs and Ketchen, 1999), and entrepreneurs have direct control over the financial risk of their business (Gonzalez-Diaz & Solis-Rodriguez, 2012). Conversely, financial risk is shared risk in franchising. Does the entrepreneurial orientation of prospective franchisees affect the performance of an organization? A relative inquiry is whether prospective franchisees are enticed to franchising as a business option based on levels of entrepreneurial orientation used in communication during the sales process of a franchise license.

Cooperation and attachment to the goals mean followers (franchisees) are encouraged to allocate extra effort to accomplish the goals of the franchise (Bass, 1990), and a charismatic leadership style is therein realized. The leader (franchisor) articulates the vision, strong internalization of the value and goals occurs, commitment forms, and a willingness to be part of the brand transcends (Zachary et al., 2011). Researching this commitment requires the examination of the role of charismatic leadership in relation to franchise performance in interpersonal communication.

Within the recruitment process, charismatic language has the potential to incite action (Zachary et al., 2011). Those franchisors that convey rhetoric indicative of market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and charismatic leadership were also those who performed better; larger franchisors tend to do this, but age had no difference in these dimensions (Zachary et al., 2011). Additionally, Zachary et al. (2011) discovered that organizational identity is valuable in explaining how franchisors brand their opportunity to their preferred segment. However, the research has not included studying internal communication, such as emails, of a franchised brand. The research model for this study is depicted in Figure 1.

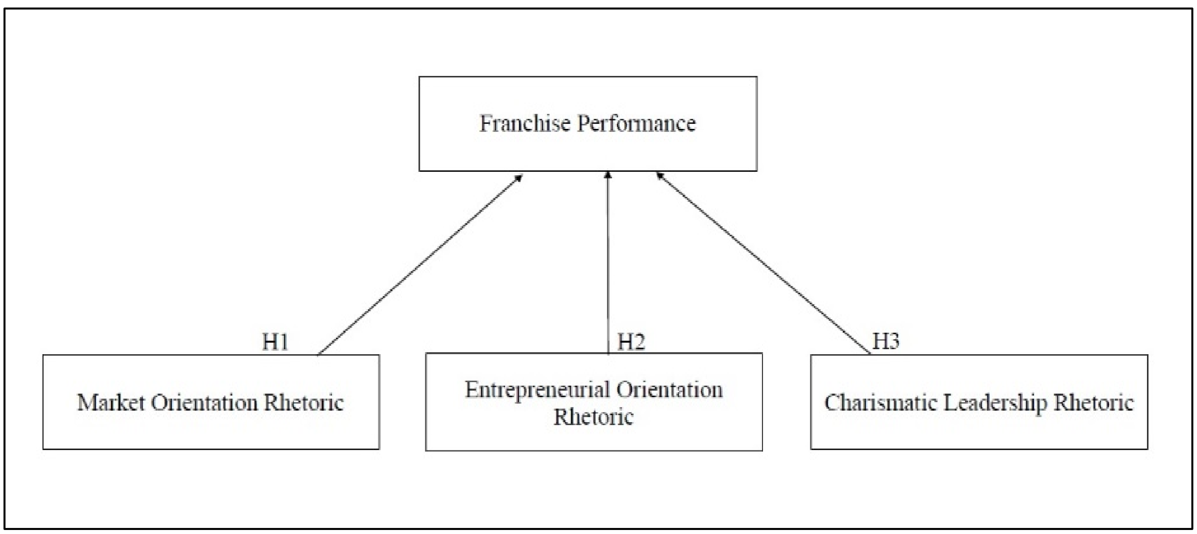


*Figure 1*: Research Model

**Literature Review**

Franchise development executives potentially do not recognize the power and influence of messaging (rhetoric) used when communicating with prospective franchisees during the sales process post pricing when the relationship is forming and decision-making is emerging. The present literature review addresses a narrow research gap in the communication with franchise marketing messages used in the franchise sales process and expands the research by Zachary et al. (2011) that examines external marketing communication to irradiate organizational identity via branding.

*Market Orientation Rhetoric and Franchise Performance*
Market orientation is a marketing management concept that refers to the company-wide acquisition and circulation of market intelligence information (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; c.f. Lee et al., 2015). Its strength lies in the ability to facilitate the delivery of a firm's products and services (Lee et al., 2015). Market orientation is a one-dimension construct measuring three behavioral components and two decision criteria that are conceptually related and equally important (Narver & Slater, 1990). For a long-term profit focus, customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination must depend on each other like a triangle to create continuous superior value for customers; this triangle is the conceptual model of Narver and Slater (1990). Due to the reliance on its component parts, market orientation should be a continuous process reflected in proactive action in the organization, where it may also provide the means of control in the market environment and over a firm's competitors (Greenley, 1995). The ultimate goal of market orientation, however, is profitability (Narver & Slater, 1990), though the need to focus on exogenous factors is what provides the firm with a competitive advantage (Lee et al., 2015).

The generation, dissemination, and responsiveness to market information (Zachary et al., 2011a) further characterize market orientation. Management leads a firm to be more market-oriented by building a sustainable competitive advantage of superior customer value (Zachary et al., 2011a), and marketers share the same role. The perceptual nature of measuring market orientation can be problematic in a new phenomenon or with segments unfamiliar with marketing (Kraaijenbrink, Roersen, & Groen, 2009). Still today, little attention of market orientation literature is focused on franchise channels (Gauzente, 2010).

A franchisor that has higher market orientation leads to innovative responses to the market and, therefore, a better capacity to meet consumer needs (Gauzente, 2010), but the impact of market orientation is not uniform in franchise channels (Gauzente, 2010). Further, Gauzente (2010) found a disparity between the franchisor's market orientation and the franchisee's own market orientation that presents a big gap between top-management and salespersons. Gauzente therefore suggested that those franchises who perform better have a stronger competitive advantage and created superior value over alternatives in the marketplace based on the franchisor's market orientation. The presence of market orientation rhetoric in franchise sales process communication may be indicative of franchise performance due to the salesperson's ability to communicate its sustainability or competitive advantage despite difficulties of co-ordination within franchise channels (Michael, 2002).

*Entrepreneurial Orientation and Franchise Performance*
Numerous researchers (Chien, 2014; Short, Zachary, & Ketchen, 2018) studied the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance, where the majority of the studies indicate a significant relationship between variables. These include financial measures such as profit growth, sales growth, and market share growth (De Clercq et al., 2009). Dada and Watson (2013) indicate that entrepreneurial orientation has a positive relationship with performance. The research suggests the franchise system support structure was found to be important in fostering entrepreneurial orientation within the organization through its business is based on standardization (Dada & Watson, 2013). However, franchisors encourage standardization with franchisees' entrepreneurial spirit to promote innovation and change (Gillis & Combs, 2014), and this seems counterintuitive.

A study by Botha and Prawlall (2017) indicates high levels of entrepreneurial orientation means franchisees are likely to be more productive, and productivity leads to more profitable franchise systems. Besides, according to Dada and Watson (2013), entrepreneurial orientation is positively and significantly related to the financial and non-financial performance outcomes of a franchise system. Subsequently, franchise sales and marketing executives could perceive their firms to be higher in entrepreneurial orientation if they are top-performing (Short, Zachary, & Ketchen, 2018), which would then affect their communication in emails.

*Charismatic Leadership Orientation and Franchise Performance*

To attract would-be entrepreneurs to a franchise brand, leaders may use charismatic rhetoric to influence followers to adopt and accomplish the goals of the organization as their own while working together (Shamir and Howell, 1999; c.f. in Zachary *et al.*, 2011). Charismatic content elements in a leader's proposition are likely emphasized to produce motivational effects (Shamir, Arthur & House, 1994). It follows that franchisees operate in an organizational setting that attaches a trusting connection to the franchisor's vision, goal alignment between the two, and the organizational identity of a franchisor; in turn, this incites a financial and emotional commitment back toward the leader's vision (Zachary *et al.*, 2011).

Cooperation and attachment to the goals mean the followers (franchisees) are encouraged to allocate extra effort to accomplish the goals of the franchise (Bass, 1990). Here the charismatic leadership style is realized. The tangibility dimension of charismatic leadership references future intangible goals over concrete outcomes, and the action dimension measures the communication of purpose and confidence in the leader's vision (Bligh *et al.*, 2004). During communication throughout the franchise sales process, it becomes more transparent to the prospective franchisee how the leader (franchisor) articulates the vision of the brand. Additionally, strong internalization of the value and goals occurs, commitment forms and a willingness to be part of the brand transcends (Zachary *et al.*, 2011).

Researching this progression requires the examination of the role of charismatic leadership in communication during the franchise sales process. Franchise sales and marketing executives could perceive their firms to be higher in charismatic leadership orientation if they are top-performing (Bass, 1990; Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998).

**Research Objective and Methodology**

The main objective of this study is to examine the use of market, entrepreneurial, and charismatic leadership orientation rhetoric in email communication of top-performing franchise brands.

> **RQ**: How much market orientation rhetoric, entrepreneurial orientation rhetoric, and charismatic leadership rhetoric is used in sales process emails of successful franchise brands?

The present study qualitatively evaluates the use of rhetoric in three constructs (market, entrepreneurial, and charismatic leadership orientation).

This qualitative ethnographic study used a systematic approach to study a group of people living and practicing their everyday life (Hernández-Hernández & Sancho-Gil, 2015), and it is a division of anthropology. Through ethnography, the relationships among employees and employers inside corporate organizational environments are studied, and marketers use ethnography to purview how a product or service performs in the market where it is produced

(Mendez, 2009). Ethnography is a strategy that researchers can use to understand what is involved with the production and delivery of a message in an organization, also known as marketing ethnography with a focus of being organization-oriented (Mendez, 2009).

Micro-ethnography shares the same qualitative focus and rigor as ethnography with its methodology endured through fieldwork, observation, or interviews, but the emphasis is on a site, experience, or daily reality for a shorter period of time (Hernández-Hernández & Sancho-Gil, 2015). Micro-ethnography is the means by which marketers can study reality or a poorly understood condition of an organization within a specific context (Le Baron, 2006). By studying an intricate process, such as that of the franchise development executive using communication through the franchise sales process, organizational practices can be articulated into experiences (Hernández-Hernández & Sancho-Gil, 2015).

Micro-ethnography represented the study's approach to uncovering insights within a niche group of people: top-performing franchise organizations in an effort to qualitatively understand the use of franchise sales process emails from top-performing organizations. Mendez (2009) used micro-ethnography in marketing research to illustrate an effective approach to integrated marketing communications so that intrinsically linking organizational cultures could be done. The qualitative data provides insight into the everyday life of the franchise sales executive and marketing manager working in their jobs to create email content that provides details on purchasing a franchise.

Ethnomethodologists use a form of extreme case sampling in field experiments. After an analysis of the *Franchise 500* lists from 2016–2019, 776 franchise organizations comprised a criterion sample. Only 259 were ranked consistently across all four years and, as such, were considered top-performing. After obtaining the contact information from franchise websites and LinkedIn, the researcher sent a survey questionnaire to a franchise development executive from each of the 259 franchise organizations via LinkedIn. These 259 franchise organizations represent the extreme case sample of the study.

The researcher requested survey participants to share their sales process emails so that each email, containing pertinent keywords (rhetoric), could be analyzed using qualitative software (NVivo). Using comparative analyses from previously validated constructs by Zachary et al. (2011), Greenley (1995), and Bligh, Kohles, and Meindl (2004), the researcher uncovered successful language and attention given to sales process communication by franchise development executives who are the authors of the email communication.

Capturing marketing phenomena, such as verbiage contained on a website or via sales process campaign emails, can be measured using content analysis. Avoiding subjective errors and bias, which are common from interviews or surveys, the content analysis provides a compelling advantage in analyzing qualitative data. Scholars have successfully used content analysis in the areas of consumer research (Kassarjian, 1977), market orientation (Zachary et al., 2011), entrepreneurial orientation (Short et al., 2009; Short et al., 2010), charismatic leadership (Bligh et al., 2004), and international marketing research (Wheeler, 1988). Franchise development executives shared their sales process campaign emails in the online survey, and they were analyzed using NVivo to produce a thematic diagram of the three constructs and word clouds to show a visual presentation of a set of words by displaying the most frequently used words as larger than others (DePaolo & Wilkinson, 2014).

**Results**

The purpose of a thematic diagram is to identify patterns of qualitative data that are important or relevant to the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The franchise sales process emails obtained from the survey questionnaire were mined and analyzed based on three constructs (market, entrepreneurial, and charismatic leadership orientation rhetoric). A thematic diagram was prepared using the NVivo 12 Plus software, which indicates thematic nodes as a "child." The analysis of the frequency of words that align with the three constructs is illustrated in Figure 2.

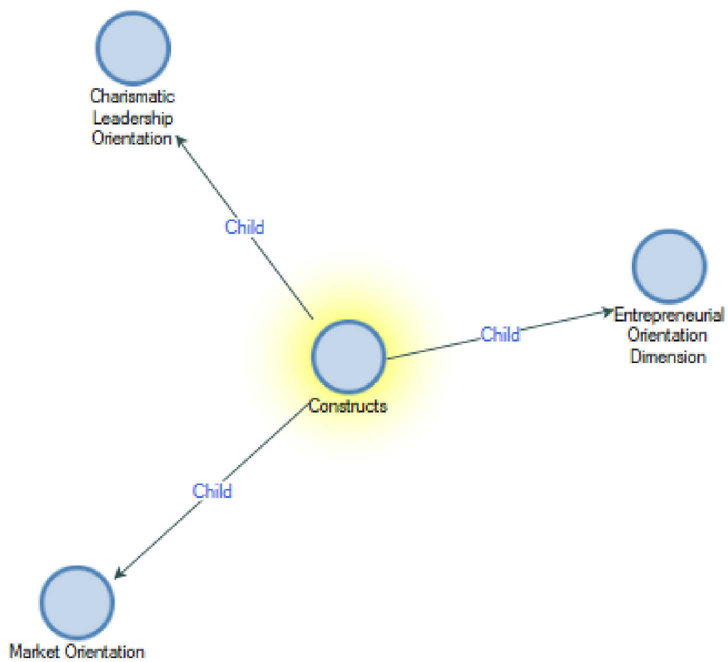


*Figure 2*: Qualitative Thematic Nodes

*Market Orientation Rhetoric (H1)*

The first hypothesis was formulated to understand if there is a relationship between the level of market orientation (MO) rhetoric in the franchise sales process campaign emails and franchise performance.

H1: There is a significant relationship between the level of market orientation rhetoric and franchise performance.

The market orientation qualitative construct is subdivided into the following five dimensions:

1. **Customer Orientation**: The understanding of an organization's consumers to provide continuous value to future customers (Zachary et al., 2011).
2. **Competitive Orientation**: The "short-term strengths and weaknesses and long-term capabilities and strategies" of competitors (Narver & Slater, 1990).
3. **Inter-functional Coordination Orientation**: The synchronized utilization of resources to create superior value for customers and other stakeholders (Narver & Slater, 1990).
4. **Long-Term Focus**: The need for businesses to look toward the future as they strive toward the other four dimensions of market orientation (Narver & Slater, 1990).
5. **Profitability**: The primary goal of an organization and a metric that a business finds an optimal level of investment (Narver & Slater, 1990; Zachary et al., 2011).

The analyzed email data gathered from the online survey revealed a dwelling on competitive orientation and inter-functional orientation more than any other dimension in this construct, and that the competitive orientation was mostly discussed. High competitiveness could be due to the competitive landscape of franchising today with thousands of options for prospective franchisees to choose from in the United States, of which more than half (259, as with the purposeful sample) are consistently ranked in the *Franchise 500* for multiple, consecutive years. Further, product or service deliverables within business format franchises should set the competitive advantages of its franchise so that the customer's decision-making is influenced (Kaufman and Eroglu, 1998).

The data dwelt on customer orientation the least, which could be explained by the layers of business relationships within the business format franchise. The franchisor must balance economic growth in both business development and customer relationships, and, depending on the franchise leader's organizational objectives, the latter may take a back seat at times for the sake of growth.

Further, the qualitative analysis revealed that the content of emails sent is majorly focused on market orientation, followed by inter-functional coordination, long-term focus, profitability, and customer orientation. An illustration of this data is shown in Figure 3.

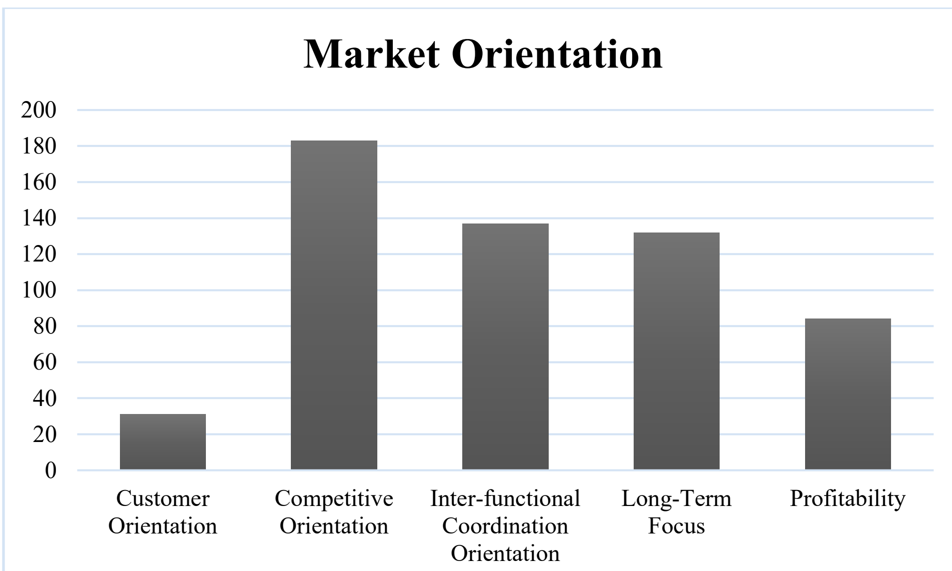


*Figure 3*: Market Orientation Rhetoric Analysis

The qualitative analysis of the survey was in agreement with the construct frequency distribution. Survey data revealed that respondents believe they pay attention to all attributes in the construct. Due to this finding, it was difficult to rank the responses on each attribute mainly because of their close similarity in the survey.

Word clouds are used in qualitative analysis to show a visual presentation of a set of words by displaying the most frequently used words as larger than others (DePaolo & Wilkinson, 2014). NVivo is a software that applies codes to data in order to visualize themes in the form of word clouds (McNaught & Lam, 2010), and it helps users organize and analyze non-numerical data. In this study, franchise development executives shared their sales process campaign emails in the online survey, and using the word lists for market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and charismatic leadership orientation, the researcher was able to further investigate the research questions.

NVivo identified four major themes of the five dimensions of market orientation as having a more significant result in rhetoric used in franchise sales process campaign emails than others. Within the competitive orientation dimension, one keyword, “bid” was used more than all others (Figure 4). Four keywords were used more frequently within the inter-functional coordination dimension, which include, “joint”, “cross”, “team”, and “mutually” (Figure 5). The long-term focus dimension produced two major keywords, including “long” and “robust”, and three medium-sized words, “life”, “lengthy”, and “tenure” (Figure 6). Six keywords were prominent within the emails pertaining to the profitability dimension, including, “cost” and “income” as larger keywords, followed by “profits”, “paid”, “dividends”, and “paid” as medium-sized keywords (Figure 7).


*Figure 4*: MO: Competitive Orientation Word Cloud from Sales Process Campaign Emails

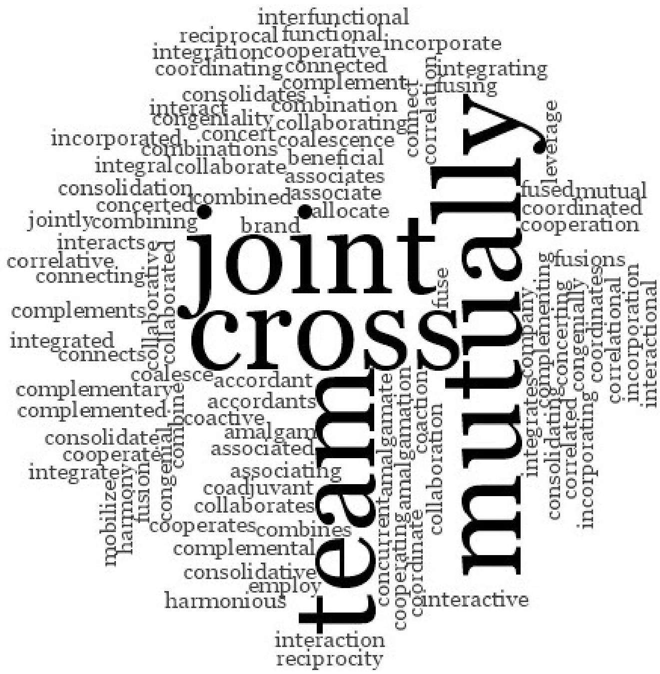


*Figure 5*: MO: Inter-functional Coordination Word Cloud from Sales Process Campaign Emails

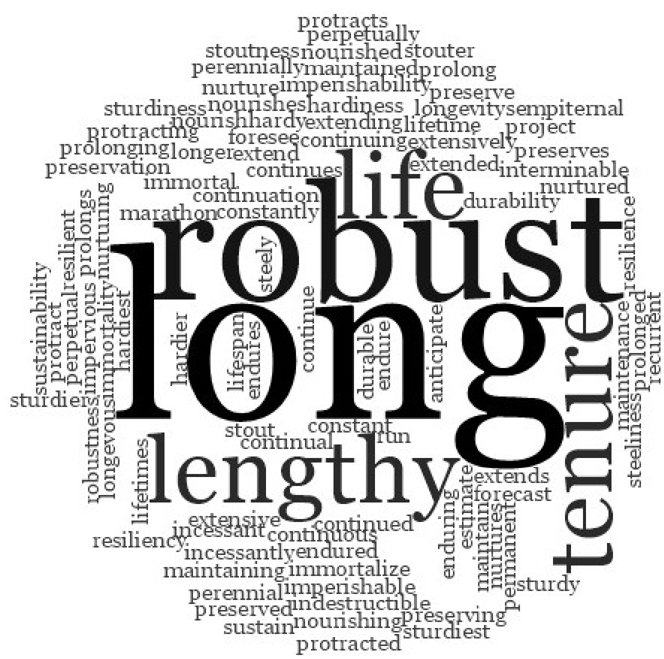


*Figure 6*: MO: Long-Term Focus Word Cloud from Sales Process Campaign Emails


*Figure 7*: MO: Profitability Word Cloud from Sales Process Campaign Emails

*Entrepreneurial Orientation Rhetoric (H2)*

The second hypothesis was formulated to understand if there is a relationship between the level of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) rhetoric in the franchise sales process campaign emails and franchise performance.

H2: There is a significant relationship between the level of entrepreneurial orientation rhetoric and franchise performance.

The entrepreneurial orientation qualitative construct is subdivided into the following five dimensions:

1. **Autonomy**: “Actions of individuals and teams to carry new ideas to completion” (Zachary et al., 2011).
2. **Innovativeness**: “Willingness to experiment and create in order to exploit marketable ideas and inventions” (Zachary et al., 2011).
3. **Proactiveness**: “Focus on anticipating future needs and marketplace changes” (Zachary et al., 2011) and “doing whatever is necessary to bring an entrepreneurial concept to fruition” (Morris & Lewis, 1995).
4. **Competitive Aggressiveness**: “Tendency to challenge competitors to gain entry to outperform marketplace rivals” (Zachary et al., 2011).
5. **Risk-taking**: “The degree to which organizations make large resource commitment that has a chance of costly failure” (Zachary et al., 2011).

The analyzed email data revealed that the content is geared towards innovativeness. A firm that entrepreneurially oriented is one that extensively and frequently innovates products in order to obtain a competitive advantage for the firm (Chadwick, Barnett & Dwyer, 2008; c.f. Covin & Slevin, 1989). Identifying new opportunities and solutions may result in a competitive advantage for the franchise brand; that franchise development executives communicate this in their sales process emails to prospective franchisees is not surprising and somewhat expected in an attempt to persuade decision-making.

This is followed by competitive aggressiveness, risk-taking, and autonomy. Proactiveness is the least most mentioned content in this construct. Aggressive posturing or strategies in creating competitive advantages against the firm's competitors (Knight, 1997), is expected in franchises in an effort to stay affront consumer's minds. Autonomy stands out as a dimension because there is a well-balanced degree of entrepreneurship and independence in business format franchising, though the connectedness to the brand provides strength and resources that allow ideas to be carried out to completion (Zachary et al., 2011). The relationship between the five dimensions found in the qualitative analysis of entrepreneurial orientation is illustrated in Figure 8.

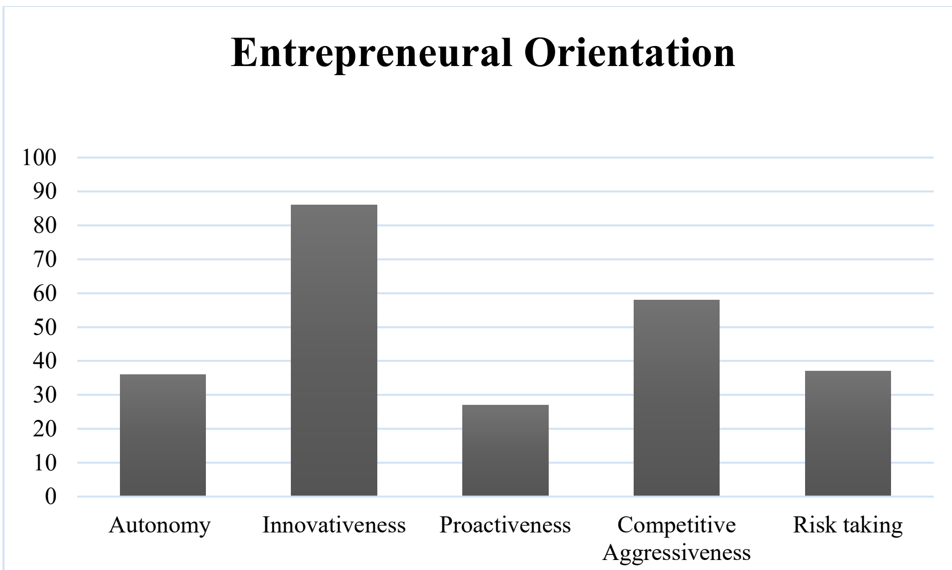


*Figure 8*: Entrepreneurial Orientation Rhetoric Analysis

NVivo identified four major themes of the five dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation as having a more significant result in rhetoric used in franchise sales process campaign emails than others. Within the autonomy dimension, two keywords were used more commonly, which include "self" as a dominant word, followed by "liberty" (Figure 9). "Innovation", "dream", and "new" were found to be equally dominant within the innovativeness dimension (Figure 10). The competitive aggressiveness dimension produced two interesting keywords, "dog" and "fight", which were equally weighted, and more dominant than all others (Figure 11). In the risk-taking dimension, "bold" was the only major keyword used in the emails (Figure 12).


*Figure 9*: EO: Autonomy Word Cloud from Sales Process Campaign Emails


*Figure 10*: EO: Innovativess Word Cloud from Sales Process Campaign Emails


*Figure 11*: EO: Competitive Aggressiveness Word Cloud from Sales Process Campaign Emails


*Figure 12*: EO: Risk-Taking Word Cloud from Sales Process Campaign Emails

*Charismatic Leadership Orientation Rhetoric (H3)*
The third hypothesis was formulated to understand if there is a relationship between the level of charismatic leadership orientation (CL) rhetoric in the franchise sales process campaign emails and franchise performance.

H3: There is a significant relationship between the level of charismatic leadership orientation rhetoric and franchise performance.

The charismatic leadership orientation qualitative construct is subdivided into the following eight dimensions:

1. **Collective Focus**: “Emphasizes and affects followers’ sense of collective identity” (Zachary et al., 2011).
2. **Temporal Orientation**: “References history and tradition, describing past successes and emphasizes future rewards” (Zachary et al., 2011).

3. **Followers' Worth**: "Emphasizes the benefit of joining the group to share the same identity and promises followers the bright future that comes from working with the group" (Zachary et al., 2011).
4. **Similarity to Followers**: "Points to similarities between the leader and the followers to gain the followers'' acceptance and build trust" (Zachary et al., 2011).
5. **Values and Moral Justifications**: "Emphasizes values and moral justifications that match or are closely related to followers' social values" (Zachary et al., 2011).
6. **Tangibility**: "References to future intangible goals versus more concrete outcomes" (Zachary et al., 2011).
7. **Action**: "Inspire followers to pursue and accomplish goals based on the leaders' insight" (Zachary et al., 2011).
8. **Adversity**: "Referring to hardship or intolerable situations" (Zachary et al., 2011).

The data revealed that charismatic leadership orientation is focused on action. The rhetoric that reveals the germane characteristics of the franchisor may be action-oriented to promote the growth and continued success of the brand (Zachary et al., 2011). Communicating these characteristics in sales process emails could encourage followers (franchisees) to take risks to join the franchise (Zachary et al., 2011). The majority of the content revealed the leaders have elements that inspire their respective followers, which is followed by followers' worth and adversity. The least element in this construct is the collective focus in this qualitative measure (Figure 13).

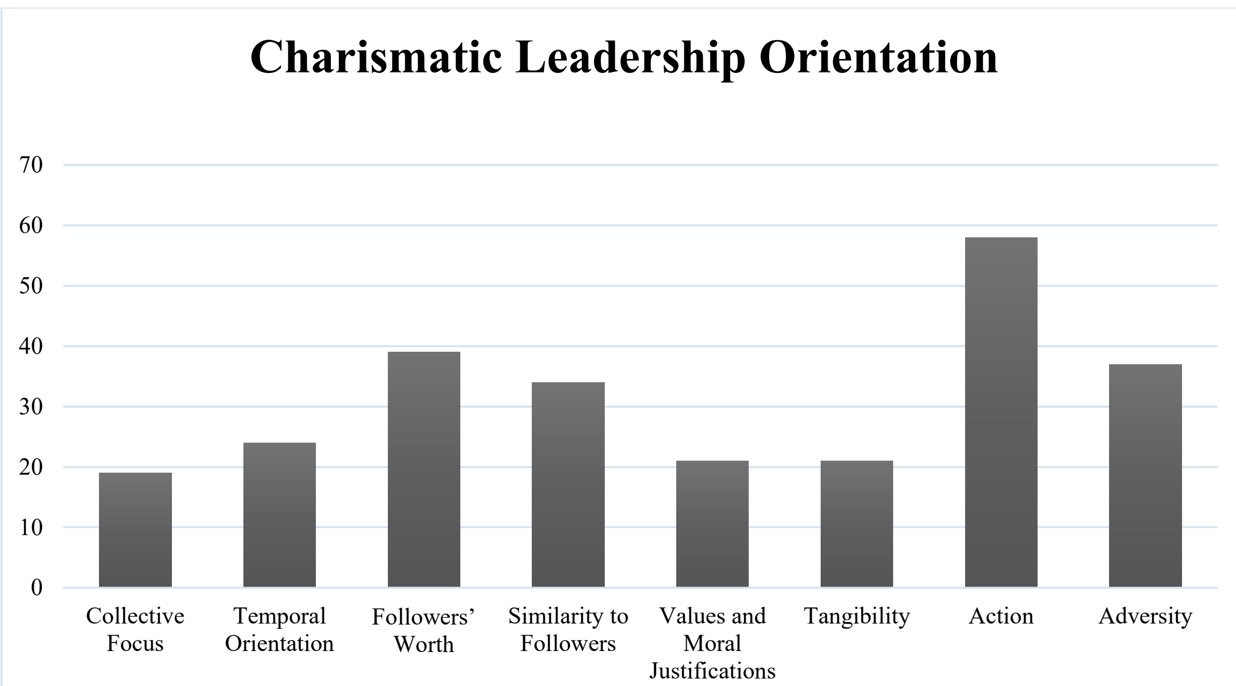


*Figure 13*: Charismatic Leadership Orientation Rhetoric Analysis

NVivo identified only one major theme of the eight dimensions of charismatic leadership orientation as having a more significant result in rhetoric used in franchise sales process campaign emails than others. Within the action dimension, the keyword "influence" was used more commonly (Figure 14).


*Figure 14*: CLO: Action Word Cloud from Sales Process Campaign Emails

**Conclusion**

The strength in market orientation is not surprising as a business format franchise because it can be assumed that stronger tendencies toward its dimensions lead to franchise success (Lee et al., 2014). The results could mean that in order to be successful in franchising, the organization must understand its consumers to provide value (customer orientation); that it is competitively positioned (competitive orientation); its resources and processes are synchronized to create value for stakeholders (inter-functional coordination); there is a long-term focus; and the franchise brand is profitable. These dimensions, collectively represent a market orientation, and are supported by the qualitative analysis.

The theoretical linkage of entrepreneurial orientation and performance is often postulated by a search for high returns (Li et al., 2008). It is worth noting that in order for a franchise to competitively and sustainably remain viable, financial measures relating to profit, sales, and market growth are necessary (De Clercq et al., 2009). Other subjective indicators that support these initiatives should be eminent, to include autonomy, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and risk-taking. With all five dimensions collectively and similarly represented in the franchise sales process emails, the use of entrepreneurial orientation rhetoric was also supported.

The charismatic relationship is grounded in language, and the charismatic leader's appeal lies within their ability to articulate and express sentiments that followers are unable and unwilling to express (Bligh, Kohles & Meindl, 2004). How franchise development executives frame and craft a message that has a true impact (Conger, 1991), such as within sales process emails, could evoke the desire to engage in a contractual, franchisor-franchisee relationship.

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# AR/VR Training for Emergency Response: An Integrative Review

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**Abstract**

Virtual and augmented reality are often used for training purposes. First responders and emergency providers are positioned to benefit a great deal from incorporating VR use into their training and pedagogical practices, given the extreme, dangerous, risky, and messy circumstances and incidences that these public servants are preparing to mitigate. This integrative review sought to aggregate and synthesize existing literature on AR and VR training for emergency and first responders to provide evidence-based recommendations for fire & emergency departments and designers who offer products to these users. Out of 496 articles retrieved from a search of public reports and articles, we reviewed about 30 case studies and user research studies that included usability data from augmented reality and virtual reality systems designed to train first responders and emergency providers, firefighters, EMTs, and ER physicians. Significant findings included observations that VR increases engagement in the learner. Studies also found that post-training, VR/AR trainees followed instructions with more confidence, even when they did not already know the incident settings. Drawback included the total cost, the proliferation of developing niche software, and the technology's capacity only slightly to imitate reality and only partially integrate real-world experience factors. Overall, the integrative review offers evidence-based recommendations, including performing replication studies with different training courses and introducing more task sequences to define a significant test to verify effective learning in a training activity.

**Introduction**

Virtual and augmented reality are often used for training purposes. First responders and emergency providers are positioned to benefit a great deal from incorporating virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). Training is supposed to prepare them to mitigate extreme, dangerous, risky, and messy circumstances and incidences not immediately accessible in the classroom. Sometimes these technologies replace or extend simulation labs and other real-world spaces where responders train (Leu et al. 2003, Mantzios et al. 2014, Sebillo et al. 2016, Sharma & Jerripothula 2015). Sometimes they are used in conjunction with lab work (Backlund et al. 2013, Chen et al. 2008, Ørngreen 2010, Sebillo et al. 2015, Stone 2018, Zarrad & Mahlous 2015). They are also used in tandem with textbook learning and class activities to give lessons more dimensions, to increase interest in learning, and to practice in ways that exercise haptic, interactive, and kinesthetic learning (Bailie et al. 2016, Karl et al. 2015, Nguyen & Nyong 2017, Seo et al. 2017, Sharma et al. 2017, Stone et al. 2017, Wilson & Wright 2007). Overall, the emergency response field needs more immersive and realistic training technologies to train and prepare them for real-world situations accurately.

However, in VR and AR technologies subjectivities abound in creating these representations in setting parameters, initial conditions, system features, and other dimensions that involve assumptions, substitutions, and hunches on the designer's part. The design and adoption of these technologies might be biased, limiting, or not entirely representative of reality (Roundtree 2013). These new technologies have physiological effects (Allen et al. 2011). What does the literature say about the effectiveness of these technologies used for training in emergency response? Is it sufficient enough to invest in using these technologies for training?

This integrative review sought to aggregate and synthesize existing literature on AR and VR training for emergency and first-responders to provide evidence-based recommendations for fire & emergency departments and designers who offer these users products. Out of 496 articles retrieved from a search of public reports and articles, we reviewed about 30 case studies and user research studies that included usability data from augmented reality and virtual reality systems designed to train first responders and emergency providers, firefighters, EMTs, and emergency room physicians. Significant findings included observations that these technologies increase engagement in the learner, but the study designs were limited in ways that made generalizability unclear.

This study engages several stakeholders for whom the trade-offs matter: developers who are designing these technologies, user experience specialists tasked with helping improve those designs, marketing teams who have to report the benefits of the technology accurately, teachers considering how to integrate these technologies for the use of their trainees, and executive leadership and management making decisions about whether to invest in these technologies and which ones were designed to overcome the limitations of the technology. The stakes are high for these stakeholders. They have to vouchsafe the quality, effectiveness, usefulness, usability, pedagogical, and financial value of the software. This integrative review can help these stakeholders in their deliberation and decision-making. The stakes are raised because these technologies are used to prepare trainees for emergency response. The outcomes as to the benefits or risks of the training technologies have real-world implications that could affect first responders' lives and the communities they protect and serve.

**Methods**

We searched several databases, including Google Scholar, ACM, IEEE, Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, ERIC, and JSTOR, to find articles about the following keywords in the title and abstract, including stems and abbreviations: augmented reality, virtual reality, emergency responses, first responders, paramedics, EMT, fire services, firefighters, training, users, usability, user experience, and education. We scanned abstracts to determine fitness and inclusion criteria. We also eliminated articles that were not in English, manuscripts that were not peer-reviewed, and those not available in library holdings or interlibrary loans.

**Results**

Out of 496 articles retrieved from a search of public reports and articles, 30 peer-reviewed publications were included. These 30 included case studies included user research studies with usability data from augmented reality and virtual reality systems designed to train first responders and emergency providers, including firefighters, EMTs, and emergency room physicians. See table 1.

*Table 1*. Articles Retrieved, Excluded, and Included

| | |
|---|---|
| Springer | 281 |
| Google | 139 |
| PUBMED | 0 |
| JSTOR | 0 |
| ACM | 35 |
| Scopus | 13 |
| IEEE | 2 |
| Science Direct | 13 |
| ERIC | 13 |
| Total Retrieved | 496 |
| Not peer-reviewed | 199 |
| Duplicates | 143 |
| No User Tests | 80 |
| No User Test Results | 44 |
| Total Excluded | 466 |
| Total Included | 30 |

Table 2 in the Appendix presents the characteristics of the study participants. Overall, there were 1182 participants represented in the sample of 30 articles. Only ten articles reported receiving approval from Institutional Review Boards, Committees for the Protection of Human Subjects, or other research ethics review boards.

Figure 1 illustrates by word cloud the frequency of words used to describe the group's participant samples--the larger the word, the more times it was mentioned. The largest words in Figure 1 illustrate that the samples very often included students and staff, particularly those training as emergency responders, paramedics, firefighters, and in health and medical fields. Other fields from which participants were recruited include science and engineering departments where the software was designed.


*Figure 1.* Word Cloud of Sample Type

Generally, the studies corralled a small sample size (that ranged from 8 to 169 total). The sample often included students (n=13). Most of the studies were healthcare-related (n=19). Most were conducted in a research university or education setting (n=18). When reported, the sample of participants reflected a majority male representation. However, other studies failed to report gender, so the exact distribution was uncertain.


*Figure 2.* Word Cloud of Methods Used

Figure 2 illustrates by word cloud the frequency of words used to describe the research methods used—the larger the word, the more times it was mentioned. Regarding technologies tested, most of the studies tested VR (n=28). Task scenarios, experiments, user tests, and controlled trials were among the methods most mentioned and used. Many of the studies used scenario-based methodologies (n=17). A few used interviews and focus groups (n=6). Some used surveys or questionnaires (n=15). Some used empirical studies (n=16). Finally, a few used mixed methods (n=4).


*Figure 3*. Word Cloud of Technologies Used

Figure 3 illustrates by word cloud the frequency of words used to describe the technologies tested in the studies—the larger the word, the more times it was mentioned. The figure shows that virtual reality was tested more than augmented reality. Immersive environments, Google Glass, disaster and emergency scenarios, 3D and building scenes, simulations, and games were often mentioned. Some tested AR and VR Immersive (n=15). A few tested simulations (n=4). Finally, common popular brands included Google Glass (n=4), Oculus (n=2), and Second Life (n=2).

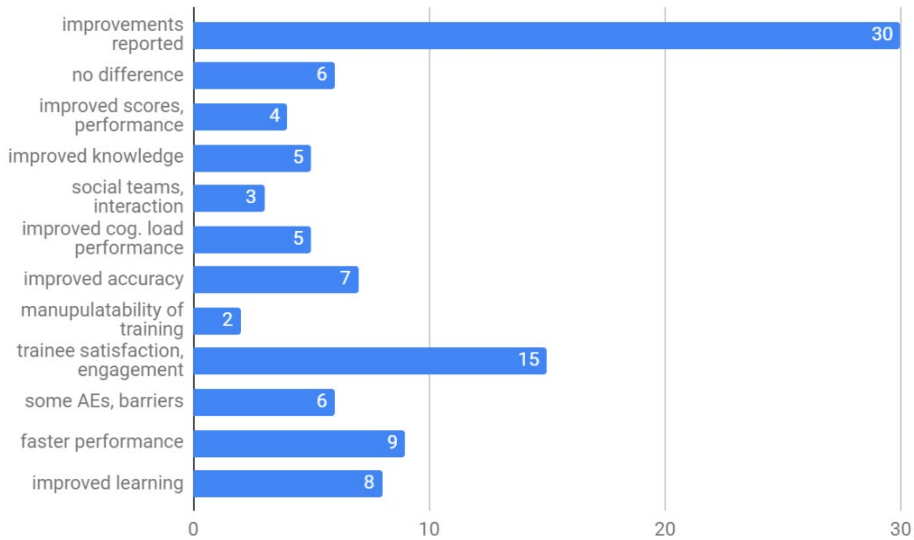


*Figure 4.* Overview of Findings

Shared findings across the studies included the following: all reported that AR/VR offered some degree of improvement (n=30) or similar efficacy to other training modalities. Sixty percent (n=18) reported trainee and team engagement or satisfaction as a benefit or success measure. Most (n=38) reported performance benefits. Only 23% (n=7) reported adverse events or barriers to uptake. See figure 4.

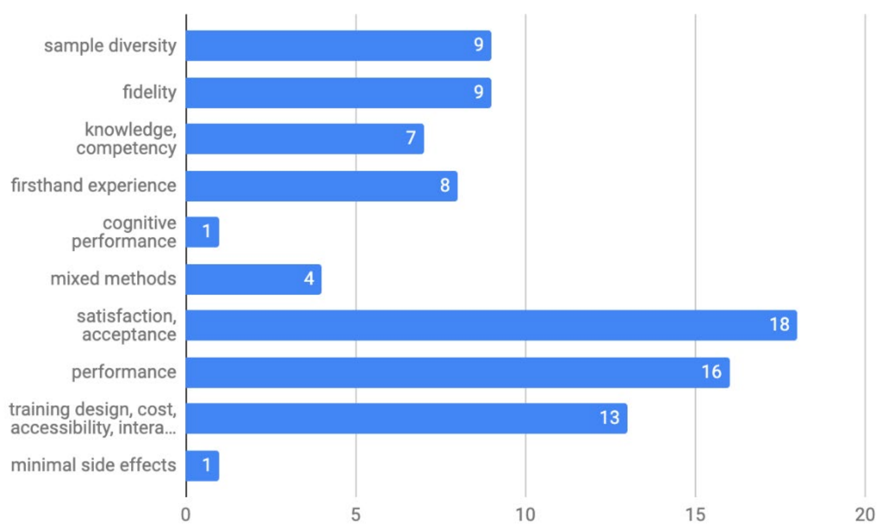


*Figure 5.* Overall Strengths

Regarding the strengths that findings reported (see figure 5), about 57% (n=17) reported that trainees perceived the environments had fidelity to real-world experience. Sixty percent (n=18) reported trainee satisfaction as a conclusion or study strength. Almost all (n=24) reported some form of trainee performance as a major conclusion or study strength. Most (n=25) reported study or training design as benefits. Only one claimed side effects were surmountable or minimal.

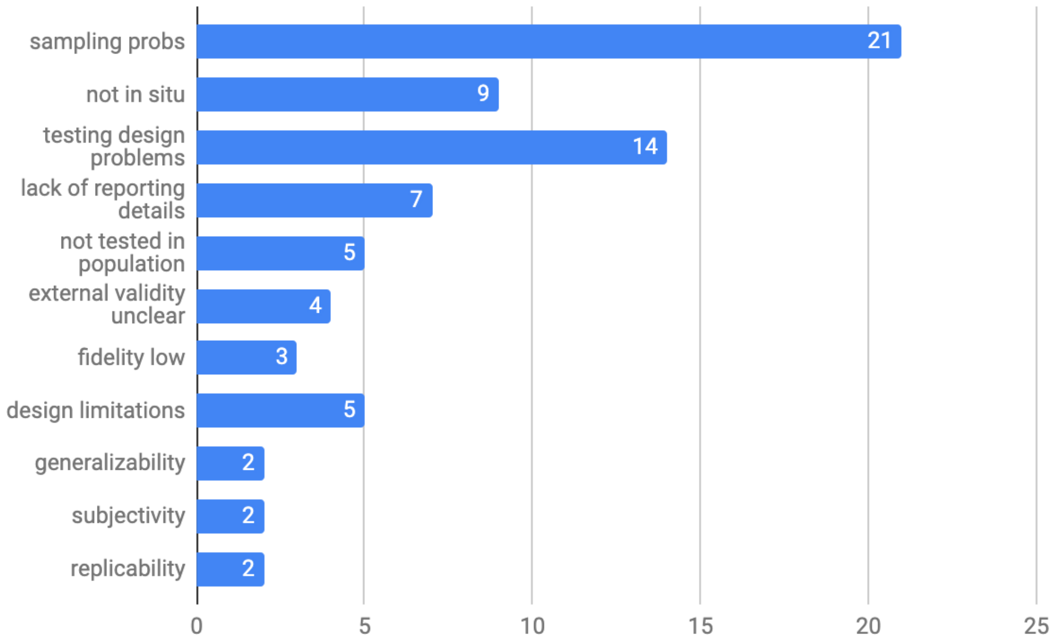


*Figure 6.* Overall Weaknesses

On the other side, regarding weaknesses (see figure 6), many reported that their project suffered from sampling problems (n=21). Almost half admitted the drawback of not testing with the target population or in the workplace (n=14). Nearly half reported and simulation design problems (n=14). And almost a third reported issues of fidelity and real-world verisimilitude (n=12).

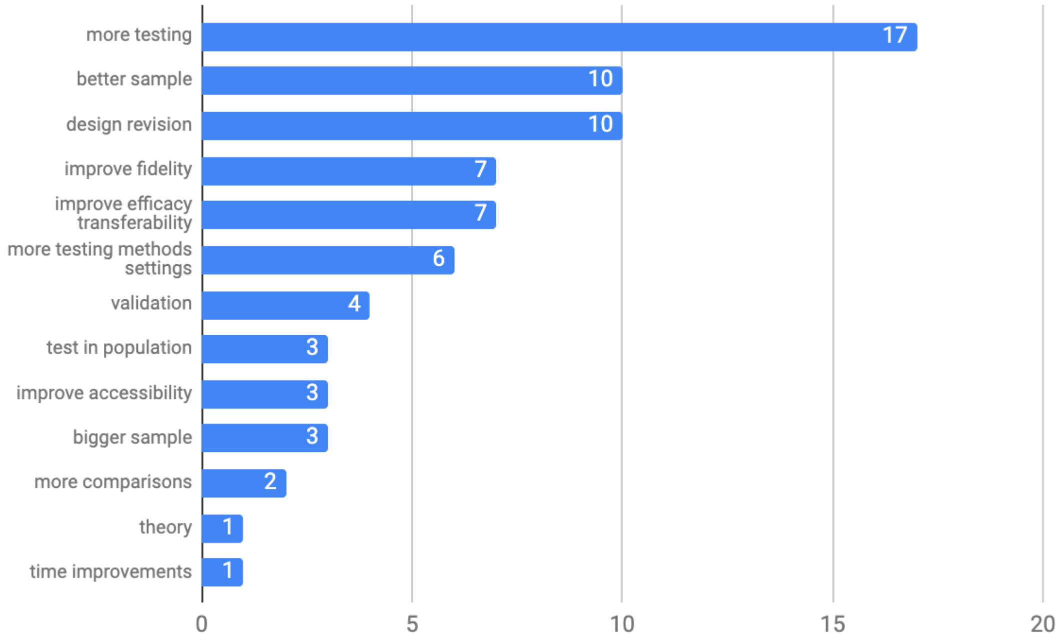


*Figure 7.* Overall Limitations

Regarding future work (see figure 7), most of the studies called for more testing (n=17), better testing (n=25), better AV/VR design (n=27), and better fidelity (n=11). Table 3 in the Appendix also provides a meta-analysis of the findings. One article was qualitative, so it offered incomparable metrics. Others reported different forms of significance measures and used different scales that could not be aggregated. The meta-analysis includes average scores on scales of 5 or 10 and percentages of positive or affirmative findings. The meta-analysis confirms that almost all studies reported positive or affirmative results about the following: preferences for AR/VR; increased involvement and engagement; increased learnability and memorability; and ease of navigation and usability. Most also reported that participants found the interface to be useful. However, when calculating the raw number of participants reporting favorable opinions as a percentage of the entire sample of participants across all studies, the favorability is more modest. About 19% preferred the new training. About 12% reported more engagement. About a third (31% and 37% respectively) reported good usability and positive opinions. About 20% and 37% respectively reported objective and subjective skills improvements, and 35% reported interface realism. These more modest findings were a product of a lack of uniformity reporting findings across the studies.

**Discussion**

Most of the studies had participants test different VR/AR systems and provide their qualitative impressions. A few used traditional usability study methods that required users to complete specific tasks, rating their performance overall. A few were quantitative, using large sample sizes and randomized group assignments to control confounding. Here, the results were statistically significant.

Significant findings included observations that VR increases engagement in the learner. Most environments also incorporate sound into the experience to simulate the real world. Users cited the primary benefit being that VR/AR environments allow participants to work in hazardous conditions that are only simulated without real concern of danger. Studies also found that post-training, VR/AR trainees followed evacuation instructions with more confidence, even in cases where they did not already know the buildings or incident settings.

The most significant drawbacks included the total cost, the proliferation of developing niche software, and the technology's capacity to imitate reality only slightly and only partially integrate real-world experience factors. Furthermore, in some cases, the information that VR/AR training provided to users bordered on cognitive overload, which may have diminished trainees' cognitive ability to manage incidents. Finally, some users needed to adapt to new types of technology, which was, at times, difficult for them.

Studies found that post-training, VR/AR trainees followed instructions with more confidence, even in cases where they did not already know the incident settings. Drawback included the total cost, the proliferation of developing niche software, and the technology's capacity to imitate reality only slightly and only partially integrate real-world experience factors. Overall, the integrative review offers evidence-based recommendations, including performing replication studies with different training courses and introducing more task sequences to define a significant test to verify effective learning in a training activity.

Fidelity of the simulation was called into questions if not tested in population or in situ. Safety unclear if reporting is incomplete. Accessibility and transferability called into question if the sample is young, inexperienced, and male. Efficacy is questionable if user testing methods are shallow. Affordability is called into question if tech is an original design. The transferability of effectiveness is unclear if the sample is small and young, and the study is not longitudinal or without direct measure in situ. VR/AR might increase trainee engagement and improve training performance. Post-training, many VR/AR trainees followed instructions with more confidence, even in cases where they were unfamiliar with the setting. Some drawbacks included the total cost, the proliferation of developing niche software, and the technology's capacity to imitate reality and only partially integrate real-world experience factors. User testing reporting was inadequate in many cases. Lack of sample diversity might hinder uptake, given the demographics (education, age, etc.) of first responder populations.

Overall, the integrative review offers evidence-based recommendations, including the following: create training for groups with disabilities. Make these training technologies accessible to service providers in smaller communities where they would benefit from it most. Perform replication study with different training courses. Introduce more task sequences to define a significant test to verify effective learning in a training activity. Investigate how muscle memory factors into VR/AR learning. Measure the usefulness of VR/AR for trainees who are less tech-savvy. Provide a heads-up display within a participant's view, and use prototypes extensively in the training technology design. Use agile testing and production processes to integrate real-world usage into prototyping more immediately.

This study is limited because it does not include dissertations and other forms of reporting that did not undergo peer review. It also could not complete a full meta-analysis due to the inconsistent reporting across articles. However, for stakeholders investigating investments in these technologies for improved training, there are some signs of benefit, but more research is needed to confirm the generalizability of the benefits reported.

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**Appendix**

*Table 2.* Study Sample Characteristics

| Citation | Methods | Sample | IRB | No. Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Balian et al. 2019 | Feasibility trial. Skills scenarios. Satisfaction. Quantitative and qualitative feedback. | 51 healthcare providers. Median age: 31 years. 71% female. 67% registered nurses. | 0 | 51 |
| Berndt et al. 2018 | Workshop. Two sessions. Actions logged. Two presence questionnaires. Post-training survey | 10 participants in an EMS symposium. M=33.9 years. | 0 | 10 |
| Birt et al. 2017 | Intervention and control. Pretest. Training. Observations. Post-test. | 64 paramedic students. F:35. Intervention N=27 F:14. Control N=37 F:21. | 0 | 64 |
| Bucher et al. 2019 | Training. Pre- and post-test survey. Skills scenarios. Post-scenario semi-structured interviews. | 22 participants | 0 | 22 |
| Campos et al. 2019 | Preliminary evaluation. Feedback. Intermediate evaluations. Training. Tasks performed during testing sessions. Post-session questionnaire. System Usability Scale (SUS). User Experience Questionnaire (UEQ). Final evaluation. Tasks and questionnaires (SUS and UEQ). | Preliminary: 3 users, between ages 18 and 24 years, all males. Intermediate: 5 navy elements, between ages 19 and 24 (mean: 20.2, SD: 1.94), all-male. Final: 10 participants (nine male and one female), between the ages of 19 and 24 (mean: 20.5, SD: 1.57), | 0 | 28 |
| Clifford et al. 2018a | Comparison study. Task. Post task questionnaire. One session. | 36 people: 13 students, 9 software engineers, 8 other, 6 fire and emergency personnel. 11 females. Ages 18-70. M=age 33. | 0 | 36 |
| Clifford et al. 2018b | Training. Post-training review. One session. | 36 participants | 0 | 36 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clifford et al. 2019 | Control vs. intervention. Performance scores. Month duration | 12 firefighters 2.5 years in role. 11 males. M=age 47. 11 firefighters 7.5 years in role. M=age 47. | 1 | 23 |
| Clifford et al. 2020 | Skills scenario. Questionnaire. One session | 25 participants. 2 females. 8 AAS, 6 firefighters, 11 novices. | 0 | 25 |
| Cohen et al. 2013 | Prospective cohort feasibility study. Three different scenarios. Comparison study. Qualitative and quantitative feedback. | 23 pre-hospital and hospital-based clinicians | 1 | 23 |
| Cohen-Hatton et al. 2015 | Experiment 1: 3 scenarios. Experiment 2: IRL. Experiment 3: recreation. | 13-member expert advisory group | 1 | 13 |
| Collington et al. 2018 | Control vs. intervention groups. Day one: training. Day two: 4 skills. Focus group feedback. | 10 male firefighter EMTs. Ages 18–35. 2 Asian. | 0 | 10 |
| Conradi et al. 2009 | Training. Scenarios. Feedback. 3 days. | Day 1: 10 first-year paramedic students. Day 2: 5 paramedic students. Day 3: 10 first- and second-year paramedic students | 0 | 25 |
| Dorozhkin et al. 2017 | Simulator training. Questionnaire. One session. | 49 subjects with varying surgical and FUSE training experience | 1 | 49 |
| Heinrichs et al. 2010 | Demographics. Training. Team scenarios. Entry and exit questionnaire. One exercise. | 10 physician (average=4 yrs. experience). 12 nurses (average=9.5 yrs. experience) | 1 | 22 |
| Hewitt et al. 2013 | Scenario completion. Debriefing. Survey. | 65 participants | 0 | 65 |
| Jeon et al. 2019 | Control vs. intervention Training. Phase two real world deployment. Post-training review. Month duration. | 15 firefighters for design feedback. 22 university students for testing. 8 female. Ages 20 to 33. | 1 | 37 |
| Koutitas et al. 2019 | Training. Post-training survey. One session. | 30 cadets | 0 | 30 |
| Koutitas et al. 2020a | 3-week training. Post-training survey. Training. Post-training survey. One session. | 30 cadets | 0 | 30 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| Molka-Danielsen et al. 2017 | Team-bases scenarios. Feedback. Two days. | Day 1: 14 high school students. Day 2: 4 firefighters, 5 medical students, 1 paramedic student. | 0 | 24 |
| Molka-Danielsen et al. 2018 | Trial 1: Lecture and tasks. Trial 2: Tasks. Trial 3: Tasks. Feedback. Three months. | Trial 1: 14 high school students and teacher. Average 18 years. Trial 2: 10 participants (4 firefighters, 5 medical students with acute medicine specialization, and 1 paramedic student. Trial 3: 1 EM professional instructor, 2 volunteers from higher education, 10 high school students with ambulance training, 2 teachers in paramedics. | 0 | 59 |
| Oliva et al. 2019 | User experience and player demographics. In-game questionnaire. Post-test questionnaire. One session. | 169 people: 14-year-olds, university students, office workers, fire department employees. | 0 | 169 |
| Prasolova et al. 2017 | Training. Trials. Reflection and review questionnaire. One session. | 14 high-school students (M=age 18). 11 experts (4 firefighters, 1 EM, 6 grad students) | 0 | 25 |
| Rossler et al. 2019 | Control vs intervention. Performance scores. One session. | 20 nursing students. Control group n=15. Intervention group n=5 for intervention group. 6 participants (3 from each study group). 7 perioperative teams completed the drill simulation. | 1 | 26 |
| Reason et al. 2020 | Demographic questionnaire. Task. User questionnaire. One session. | 53 volunteers with varying medical experience 38.5 age. 14 women. | 1 | 53 |
| Sankaranarayanan et al. 2018 | Pre-test. 10-min presentation and reading. One session of 5 trials within a week from the pre-test. One week later, reassessment post-test. Evaluation a week after. | 20 subjects. 10 surgery residents. 11 females. | 1 | 20 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Schild et al. 2018 | One session. Igroup Presence Questionnaire (IPQ).System Usability Scale (SUS). Training Evaluation Inventory (TEI). | 24 paramedic trainees (F=5, mean age=23.3). 31 paramedic trainees for analysis of target groups. | 0 | 55 |
| Strada et al. 2019 | Control vs intervention. Training. User questionnaire. One session. | 58 nursing students. 29 in traditional group. M=age 21.34. 5 males. 29 in AR group. M=age 20.76. 13 males. | 0 | 86 |
| Wenger et al. 2017 | 12 = multiple times a week, 6 =multiple times a month, three multiple times. Pre- and post-questionnaire. | 24 participants (7 female), 23=3rd yr paramedic trainees M=22.4 years, ranging from 20 to 33 years. | 0 | 24 |
| Wilkerson et al. 2008 | Expert review. One session. | 12 experts | 1 | 12 |
| Youngblood et al. 2008 | Intervention and comparator groups. Training. Pretest and Posttest. One session. | 30 subjects (13 recent medical graduates, 17 clinical students). F=15. 30 four-person teams. | 0 | 30 |

*Table 3*. Meta-analysis of Findings

| Category | Article | Quantitative Metric | Score Out of 5 or 10 | N | N Sample | % Positive | % Meta Sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Comparison to Old Training | Reason et al. 2020 | prefer AR/VR | | 49 | 53 | 92.5 | 4.1 |
| | Jeon et al. 2019 | prefer AR/VR | | 2 | 22 | 11.1 | 0.2 |
| | Oliva et al. 2019 | prefer AR/VR | | 101 | 169 | 60.0 | 8.6 |
| | Prasolova et al. 2017 | prefer AR/VR | | 6 | 10 | 63.0 | 0.5 |
| | Koutitas et al. 2020 | prefer traditional | | 11 | 30 | 36.4 | 0.9 |
| | Reason et al. 2020 | no preference or same | | 34 | 53 | 63.3 | 2.8 |
| | Koutitas et al. 2020 | no preference or same | | 11 | 30 | 36.4 | 0.9 |
| | Jeon et al. 2019 | no preference or same | | 4 | 22 | 16.6 | 0.3 |
| Engagement | Clifford et al. 2020 | involvement | 4.6 | | 25 | | 2.1 |
| | Hewitt et al. 2013 | fun | 4.3 | | 10 | | 0.8 |
| | Strada et al. 2019 | motivation | | 83 | 86 | 96.4 | 7.0 |
| | Clifford et al. 2019 | comparative engagement | no sig. diff. | | 23 | | 1.9 |
| Error | Berndt et al. 2018 | no error | | 4 | 10 | 40.0 | 0.3 |
| | Koutitas et al. 2019 | no error | | 10 | 30 | 34.0 | 0.9 |
| | Koutitas et al. 2020 | error reduction | | 9 | 30 | 29.0 | 0.7 |
| Usability | Strada et al. 2019 | learnability | 3.63 | | 86 | | 7.3 |
| | Jeon et al. 2019 | efficiency | | 2 | 22 | 7.6 | 0.1 |
| | Strada et al. 2019 | efficiency | 3.93 | | 86 | | 7.3 |
| | Strada et al. 2019 | memorability | 3.89 | | 86 | | 7.3 |
| | Koutitas et al. 2020 | time on task | | 14 | 30 | 46.0 | 1.2 |
| | Koutitas et al. 2020 | ease of navigation | | 27 | 30 | 90.9 | 2.3 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jeon et al. 2019 | ease of navigation | | 6 | 22 | 26.9 | 0.5 |
| | Cohen-Hatton et al. 2015 | ease of navigation | | 21 | 23 | 91.0 | 1.8 |
| | Campos et al. 2019 | ease of navigation | 4 | | 3 | | 0.3 |
| | Schild et al. 2018 | Total SUS | | 20 | 31 | 64.0 | 1.7 |
| | Wenger et al. 2017 | Total SUS | | 17 | 24 | 71.5 | 1.5 |
| Pain Point | Reason et al. 2020 | interface confusion | | 24 | 53 | 45.2 | 2.0 |
| Opinion | Cohen et al. 2013 | recommend | | 21 | 23 | 95.0 | 1.8 |
| | Hewitt et al. 2013 | recommend | 4.36 | | 10 | | 0.8 |
| | Dorozhkin et al. 2017 | recommend | 4.55 | | 49 | | 4.1 |
| | Balian et al. 2019 | recommend | | 48 | 51 | 94.0 | 4.1 |
| | Strada et al. 2019 | satisfaction | 4.44 | | 86 | | 7.3 |
| | Reason et al. 2020 | useful | | 42 | 53 | 79.3 | 3.6 |
| | Youngblood et al. 2008 | useful | | 28 | 30 | 94.0 | 2.4 |
| | Heinrichs et al. 2010 | useful | | 21 | 22 | 95.0 | 1.8 |
| | Balian et al. 2019 | useful | | 50 | 51 | 98.0 | 4.2 |
| | Wenger et al. 2017 | useful | 3.875 | | 24 | | 2.0 |
| | Dorozhkin et al. 2017 | useful | 2.87 | | 49 | | 4.1 |
| | Campos et al. 2019 | useful | 4.2 | | 3 | | 0.3 |
| Objective Skill | Wilkerson et al. 2008 | skills met | | 6 | 14 | 42.0 | 0.5 |
| | Balian et al. 2019 | skills met | | 41 | 51 | 80.0 | 3.5 |
| | Bucher et al. 2019 | skills met | | 14 | 22 | 62.5 | 1.2 |
| | Heinrichs et al. 2010 | average score | 8.65 | | 22 | | 1.9 |
| | Rossler et al. 2019 | knowledge | no sig. diff. | | 26 | | 2.2 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Clifford et al. 2018a | improved skills | sig. diff | | 36 | | 3.0 |
| | Clifford et al. 2018b | improved skills | sig. diff | | 36 | | 3.0 |
| | Sankaranarayanan et al. 2018 | improved skills | sig. diff | | 20 | | 1.7 |
| | Birt et al. 2017 | higher scores | sig. diff | | 30 | | 2.5 |
| Subjective Skill | Hewitt et al. 2013 | Skills perception | 4.2 | | 10 | | 0.8 |
| | Cohen-Hatton et al. 2015 | Skills perception | 4.19 | | 48 | | 4.1 |
| | Dorozhkin et al. 2017 | Skills perception | 3.74 | | 49 | | 4.1 |
| | Bucher et al. 2019 | Skills perception | | 17 | 22 | 75.0 | 1.4 |
| | Heinrichs et al. 2010 | Confidence | | 19 | 22 | 86.0 | 1.6 |
| | Koutitas et al. 2020 | Confidence | | 25 | 30 | 81.8 | 2.1 |
| | Youngblood et al. 2008 | Confidence | | 17 | 30 | 56.0 | 1.4 |
| | Heinrichs et al. 2010 | Confidence | | 19 | 22 | 86.0 | 1.6 |
| | Hewitt et al. 2013 | Helpful / Effective | 4.34 | | 10 | | 0.8 |
| | Koutitas et al. 2020 | Helpful / Effective | | 22 | 30 | 72.7 | 1.9 |
| | Oliva et al. 2019 | Helpful / Effective | | 135 | 169 | 80.0 | 11.4 |
| | Conradi et al. 2009 | Helpful / Effective | | 16 | 20 | 80.0 | 1.4 |
| | Hewitt et al. 2013 | Learning | 4.04 | | 10 | | 0.8 |
| | Heinrichs et al. 2010 | Learning | | 18 | 22 | 82.0 | 1.5 |
| | Conradi et al. 2009 | Preparation | 4.39 | 20 | 20 | 100.0 | 1.7 |
| Interface Evaluation | Koutitas et al. 2019 | Realism | 4 | | 30 | | 2.5 |
| | Koutitas et al. 2020 | Realism | | | 30 | 90.9 | 2.5 |
| | Jeon et al. 2019 | Realism | | | 22 | 26.9 | 1.9 |
| | Jeon et al. 2019 | Realism | | | 22 | 23.0 | 1.9 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jeon et al. 2019 | Realism | | 2 | 22 | 10.0 | 0.2 |
| | Reason et al. 2020 | Realism | | 45 | 53 | 84.9 | 3.8 |
| | Jeon et al. 2019 | Realism | | 7 | 22 | 33.3 | 0.6 |
| | Jeon et al. 2019 | Realism | | 4 | 22 | 16.6 | 0.3 |
| | Oliva et al. 2019 | Realism | | 101 | 169 | 60.0 | 8.5 |
| | Collington et al. 2018 | Realism | 1.9 | | 10 | | 0.8 |
| | Youngblood et al. 2008 | Realism | | 26 | 30 | 88.0 | 2.2 |
| | Heinrichs et al. 2010 | Realism | | 15 | 22 | 68.0 | 1.3 |
| | Cohen et al. 2013 | Realism | | 23 | 23 | 96.0 | 1.9 |
| | Dorozhkin et al. 2017 | Realism | 3.42 | | 49 | | 4.1 |
| | Youngblood et al. 2008 | Realism | | 24 | 30 | 80.0 | 2.0 |
| | Balian et al. 2019 | Realism | | 42 | 51 | 82.0 | 3.6 |

# Communication Impacts of Covid-19 on Students: One College's Experience

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**Abstract**
The pandemic caused the closure or minimization of most on-campus operations on a global scale. Students were sent home and many classes moved online in an attempt to curtail the impact of the spreading virus. Questions were and are being asked about the impact of such a quick and unplanned change in the education process. This article investigates the impact of a stay-at-home order on student communication skills and activities three months into the closure.

**Introduction**
As the Covid-19 virus began its unrelenting spread across Asia and Europe and into the western hemisphere, political leaders began issuing stay-at-home orders and other edicts shuttering businesses and schools across the world. With little advance notice, universities in the United States quickly moved many students off campus, and either ceased or curtailed on-campus classes to minimize the spread of the virus.

Following the lead of eight other governors, the governor of Louisiana issued stay-at-home orders on March 22, 2020, impacting all but essential workers, sending in-state colleges scurrying to move students home who could be moved home and to quickly transition instruction to a distance education format (Ballard and Karlin, 2020). At the time, according to one study, Louisiana was exhibiting the fastest growth rate of virus spread (Ballard and Karlin 2020). Thus, the importance and the need for such an order were apparent. Besides shuttering schools and businesses deemed non-essential, residents were strongly encouraged to stay home except in cases deemed critical as in acquiring necessary groceries and medicines (Governor's Order 2020). Social distancing was also encouraged.

**Communication Does Not Operate in a Vacuum**
Communication skills are deemed vital in all career paths. A quick search on a university library website of the terms "career" and "communication" turned up 132,362 article citations. To teach and develop communication prowess or any educational concept, university professors use many methods to improve the impact of their teaching, including the use of experiential exercises to improve the learning environment. Finch, Nadeau, and O'Reilly (2013) working before the pandemic, found a driving force behind trying to improve the learning environment through experiential exercises was the dissatisfaction employers had with the transferability of skills of graduates to the workplace. Sutton-Brady (2006) saw an apparent disconnect between relevance and reality in the learning environment. Similarly, Harbrect, Neidermeyer and Tuten (2006) proffered successful education in business should prepare students to serve the needs of business. As might be expected, among those needed skills is proficiency in communication.

The scope of the stay at home order and subsequent pronouncements by the boards of higher education in the state suspended study abroad programs statewide—even as of March, 2021. Study abroad programs can positively impact communication skills development. Altbach (2002) believes internationalization of curricula has become a necessity, not an option. Budden and Budden (2011) believe placing students in a foreign environment, even absent foreign language skills can work to improve communication skill sets of students. Unfortunately, the discontinuance of study abroad closed one more avenue to improve communication skills among students. In a cultural twist, Budden and Budden (2006) found foreign students participating in US study abroad programs to other countries, may benefit from meeting and talking to Americans in non-US environments.

**Objectives and Methodology**

The pandemic has been a game changer in education. Distance education has been the norm for most of a year, a trend that continues. This change in educational delivery has been applauded by some and disparaged by others. The filing of personal and class action lawsuits against universities by students who are unhappy with distance learning and who believe it fails to deliver the level of education and campus life experiences they expect, appear to be gaining steam (Davis, 2020). These suits ostensibly argue the experience (and result) of online learning fails to deliver what was promised.

So, for better or worse, students are staying home. The overall question is, what impacts on students' communication efforts—if any—are resulting from the stay at home order? A slate of 11 objectives were developed and used as the basis for a questionnaire aimed at determining stay-at-home impact of the educational experience relative to communication activities and skills. A survey was conducted on one campus, eight weeks after Louisiana's stay-at-home order was issued to ascertain the impacts on students who were suddenly and summarily moved to a distance education format.

The specific objectives to assess the impact of the stay-at-home order included:

1. To investigate the impact of the order on student usage of Zoom, Google Meet and similar sites for communicating.
2. To determine the impact of the order on student email use.
3. To determine the impact of the order on student social media usage.
4. To determine the impact of the order on the frequency of student writing.
5. To determine the impact of the order on the use and viewing of educational videos.
6. To determine the impact of the order on the frequency of student reading.
7. To determine student perceptions of the order on their communication skills.
8. To determine the impact of the order on communicating with fellow students through online classes.
9. To determine how students perceived the impact of online classes on their communication skills.
10. To determine how comfortable students felt discussing topics online in front of virtual classmates.
11. To determine the perceptions of students on the ability of online classes to improve communication skills.

In the second week of May 2020 a questionnaire was developed and administered to measure perceived impacts of the order on students' communication efforts and activities. The convenience survey, administered online via Survey Monkey was sent to students in a selection of eight classes whose faculty had agreed to participate. Recipients that were presented the opportunity to participate through more than one class were asked to answer only one to prevent duplication. A total of 294 completed questionnaires were returned and used in the analysis. Rounding errors may result in slightly more/less than 100% reporting in some findings.

**Findings**

Objective #1 was intended to investigate the order's impact on the use of Zoom, Google Meet and similar sites. Unsurprisingly, the great majority (92%) of students reported using Zoom, Google Meet and similar sites more after the stay at home order was given, and classes moved to an online format. The university, and especially its College of Business did not have many online courses pre-pandemic. The College did not offer any degree program, pre-pandemic, entirely through distance technologies. The large percentage reporting an increase in the use of such services was a given.

It should be noted the university did not specify which meeting platform was to be used. Some faculty used Zoom, some Google Meet, and a few used other digital platforms that were available. Future research might center on which platform was preferred by students and faculty and the reasoning for such preferences.

Objective #2 was intended to determine the impact of the stay-at-home order on student email use. The data indicates email usage is up. Approximately 69% of respondents indicated they were using email more after the order was issued. At the same time, 29% reported using email the same amount as before the order, while only 2% indicated using it less. There was no attempt to equate how students were using email—whether sending emails or checking them, or for personal use or school use. The issue was whether they were using the digital communication tool more often.

The university requires all faculty-student email correspondence to be relegated to the university email server. Moving all classes to a digital format unquestionably increased the use of the university email system. A question not investigated was whether student private email accounts (non-university) were used more after the order than before. The question only dealt with email usage in total. Future research may wish to discern the difference if any in the use of school vs. private email use.

Objective #3 was intended to determine the impact of the order on student social media usage. A full 60% of respondents reported using social media more since the stay at home order, while only 6% reported using it less. Perhaps surprisingly, 34% of respondents reported their social media usage was the same as before the order.

While social media use by students is generally regarded as a "social" tool for interacting with others, social media is often used to acquire information. Indeed, as reported in the Lancet (Tsao, et al, 2021), social media is being used by government agencies, organizations and universities for the dissemination of critical information and as such, can serve as a vital information conduit.

Objective #4 was intended to determine the impact of the order on the frequency of student writing. As writing is a major component in one's communication repertoire, it was decided to ask a specific question about the impact of the order on writing. The data found 24% of respondents reported writing more after the order than before, surprising the researchers who expected a larger percentage of respondents reporting such an increase. At the same time, almost one-half (48%) of the respondents reported the amount of writing they were doing had stayed level after the order, while an eye-opening 24% of respondents reported writing less after the move to off campus and the move to a digital format.

The type and purpose of the writing investigated was not discerned in this study. It would be interesting to see if, as the researchers believe, there was an increase in the amount of writing attributable to the learning process. At the same time, any increase in writing will benefit the communication skills of students, so the purpose, while not discerned here, is an avenue for future research.

Objective #5 was intended to determine the impact of the order on the use and viewing of educational videos. Of the respondents, 42% reported an increase in watching educational videos, whether on YouTube or through some other medium. A slightly larger percentage of respondents (44%) continued to watch educational videos at the same pace as before the order, while 7% reported a decrease in the number of videos they watched and 7% did not respond.

It is interesting to note the use of Youtube.com alone increased during the stay-at-home order. Specific types of videos witnessed significant increases even as early in the pandemic as June 2020. For instance, views of workout videos increased by than 500%. Views of videos with the term "home office" in the title increased by more than 200%, how-to videos saw increases from 150%-700%, in many areas including learning to play a guitar, making bread and even raising chickens (Youtube.com 2020). So while 42% of students reported watching educational videos more after the order, it was not determined whether watching the videos were a consequence of online class delivery or was a result of personal initiative as in one desiring to learn to play a guitar or staying fit.

Objective #6 was intended to determine the impact of the order on the frequency of student reading. Reading can improve communication skills. The amount of reading by respondents increased for 30% of those reporting. Over one-half of respondents (56%) reported reading the same amount as before the order. Ten percent of students actually reported reading less after the order, than they were reading pre-order.

While 30% reported reading more, respondents did not specify the reason or motivation for the effort. In other words, students were not questioned as to the reason they read, just whether they were reading more. Future research may determine the amount of reading for classroom-related purposes as to reading merely for pleasure. At the same time, it would be interesting to investigate why over two-thirds did not increase their reading after moving to a distance learning format. In any event, an increase in reading can improve one's written communication skills and 30% reported increasing such.

Objective #7 was intended to determine student impact perceptions of the stay-at-home order on communication skills. One-third of respondents indicated they believed their ability to communicate had increased or improved since the stay-at-home order. About 57% reported they believed their ability to communicate had not been impacted one way or the other from the order. Interestingly, 10% of respondents reported they felt their ability to communicate had declined since the order.

Moving to an online format for all classes placed students in a situation where communication activities changed significantly. While email, texting, group apps, and digital meetings may have been used previously for some efforts, they were now squarely in the forefront of efforts to remain in contact with others. Group projects and presentations required effort on the part of students and faculty to remain in contact. Indeed, faculty members moved from grading in-class presentations to grading online presentations which created not just communication hurdles but technological hurdles as well.

Objective #8 was intended to determine the impact of the order on communicating with fellow students through online classes. The university uses Moodle as its teaching platform for online classes. The eighth objective dealt with the perceptions of students regarding their ability to communicate through classes. As for as improving their ability to communicate with classmates via online courses, 27% reported an improvement. A fourth of the respondents said their ability to communicate with classmates was not impacted, while 29% reported a decrease in their ability to communicate with classmates. Some 19% of the students did not respond to this question.

It was disconcerting to see the largest response group was comprised of students who felt their communication with fellow classmates had declined since the order. Especially, in light of the fact communication plays an essential part of moving forward in the educational process. Future research will delve into the reasons behind such a finding.

Objective #9 was intended to determine how students perceived the impact of their online classes on their communication skills. Twenty-two percent felt taking online courses had improved their communication skills, while 47% believed such courses did not improve their communication skills. Thirty-one percent felt no change in communication skills due to online courses.

The finding that only 22% felt online courses had improved their communication skills is troubling. The small percentage reporting improved skills may be due to the fact that the survey was conducted only six-seven weeks after the order which did not give much time to see a change. This study will be conducted again, and it will be interesting to see if gains are made in this regard, given that more time and experience with online learning may impact those so involved.

Objective #10 was intended to determine how comfortable students were discussing topics in front of a virtual class. As for feeling comfortable discussing course topics during internet-based meetings (Google Meet, Zoom, etc), 48% indicated they felt comfortable doing so. Almost one-third (32%) reported not feeling comfortable participating in online discussions, while 21% were neutral to the idea.

Since the stay at home order required online learning, it is certainly a disappointment that one-third of respondents did not feel comfortable discussing topics during digital meetings. This may change over time as students gain experience with the technology and the role they personally play in the learning environment. To ameliorate this, faculty may wish use exercises aimed at drawing out students and making them participate as experience may offset the hesitation with joining online discussions.

Objective #11 was intended to investigate student opinions relative to the perceived ability of online courses to improve communication skills. As for as the potential to improve communication skills in online courses, only 17% of respondents felt online courses offer the ability to improve communication skills as well as in-class courses. However, a disturbing 61% of respondents felt online courses do not offer an improved ability to develop communication skills over the traditional in-class format. The remaining 22% of respondents did not feel one way or the other relative to the ability of online classes to improve communication skills.

When almost two-thirds of respondents believe online courses do not offer the ability to improve one's communication skills, something must be done. Faculty members need to involve students in the learning process, require participation and work to improve the communication skills of students using distance technologies.

**Summary and Recommendations**

Students reported a variety of impacts of the stay-at-home order relative to their communication activities. These impacts were noted as occurring within 7 weeks of the order. It is interesting to note that while students are reporting various issues with moving forward relative to communication skills development, almost four in five business schools reported sustaining or increasing their impact during the pandemic (efmdglobal.org 2021).

An increase in the use of email was as expected. Similarly, an increase in the use of Zoom, Google Meet and similar sites was noted by 92% of the respondents—not surprising the as most classes at the university had not previously been offered online. Almost one-half of respondents felt uncomfortable with online discussions while over 60% felt online courses did not provide a good means through which to develop communication skills.

Just 22% of respondents felt their communication efforts had improved since the move off campus while 10% felt their communication skills had actually declined. One-fourth reported writing more and one-third reported reading more. At the same time, 42% reported watching more online videos since the order.

The finding that many respondents felt uncomfortable with online presentations needs to be addressed by faculty. Opportunities to conduct several small presentations, including personal introductions and "ice breakers," ahead of major presentations may minimize associated anxieties. Requiring online group work utilizing video meeting platforms may prove advantageous as well.

And since approximately one-fourth of respondents reported writing less after the order, assignments requiring writing, even small amounts of writing, should be considered. These small writing assignments can be in the form of blogs geared to specific topics. Students are used to reading and following blogs and can enjoy the process for themselves. Blog writing also addresses the issue related to the discomfort of discussing topics in a virtual environment.

The duration of communication impacts of the pandemic remain to be seen. While some schools are recommending a return to the classroom and vaccinations are underway, the current spike across much of the world presents an impediment to normalcy. Additional research needs to be undertaken to see how ongoing impairment to on-campus teaching continues to impact the communication skills of students.

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# A Qualitative Analysis of Top-Performing Franchise Brands' Email Communication Used in the Franchise Sales Process

ABC-SWUS Best Paper

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**Abstract**
A franchise development executive has the role of delivering evidence of the brand's value in their communication with the franchisee candidate, which is done via emails and personal communication throughout the sales process. Therefore, the person creating the marketing communication must understand what is at stake for the brand, and the pressure to produce marketing materials to know which rhetoric to use in the marketing communication materials is critical. In forming the franchisor-franchisee relationship, the strategic use of verbiage, or rhetoric, to convey a brand's organizational identity and value is met with the desire to adequately progress a franchisee candidate through the sales process. With the average sales process being eight weeks long, there is little time to capitalize on the opportunity to sell the brand appropriately, especially in the competitive environment of franchising where market, entrepreneurial, and charismatic leadership orientation are liabilities to franchise performance. This study examines the use of such rhetoric in franchise sales process email communication of top-performing franchise brands and presents a qualitative analysis to assist practitioners in industry.

**Introduction and Model**
Theoretical approaches to understanding the use of marketing rhetoric beyond a firm's website, as with interpersonal communication, requires an extension in research in order to recognize the use of marketing rhetoric post initial engagement of the consumer and brand; this could have a potential influence on the firm's outcomes. When assessing the three constructs of the market, entrepreneurial, and charismatic leadership orientation, qualitative analyses denote the use and frequency of rhetoric. Franchise executives who work within franchise organizations are the ones to ascertain the presence or absence of the constructs themselves, which is analyzed from email communication that is used during the sales process within this study.

Franchises who perform better have a stronger competitive advantage and create superior value over alternatives in the marketplace, as indicated in their communication to do so, such as with email communication from the franchisor to prospective franchisee soliciting the business opportunity. Measuring market orientation as the generation, dissemination, and responsiveness to market information (Zachary et al., 2011), the researcher posits a relationship to franchise performance.

There is an ongoing debate on whether or not franchisees are entrepreneurs, as witnessed by the literature spanning across academic journals in the areas of business venturing, entrepreneurship, and management. The majority debate that franchising is "of course" an entrepreneurial venture form of business (Hoy & Shane, 1998) with an obvious connection between the two because franchisees "do almost all functions as other entrepreneurs" (Ketchen, Short, & Combs, 2011, p. 585-586); the argument continues, stating that the very act of creating a franchise network is an entrepreneurial act (Hoy & Shane, 1998). However, entrepreneurship presents no separation of business ownership and control (Combs and Ketchen, 1999), and entrepreneurs have direct control over the financial risk of their business (Gonzalez-Diaz & Solis-Rodriguez, 2012). Conversely, financial risk is shared risk in franchising. Does the entrepreneurial orientation of prospective franchisees affect the performance of an organization? A relative inquiry is whether prospective franchisees are enticed to franchising as a business option based on levels of entrepreneurial orientation used in communication during the sales process of a franchise license.

Cooperation and attachment to the goals mean followers (franchisees) are encouraged to allocate extra effort to accomplish the goals of the franchise (Bass, 1990), and a charismatic leadership style is therein realized. The leader (franchisor) articulates the vision, strong internalization of the value and goals occurs, commitment forms, and a willingness to be part of the brand transcends (Zachary et al., 2011). Researching this commitment requires the examination of the role of charismatic leadership in relation to franchise performance in interpersonal communication.

Within the recruitment process, charismatic language has the potential to incite action (Zachary et al., 2011). Those franchisors that convey rhetoric indicative of market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and charismatic leadership were also those who performed better; larger franchisors tend to do this, but age had no difference in these dimensions (Zachary et al., 2011). Additionally, Zachary et al. (2011) discovered that organizational identity is valuable in explaining how franchisors brand their opportunity to their preferred segment. However, the research has not included studying internal communication, such as emails, of a franchised brand.

## Aligning Incentives and Designing Online & Hybrid Teaching on a Shoestring

Jean Ann Edrington, *Arkansas State University Beebe*

**Abstract**

How to help online and hybrid students feel as though they are experiencing a full breadth of variety in assignments, discussions, and tests in order to engage students in the community and emphasize the practical aspects of learning for the workforce they will soon be joining.

Hybrid teaching with Basic Technology Set-up (When you are not able to book the Zoom Room) Even with older equipment or a mixture of old and new, a simple setup can still be successful. My Business Communication classroom has older computer equipment supplemented with a newer plug-in camera and microphone.

**Technology Tips**

When using Zoom or another video conferencing platform, it is helpful to "pin your image at the beginning of the class lecture portion and move it out of the way if sharing a PowerPoint or screen with the students. I also auto record my zoom sessions so that tardy students and student dealing with quarantine or illness can log in later and watch. For those times when technology or your camera betrays you – sharing your screen can be a helpful alternative even if you will not be using the shared screen for the entire class – it gives students something to look at and stay focused.

**Online Teaching Discussions**

My favorite aspect of teaching is having an animated discussion in class. You can successfully substitute online discussion forums for these in-person discussions or activities. I recommend splicing class information into bite-size topics. My goal is to have similar environments to the small group discussions or activities that I formerly designed for in-person teaching.

I recommend previewing future discussion topics or unveiling to students all the discussion topics for the semester. Hopefully, this preview prevents discussions from heading off onto rabbit trails or prevents student frustration when the conversation leads in a direction that would have been better reserved for the next (or upcoming) discussion. In order to build community, I require replies/responses as well as an initial discussion post. However, I do not require fellow student replies/responses on every discussion because some topics are relatively straightforward and don't lend to discussion. I think the students value the variety as well.

As an instructor, join in the discussion, especially at the beginning of the class when students are still nervous and hesitant. The instructor participation can be tapered off, but it really helps get things going in the beginning and fosters engagement and confidence.

Consider having a point value assigned to discussions that students earn for participation or receive no credit when they choose not to participate in easing the grading burden. It might also be helpful to have prewritten feedback scripts written to copy and paste to facilitate learning further and emphasize main points or what would be more ideal replies or discussions in the future.

**Online Teaching Supplements**

It is helpful to have a mixture of external videos (e.g., YouTube or other video tutorials or presentations) as well as personally recorded lectures or presentations. Students are more incented to search out other outside materials on their own to further their understanding of the course. The variety helps replicate the natural progression of lectures and video examples that would typically be presented in a face-to-face classroom experience.

For my Internship class, which culminates in a large written capstone project, I have found it helpful to force students to turn in portions of the project throughout the semester in more bite-sized chunks that can be combined smoothed into the final project or deliverable.

**Online Communication**

Frequent communication by announcement inside a learning management platform like Canvas or Blackboard helps give a personal touch to online students. I also like to send email communications to individual students, and the whole class periodically to keep communication lines open and encourage those who seem to be lagging or losing momentum.

**Aligning Incentives (Business Communication Class)**

When designing your online class, think about which aspects of the course work contribute to future workplace success. We are preparing students for a practical world, and I try to align my grading emphasis on those assignments, discussions, or deliverables that are also most practical. This alignment means that I de-emphasize quizzes and tests for some classes because these are not as useful a skill or learning medium as some projects and writing assignments.

At the beginning of class and throughout the semester, I try to remind students how the coursework is relevant to the "outside" world and remind them that their work and effort will pay dividends when finding a job and keeping it. In this same vein, I try to have assignments naturally build on one another in a rational and logical progression. I also often have specific important assignments (like the resume assignment) have several drafts required at various points throughout the semester. Students become familiar with proofing and editing a working document and fine-tuning the result. Assignments culminate in a polished employment portfolio.

**Course Outline**

Technology (Set-up discussion and photos)

Technology tips

- Pin image at the beginning of zoom class
- Auto recorded monitor for extra recording sessions when students join after the session or before
- Camera fails—share screen as an alternative

**Discussion Forums**

- Bite-size topics (similar to small group activities when in person)
- Preview future discussion topics (otherwise, students can take rabbit trails and include information that would be better discussed elsewhere.)
- Required Replies build community (Although it adds variety not always to require additional replies)
- As an instructor, join in on the discussion (esp. at the beginning of the course).
- Consider having a point value that the student earns for participating in the topic or no credit for not participating in easing the grading burden.

**Online Teaching Supplements**

- A mixture of "outside" videos and zoom or personally recorded lectures or presentations

- Bite-size assignments that build to large project or deliverable

**Online Communication**

- Communication and Reassurance to Students (Announcements and Emails)

**Aligning Incentives (Business Communication Class)**

- Grading emphasis aligns with what you want the student to focus on (homework vs. Tests or Quizzes, etc.)
- Assignments are practical with student-focused benefits
- Assignments naturally build on each other
- Assignments that require fine-tuning are turned in in several drafts spread out over the semester
- Assignments culminate in a polished employment portfolio

# Teaching Research Methods: A Duoethnography of the Merits and Challenges

Nancy Garcia, *West Texas A&M University*
Leslie Ramos-Salazar, *West Texas A&M University*

**Abstract**
Research method courses are a valuable foundation for students. However, research method courses have been known to generate distress, disinterest, and low motivation in students which makes the course more challenging to teach for professors and instructors. The purpose of this research is to expand the knowledge base of instruction practice for research methods education by presenting two perspectives that illustrate the merits and challenges of teaching research methods.

**Statement of the Problem**
Communication research methods courses, especially those focused on quantitative research methods, are one of the most challenging courses to teach. Research methods courses, specifically those focused on quantitative and qualitative methodologies, are required in the curriculum of four-year public and private universities to ensure students develop research design, data analysis, and data interpretation skills (Bertelsen & Goodboy, 2009). The pedagogy adopted in research methods courses varies by instructor and academic area; however, the topics, methods, and software used are very similar. Despite experimenting with different pedagogical approaches, instructors continue to face challenges in teaching this course. In part, the "research culture" of the field has not been instilled in students prior to entering the course, and this creates resistance from students in learning about research, data analysis, statistics, and the scientific process.

Preconceived perceptions of the course create challenges. Oftentimes, students select non-mathematical courses to avoid mathematics altogether (Carpenter & McEwan, 2013). As a consequence, there is an enhanced perception of the difficulty of the topics being covered, reduced understanding of course material (Lin, Durbin, & Rancer, 2016), and reduced student achievement (Papanastasiou & Zembylas, 2008). Topics such as sampling are intimidating to students and using hypothetical activities that engage students in the sampling process facilitates their understanding of the material (Kopaz, 2010). Another common challenge is that students experience boredom in learning about research methods because many modern textbooks use hypothetical data and some topics come across as irrelevant to their lives or careers (Denham, 1997).

While lecturing approaches are still common given the complexity of the topics in the course, instructors have been adapting their pedagogy to include more applied exercises, group work, and active learning activities to motivate students to learn research methods concepts (Crandall & Busselle, 2009). For example, Morrow, Kelly, and Skolits (2013) used student-based research scenarios to guide students in selecting the appropriate analytical and statistical techniques with the appropriate research design. Also, using applied research projects may enable students to present their projects in front of their peers using a PowerPoint presentation or a research poster (Kirby, 2004). A drawback; however, of implementing research projects in an undergraduate course is that instructors devote too much energy and time in facilitating and grading those assignments, and the time invested does not always result in presentation or publication of the students' projects (Weber & Martin, 2006). As such, some instructors prefer to avoid time-consuming and rigorous applied projects.

Moreover, reducing student confusion is also challenging because students struggle with basic research concepts such as distinguishing the difference between independent and dependent variables, developing effective research questions and hypotheses, and calculating the variance and standard deviation. As such, instructors are likely to lecture on developing research questions and hypotheses, measurement types, variable types, sampling, descriptive statistics, survey development, and data analysis such as t-tests and one-way ANOVA (Parks, Faw, & Goldsmith, 2011). To reduce students' perceived "dryness" of course content, lecturers might incorporate humor by telling jokes or showing funny images in their PowerPoints and also include real-world examples (Lesser & Pearl, 2008; Morrow, Kelly, & Skolits, 2013). Despite having a variety of pedagogical strategies in teaching research methods, there is still a need to compare pedagogical approaches in research methods courses for improvement purposes (Keyton, 2001). The majority of previous studies have placed most of their emphasis on applied activities to enhance learning and on students' perceptions about research methods courses; however, no study has explored instructors' pedagogical experiences of research methods courses. As such, examining instructors' perceptions of their own pedagogical approaches in regards to their own perceived merits or challenges in teaching research methods courses can benefit both novice and experienced educators of communication research methods courses.

**Methodology**

The purpose of this research is to expand the knowledge base of instruction practice for research methods education. A duoethnography approach was adopted to promote dual-perspective dialogue about the merits and challenges of teaching research methods. Duoethnograohy, a relatively new form of inquiry, is a suitable method for critical and reflective examination via conversations among two different people with diverse histories and pointviews (Breault, 2016; Sawyer & Norris, 2009). While a duoethnography is autobiographical in nature, its focus is on understanding how two individuals experienced and gave meaning to a phenomenon and how those meanings were transformed over a period of time (Breault, 2016; Lund, Sawyer, & Norris, 2012).

In the present duoethnography, initial data has been collected using dialogic reflection. A total of 85 minutes of both formal and informal engaging conversations have been audio-recorded thus far. More conversations are still needed to conduct a meaningful analysis. The duoethnography will be produced first via the construction of the two personal narratives of the researchers and then challenging each other's perceptions by encouraging a deeper reflection on our personal experiences and adding the interpretations of the other. Finally, these narratives will be dissected into juxtaposed themes for presentation and discussion to create a greater meaning.

**Expected Findings**

The study presented is currently in progress. In reporting the process of the duoethnography, the voices of each of the researchers will be made explicit throughout the narrative to allow for each story to rest in juxtaposition to the other. The goal of conducting a duoethnography is to question the meanings of experiences and invite reconceptualizations. Throughout the process, it is expected that changes in both stories will occur and become evident in the text portraying knowledge in transition and inviting others to explore their own stories. Findings from this duoethnography will reflect the merits and challenges of two different instructional approaches along with individual perceptions on teaching development. In presenting the findings, quotes from the recorded conversations will be presented to illustrate comments that have been identified as representation of the overall experience of teaching research methods.

**Implications for Education and Business**

Research method courses are a valuable foundation for students not only as they prepare for conducting research, but also as they prepare for graduate school or employment. However, research method courses have been known to generate distress, disinterest, and low motivation in students which makes the course more challenging to teach for professors and instructors. The purpose of this research is to expand the knowledge base of instruction practice for research methods education by presenting two perspectives that illustrate the merits and challenges of teaching research methods. The use of duoethnography as a methodology for this study allows for the exploration of personal practices in relation to “the other” which, in turn, recognizes the pedagogical value of others’ experiences. The self-reflexivity of the authors’ own challenges and pedagogical approaches in the research methods course can be of benefit for graduate students, novice professors and instructors, or just educators who might feel discouraged after facing similar challenges. Thus, the current article fulfills a gap as no prior study has examined instructors’ perceived failures in teaching research methods courses.

# Preparing Students for the Interview: A Proposed Study on the Effectiveness of Virtual Interview Preparation

Seth Frei, *Texas State University*
Matari Jones Gunter, *Texas State University*

**Abstract**
While recent years have seen an increase in virtual interview methods, the COVID-19 pandemic has quickly accelerated virtual interview use for undergraduate and recent college graduates. As business communication instructors, we are often instrumental in determining the best way to prepare students for interviews. This proposed study looks at the effectiveness of various interview preparation methods.

**Statement of Problem/Purpose**
While recent years have seen an increase in virtual interview methods, the COVID-19 pandemic has quickly accelerated virtual interview use for undergraduate and recent college graduates (Jones, 2020). In the early months of the pandemic, a survey of hiring employers found 89% used virtual interviewing (Liu, 2020). This has prompted change in the way job-market entrants must navigate and prepare for the interview process. Due to convenience, cost savings, and the current ongoing health crisis, organizations and institutions are rapidly adopting technology to facilitate the use of virtual interviews (Jones, 2020).

In response to the trend toward virtual interviewing, business schools and colleges are revamping and updating the curriculum to address virtual job interviewing preparation. Instead of organizing the traditional face-to-face mock interviews in the classroom or the career center, institutions are utilizing web-based, online platforms such BigInterview, InterviewStream, and GoReact to help prepare students for success in virtual interviewing (Chandratre, 2020). While these platforms have increasing rates of adoption, we must ensure that students are still gaining the skills to be successful in the career search. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to explore the effectiveness of mock virtual interviewing in preparing students for the interview process compared to face-to-face methods. This research is not only timely but valuable because current evidence and information regarding the efficacy of virtual interviewing is scarce (Chandratre, 2020).

Many undergraduates and entry-level job seekers may lack the necessary skills and expertise to successfully communicate during online or virtual interviews (Liu, 2020). Successful video interviewing requires knowledge of the specific technology, correct usage regarding style and delivery, and the ability to effectively convey nonverbal messages. Research on the effectiveness of virtual job interview preparation has benefits for both faculty members and students. Through a better understanding of the efficacy of mock-virtual interview platforms, faculty members and career development specialists will have increased knowledge, tools, and best practices for teaching these skills to undergraduates and recent college graduates. For students, learning how to master online interviewing could help job seekers stand apart from the competition. Since videoconferencing can be used as a screening tool for job applicants, those job seekers who can easily navigate this mode of delivery may have an edge on the competition in moving on to further rounds of interviews or securing the job (Chandler, 2019).

Although, many organizations still desire face-to-face interviewing, virtual interviewing is here to stay and will play some role in the hiring process for many recent graduates (Chandratre, 2020). This study seeks to further understand this process so instructors can best align their teaching methods to the contexts encountered by students entering the workforce. To this end, the following research questions are posed:

> **RQ1**: Does face-to-face, virtual, or a combination of both interview prep methods lead to greater perceptions of cognitive learning of interview content and perceptions of interview preparedness?
>
> **RQ2**: Does face-to-face, virtual, or a combination of both interview prep methods lead to greater confidence felt in their interviewing skills and interview self-efficacy after completing the interview?
>
> **RQ3**: Do higher perceptions of interview preparedness lead to greater levels of confidence and interview self-efficacy?
>
> **H1**: When the preparation method (face-to-face, virtual, combination of both) matches the actual interview, levels of confidence and interview self-efficacy will be higher.

**Methodology**

The proposed methodology for this study includes a survey of recent graduates who have secured post-graduate employment to further understand their experiences in the interview process. The online survey will be housed in the Qualtrics software and will be distributed via email to recent graduates who completed a Business Communication course at a large Southwest University. We are targeting students of this course because there is a requirement in the course for professional development, which includes learning about the interview process and applying it through several mock interviews. Some students in the course have completed mock interviewing in a face-to-face format and others have completed it using a virtual interview preparation software.

The survey will consist of three parts: interview preparation experience questions, job seeking experience questions, and demographics. Each of the sections will be primarily quantitative, with a limited number of qualitative questions included. The interview preparation experience questions will primarily focus on the education received to prepare the survey participant for the workforce. Survey questions will ask participants to indicate the type of interview preparation they received in classes (in-person interviewing, virtual preparation, both, or no preparation), how many mock interviews (virtual or in-person) they participated in prior to graduation, the types of questions they prepared for (behavioral, case, open-ended), perceived cognitive learning of interview content, and perceptions of interview preparedness. In the second portion of the survey, questions will focus on interviews and the job-seeking process. Survey questions will ask about the number of interviews they participated in prior to receiving a job, the number of months it took to find a job after graduation, the format of their interview (virtual, in-person, both), the confidence they felt in their interviewing skills, interview self-efficacy, and the types of questions asked in their interview. The final portion of the survey will ask demographic questions, including their age, years since their formal education on interviewing, years since graduation, and years in their first job.

**Summary**

Organizations see many benefits for virtual interviewing, especially in cost-savings and the efficiency of interviewing out-of-town candidates. While Business Schools and Career Centers are implementing virtual mock-interviewing software platforms, this study seeks to understand if they are effectively preparing students for the workforce. Through an understanding of interviewee confidence, self-efficacy, and feelings of interview success, we aim to provide instructors with data to inform their decisions on the types of mock-interviews to use in their classrooms.

**Implications for Education/Business**

The purpose in this study is to determine correlations between the preparation method and the actual interview method. From this connection, we hope to further understand how perceptions of preparedness leads to success in interviewing, confidence, and self-efficacy. This information will be useful for instructors teaching interviewing and determining the most appropriate methods to use in their classroom. While we see the trend moving toward video-based interviewing, there might still be some benefit in traditional face-to-face mock interviewing. Through this study, we hope to highlight the potential benefits to each form of interview preparation. As educators, we look forward to the results of this study as a way of strengthening our instructional methods.

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# Developing Teamwork at a Distance

Karen Hardin, *Cameron University*

**Abstract**
As learning management systems, video conferencing applications and connectivity continue to progress, faculty and learners are provided with greater options for increased synchronous and asynchronous interaction for learner-centered environments focused on active learning. This presenter will share activities and tools to effectively engage distant learners in teamwork.

**Description**
As learning management systems, video conferencing applications and connectivity continue to progress, university faculty members and students are provided with greater options for increased synchronous and asynchronous interaction for learner-centered environments focused on active learning, guided by a faculty member who serves as a facilitator of learning.

In a paper titled, Enhancing learner–learner interaction using video communications in higher education: Implications from theorising about a new model, Robyn Smyth advocates, "a model which distinguishes between learner–content and learner–learner interactivity in learning design. In so doing, it analyses the implications for teachers, learners and institutions wishing to use video communications technologies to enable more authentic learner–learner interaction in virtual environments." (2011) As a faculty course designer of business and leadership communication courses, the presenter sought to provide authentic learning opportunities to meet the courses objectives. In a traditional classroom, she would divide students into teams to have them work together to create course materials and deliver a presentation. With a desire to keep online/hybrid experiences as similar as possible, she discovered tools that allow students to communicate synchronously and asynchronously so they could be monitored and evaluated.

Students work in individual groups, using the discussion board to communicate asynchronously, the group tasks tool to assign tasks to each member, the group journal tool to document the process and the file exchange tool to share files that they create. They conduct synchronous group meetings using the online video conferencing tool, Zoom. Learning artifacts include a business proposal, presentation outline, visual aid and final presentation. To ensure "real world" experiences, students use Zoom to deliver synchronous small group presentations instead of pre-recorded YouTube videos with a manufactured audiences. The recorded Zoom videos are then linked to the course materials for classmates to review. The professor is able to evaluate each student's participation and assign individual grades.

The presenter will share exercises, activities and implications of transforming the online environment into an effective medium to increase student-content, student-student, and faculty-student learning with a focus on learning outcomes rather than traditional limitations of technology, so that medium supports learning rather than dictates the learning process.

The presenter will demonstrate tools and techniques so that participants can employ collaborative synchronous and asynchronous strategies into hybrid and online environments.

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# The Effect of Managerial Skills Training on Scientists' Job Satisfaction in Supervisory Roles

Jamie K. Humphries, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
Lucia S. Sigmar, *Stephen F. Austin State University*

**Abstracts**
he authors' empirical study considers Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966) and applies Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Theory (1974, 1980) in their investigation of the effect of managerial training on scientists in managerial roles in the areas of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Further, the authors examine the effects of such training on job satisfaction in the roles of scientists as technicians and scientists as managers.

**Description**
The Covid-19 pandemic and other world issues have suddenly propelled scientists into management positions or leadership roles that require sophisticated management communication skills. For example, consider the interactions between Dr. Anthony Fauci and President Donald Trump or the public's hostile response to mask-wearing and other CDC recommendations. In these situations, managing others, effective communication, and constructive feedback are as crucial in dealing with global issues as they are in day-to-day workplace operations.
However, managerial skills training is an area in which scientists have traditionally received little formal training. This trend is hardly surprising given the number of required science courses that students must complete prior to the conferral of their undergraduate or graduate degrees. In addition, few science-focused organizations provide this type of specialized training prior to an individual's transition into their first supervisory role; and those organizations who do provide training seldom introduce appropriate levels of instruction for employees who are unaccustomed to managerial tasks (Biddle & Roberts, 1994). Often, the responsibility for gaining supervisory skills often falls on the scientists themselves who may pursue training individually though online instruction, or variously through professional associations, conference seminars, or additional graduate-level coursework.

For this understudied scientific demographic and the organizations that employ them, the cost of this lack of training or lack of training motivation can be significant. In his seminal publication on motivation theory still relevant today, psychologist Frederick Herzberg (1966), maintained that the primary factors of motivation are not in the environment but in the satisfaction and value of the job itself; organizations that fail to develop role structures that allow for knowledge and development into new managerial and leadership positions dramatically increase employee job dissatisfaction and turnover. In fact, according to Biddle and Roberts (1994), approximately 30 percent of those individuals who transitioned from technical roles to leadership roles, transitioned back into their technical roles.

Previous studies of technically-oriented individuals and their dissatisfaction with managerial responsibilities have focused primarily on engineers and other knowledge workers (Bayton & Chapman, 1972; Holt & Ferber, 1964; Liu, Engler-Carlson, Minichielle, 2012; England, Bearak, Budig, & Hodges, 2016; Wolfinger, 2016). Although engineers and scientists share similarities in innovation creation, scientists are more focused on knowledge creation and interpretation. Moreover, scientists use the tools developed by engineers and the resulting data to produce meaningful, empirical data. Thus, each discipline (and the roles that define it) must be studied individually.

These conflicting role expectations and the repercussions to the scientific organization may be avoided by appropriately characterizing the elements of the work and the skills needed by individuals slated for advancement. Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Theory (1974, 1980) may allow organizations to identify valued components of jobs and may inform individuals and organizations of the types of training to pursue, along with the appropriate levels of support. This theory proposes five "core" characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) that impact work-related outcomes such as motivation, satisfaction, performance, absenteeism, and turnover.

The authors' empirical study considers Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966) and applies Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Theory (1974, 1980) in their investigation of the effect of managerial training on scientists in managerial roles in the areas of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Further, the authors examine the effects of such training on job satisfaction in the roles of scientists as technicians and scientists as managers.

The 252 study participants consisted of a compensated panel from the Qualtrics organization who had earned at least a Bachelor's Degree in a scientific field of study that included biology, microbiology, chemistry, biochemistry, or physics; participants were of a prime workforce age range (born between 1962 and 1992), and included recently degreed individuals and those individuals still likely seeking career advancement in the United States.

# Are you Creating an Out-Group? The Importance of LMX Theory to Organizational Communication and Employee Engagement

Brittany Barhite, *Bowling Green State University*

**Abstract**
Organizational communication is critical to employee engagement and organizational performance. The study revealed that being remote and using technology did not impact employee engagement. Instead, leader-member exchange theory and satisfaction with organizational communication were the two variables with the most significance influencing employee engagement.

**Description**
Research on employee engagement has found that it can both positively and negatively affect organizational performance, including recruitment, retention, customer service, and profitability. Hence, businesses are investigating how to increase engagement and in turn their bottom line. Several studies have concluded that effective organizational communication practices can enhance employee engagement. However, the way that information is distributed within organizations is now becoming increasingly complex with globalization. This has led to the increase use of information communication technologies (ICTs) to communicate since leaders and employees are not often in the same location. While ICTs are more efficient and cost effective, they can lead to miscommunication and lack of engagement when used to communicate important information. Based on the link between leadership communication and engagement and the increased use of ICTs in organizations, this quantitative study attempted to measure employee engagement and what, if any, relationship exists frequency of communication, richness of communication channels, quality of leader-member exchange relationship, and perceived satisfaction with organizational communication. In order to examine the relationship between these variables, 265 full-time employees completed a survey made of four instruments— Dennis Communication Climate Inventory (1974), Leader-Member Exchange-7 (1984), Communication Channel Instrument (1999), and the Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES).

The results of this study revealed that perceived organizational communication satisfaction has the most significant relationship with employee engagement, followed by the quality of leader-member exchange relationship. However, the frequency of lean, moderate, and rich communication channels did not have a significant impact on employee engagement. This includes ICTs categorized within these three channels. The frequent use of the virtual technologies also did not have a significant relationship with employee engagement. However, the regression data revealed that rich face-to-face communication channels does affect organizational communication satisfaction. Finally, one of the most surprising results of the study was that being collocated with one's manager did not affect employee engagement or organizational communication satisfaction. Therefore, as employees continue to be spatially distributed, this will not affect employee engagement compared to perceived organizational communication satisfaction and LMX.

# Burnout Proof your Leadership

Michael Levitt, *Breakfast Leadership, Inc.*

**Abstract**
Leaders are burning out at an alarming rate. Learn how to identify burnout and prevent it from spreading through your organization.

**Description**
Individuals are burning out at an alarming rate. People feel the constant demand to deliver, so they're either burning out or they're leaving their professions altogether, due to high stress and burnout. With COVID-19, this is becoming more prevalent and amplified, due to all the demands from working from home. During this talk, you will learn about the best techniques you can use to immediately reduce stress and burnout you're facing in your organization, and within yourself! You'll learn key takeaways on what burnout is so you can quickly identify it in your life. Next you'll learn how people become burned out. Finally, you'll learn how to get out of burnout, once and for all. The audience will leave with actionable steps that they can immediately use, to transform from a burned out life, to their ideal life.

Michael Levitt will teach you how to:

- Are you beyond stressed out with live, and feel like you're burning out?
- Learn how to recognize burnout signs within your teams and yourself, so you can understand who in your organization is struggling with burnout
- Learn how to recognize how you became burned out in the first place
- Learn how to transform your future with burnout prevention techniques that go beyond taking a 2-week vacation
- Learn how to implement immediate steps you can take today, to stop the burnout from growing
- Learn how to establish boundaries in your life, so that you can fend off potential burnout from external factors

# Using a “Work Group” Model to Build Students’ Teamwork Skills for the Workplace

Ashly Bender Smith, *Sam Houston State University*

**Abstract**
This presentation describes a team project for which students are formed into “work-groups” that are modeled on workplace departments or teams. The multi-week team project requires team interactions, includes peer evaluation, and mitigates the effect of social loafing. Feedback from students will also be provided.

**Description**
Team communication and teamwork skills are highly desired by employers (e.g. National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2018). The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (2018) also includes teamwork as one of the general skill areas that business students should develop through their business degree. Anecdotally, business faculty are well aware of the potential value of that team projects could have on students’ development of team communication skills.

Yet, faculty and students alike continue to lament the challenges of including team assignments in our courses (Fiechtner & Davis, 1984/2016; Marks & O’Connor, 2013). These concerns include challenges with preparing students to engage in teamwork, forming teams, managing teams, evaluating team products, and more (see, for example, Buckenmyer, 2000; Keyton & Beck, 2008; Roebuck, 1998; Scarino & Roever, 2009; Snyder, 2009). One of the most frequent concerns is that one or more team members will engage in “social loafing,” putting in less work than other members and benefitting from the quality and potentially additional work their team members are required to do on the loafer’s behalf (Brandyberry & Bakke, 2006; Karau & Williams, 1993).

Those faculty committed to including team projects in their courses have offered a broad range of research-based strategies to mitigate, manage, and avoid the common challenges involved in assigning teamwork. This presentation follows in this trend by describing a multi-week team project that requires team interactions, includes peer evaluation, and still manages to mitigate the effect of social loafing.

The team project asks students to work in “research work-groups.” The research work-group is presented to students as similar to workplace departments or teams in which employees work independently but often on products that fit together to achieve a common goal or produce a common, multi-faceted product. In the team assignment scenario, students are instructed to imagine that they and their research work-group members report to the same supervisor who has recently asked their group to research a broad topic related to effective communication in the workplace. A selection of broad topics and two initial sources are provided to the students, and they select their research workgroup based on the topic they would like to research for the multi-week project. Some previous topics include workplace mentorship, performance review feedback, and effective meetings.

Together, the work-group creates a collection of approximately 20 credible sources about their topic. Each group member is expected to contribute an equal number of sources and provide an annotation that summarizes the source’s content and describes why it is a credible source. Based on this collection of sources, the team members each write an executive brief report that provides key research-based information to the work-group’s supervisor about a sub-topic of the group's broad topic. Work-groups are expected to ensure that each member's report addresses a different sub-topic. For example, in a work-group researching workplace mentorship, members might write separate reports about different models of mentorship, gender-related issues with mentorship, peer mentorship, and more. Ultimately, the imagined supervisor receives a collection of individual reports that provides them a strong research-based overview of the topic.

The students are individually evaluated on their contribution to the work-group's collection of credible sources and their executive brief report for their imagined supervisor. To complete these projects effectively, though, students must work collaboratively to curate the collection of effective sources, develop each member's narrowed report topic, and review each other's drafts. After the project is concluded, peer evaluation is conducted in which students evaluate each work-group member's ability to do the following throughout the project:

- Consistently contribute useful content (sources, feedback, etc.)
- Consistently communicate appropriately and professionally with the team
- Be reliable as a team member
- Effectively use interpersonal and team communication skills

Thus, students' major contributions and projects receive an individual grade, which helps to address established concerns about workload distribution and social loafing. Still, the work-group project also includes evaluation of the students' ability to be valuable contributors to a team and use effective, professional team communication and teamwork skills. The design of this work-group project helps students to strengthen highly desired skills while mitigating some of the significant concerns associated with team projects in courses.

This presentation will present the previously described work-group project to the audience. Then, I will present the results of a student survey regarding their perceptions of the work-group project in comparison to team projects they have completed in other courses. Together, the content of the presentation will provide the audience with another option for strengthening students' team communication skills by integrating effective team projects into their courses.

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# Ungrading in the Professional Writing Curriculum: Crazy, but Effective

Shannon Lee Denney, *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Abstract**

Ungrading. Labor-based grading. Contract grading. Whatever you call it, it can save your teaching experience. The worst part of teaching is grading. Ungrading enhances student responsibility for learning and brings you back to why you wanted to teach in the first place.

**Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss various "ungrading" strategies and how they can be successfully applied to the business and professional writing curriculum. This presentation will cover what ungrading is, how it can be implemented, student reaction, and increasing teaching satisfaction.

**Summary**

Alternative assessment methods address assignment grading. Instead of offering a grade and minimal feedback for students, instructors instead create space for students to control their education. Various forms of "ungrading" include labor-based and contract-based grades where student writing is evaluated by peers, by the students themselves, and, finally, with discussions with the instructor. Students learn to take control of their learning to revise and resubmit their product. Students have more one-on-one time with the instructors to discuss their goals for their assignments and get immediate feedback on their writing quality.

Ungrading also provides a more equitable assessment opportunity and helps to resolve issues of inequality. Ungrading is consistent with Disability Pedagogy, Universal Design, and anti-racist practices. It is also a practical assessment method in tumultuous times, such as responding to the recent COVID-19 pandemic. By giving the students control over their work, they can choose how much effort they can reasonably give to the course and project their final grade.

This presentation will answer these questions for participants:

- What are the ungrading options?
- How will you provide student feedback?
- What is the student response?
- Is this pedagogically sound?
- How does this not inflate grades?
- Can this lessen the expectation of student disclosure in exchange for accommodations?

After the session, attendees will understand various forms of ungrading and consider if ungrading is something they would like to pursue in their classrooms. Finally, the attendees will understand how to revise their courses to include ungrading methods.

**Implications for Education**

Grading is the single-most dreaded activity for teachers. Teachers (especially English teachers) complain about grading and say that they would love teaching more if they did not have to grade. It is a daunting task to give a grade and good feedback in a timely manner. Using ungrading methods, teachers can refocus on student learning, provide immediate feedback, and enjoy teaching again.

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# An Analysis of Mindset Strategies in Economics Courses

Shari Lawrence, *Nicholls State University*
Andrea Chiasson, *Nicholls State University*

**Abstract**
For some time research has supported the theory that mindset plays a role in student achievement. The use of growth mindset strategies to impact achievement has become increasingly more prevalent in the last few decades. This paper seeks to examine whether sharing these strategies within a macroeconomics college classroom can improve student outcomes.

**Description**
For some time research has supported the theory that mindset plays a role in student achievement. The use of growth mindset strategies to impact achievement has become increasingly more prevalent in the last few decades. This paper seeks to examine whether sharing these strategies within a macroeconomics college classroom can improve student outcomes.

Specifically, this study analyzes course performance of students in two different settings for Principles of Macroeconomics. We call the two groups mindset and non-mindset based on whether the groups were provided with growth mindset lessons throughout the semester.

In Fall 2019, two Principles of Macroeconomics sections were taught by Instructor Andie Chiasson, without providing students with growth mindset lessons. In Fall 2020 two Principles of Macroeconomics sections were taught by Instructor Andie Chiasson, while providing students with growth mindset lessons. Both groups used the same instructional materials and textbook, and were taught using similar methods such as class preparation assignments, graded assessments for homework and quizzes, and unit exams. The mindset group was also provided with a post-assessment analysis and goal setting after each unit exam.

Before each macroeconomics lesson, students were given a mindset lesson. Students read information on fixed and growth mindset and answered questions to assess their understanding and analyze their own behaviors. At the end of the semester, students were provided a questionnaire on employing growth mindset. Additionally, student success rates in these two courses were compared to success rates in the previous fall semester courses where mindset lessons were not provided.

We hypothesize that courses including growth mindset lessons will have statistically significant higher success rates (students earning a C or better in the course) than those courses without exposure to mindset lessons.

# "It's Pitchy": Students Perceptions of Using PitchVantage Presentation Software

Dana E. Bible, *Sam Houston State University*
Ashly Bender Smith, *Sam Houston State University*

**Abstract**
Due to COVID-19 and its limitations on physical proximity, the landscape of business communication has changed. Businesses are increasingly communicating via Zoom and other virtual meeting platforms which makes teaching verbal communication skills critically important. The presenters introduce one specific technology option, PitchVantage presentation software along with student's perceptions of the software as well as instructor experiences.

**Purpose**
As the number of online Business Communication course offerings continues to increase within colleges and universities across the nation, instructors are called upon to utilize new instructional technology in their classes. As such, the purpose of this paper is to introduce one specific technology option, PitchVantage presentation software, which was used in online business presentation courses. The student's perceptions of the software as well as instructor's experiences with using the software will also be presented to provide a more complete picture of the user experience.

**Methodology**
Information regarding the software will be obtained from the PitchVantage official website as well as from official documentation provided by the software company representatives. Student Data regarding student experiences will be gathered from end of the course surveys and reflection assignments form 3 online sections of Design and Presentation of Business Projects. Anonymized student data will be coded and categorized. An analysis of the data will be completed after the data are categorized which will allow the researchers to identify any emergent themes. An exploration of the emergent themes combined with knowledge of the software will allow the researchers to present a unique perspective of the student's experience with the PitchVantage software. The experiences of the two instructors who utilized the software in their online classes will be examined through a review of notes taken throughout the semesters when the software was utilized.

**Summary**
Communication skills consistently rank high among the most sought after skills for professionals (Graduate Management Admission Council, 2017; Robles, 2012). These skills, especially verbal communication, prove time and again to be vital, especially for people who may be entering the professional workforce for the first time. Although these skills may be honed throughout years of experience, it is the job of business communications instructors to flatten the learning curve by arming students with strong communication skills through in class practice.

One way to provide additional practice opportunities for students is to utilize presentation software, such as PitchVantage. This software utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) to provide students with feedback during via avatars who respond to student's tone and pitch and immediately after their presentation based on preprogramed and/or instructor created rubrics. By combining additional opportunities to practice with immediate feedback, students can work toward perfecting their verbal communication skills without waiting on feedback from their instructor.

**Implications for Education**

Due to COVID-19 and its limitations on physical proximity, the landscape of business communication has changed. Businesses are increasingly communicating via Zoom and other virtual meeting platforms which makes teaching verbal communication skills critically important. One way that instructors may do this is by utilizing software, such as PitchVantage, to provide their students with communication practice with real time feedback in a virtual environment. Thus, this study will be of particular interest to instructors who may be considering adding additional or new educational technology to their business communications courses, particularly those that have a string focus on verbal communication and presentations. Additionally, this study can also be used as a basis for comparison of student perceptions by instructors who implement the PitchVantage software into their courses.

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# Are Business Communication Skills Transferring to an Upper Level Required Business Course?

Marsha L. Bayless, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
Manuel G. Guerrero, *Stephen F. Austin State University*

**Abstract**
This pilot case study will compare the result of reports of students who have taken a sophomore Business Communications course to those who have not that are enrolled in an upper level business course at an accredited Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business College in the State of Texas. Critical thinking, research and business writing will be analyzed.

**Description**
Workplace communication places high emphasis on writing with basic writing mechanics and clear and precise writing in the top three categories of importance (Kleckner and Marshall, 2014). Being able to persuade the reader is another key element of successful writing and is important in utilizing critical thinking as part of the argument (Ciortescu, 2020). Business ethics can be used as a critical thinking tool in a variety of business courses (Conn, 2008).

At present most business colleges, schools and departments in the nation have business communication courses to provide for a foundation in business writing beyond what a student would learn in standard lower level foundation English courses (Rhetoric and Composition and Research and Argument). While English foundation courses address rhetorical analysis and evaluation of written text, as well as argumentative writing and research methods, business communication courses focus on the application of communication principles that provide for effective business documents and oral presentations.

Upper level business courses in areas such as Marketing, Management, Sports Business, Human Resources and Accounting require that students are able to research and present business information in a concise manner with supporting research to validate data provided. These types of documents form the basis for leaders and managers to make business decisions to enable organizations to profit and grow.

The upper lever course selected for this case study is a business foundation requirement for all majors in the College of Business, and is a recommended upper level course for those in other colleges at the university. The title of the course is Business, Ethics, and Society.

The exercise utilized for this pilot case requires that students do critical thinking, research and writing to define and explain the differences between personal and business ethics, and provide their own code of ethics. Students should be able to provide their research findings in APA format in a document with no spelling or grammar errors that will enable the reader to understand what type of code of ethics the student has.

**Purpose**
The purpose of this study is to identify if students are successfully transferring the skills learned from the Business Communication course to the next level of business courses. Are students retaining and able to perform at a level that will provide them opportunities in the future.

**Methods**
For this pilot study, 100 students taking a Business Ethics and Society course will be assigned a paper to write on developing their own Code of Ethics. In addition to evaluating the paper

submitted, an accompanying survey will be filled in by each student to gather demographic info (age, gender, years in school, business communication courses, major – and other related information).

Students completing the Business Communication course at the university focus on writing skills, critical thinking skills, and research skills as well as other areas. For this pilot a scale will be developed to determine the proficiency of the student in the following areas: writing (format, grammar, spelling), critical thinking (level of assessing the problem at hand and making an appropriate determination), and research (finding appropriate articles and citing correctly using the APA style).

**Findings**

Conclusions and recommendations will be drawn after the data is fully analyzed. The conclusions and recommendations from this study will provide information for business teachers to help students understand the importance of effective business communication especially related to development of a personal code of ethics.

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# Legal Considerations When Running Online Sweepstakes and Games

Eric Langstedt, *Mount Saint Mary College*

**Abstract**
My primary research interests is Internet marketing, and this paper was inspired by my observation of companies using games and sweepstakes to drive customers to their social media accounts and websites. This paper addresses the greater legal complexity of running games and sweepstakes online, and considers how companies can reduce their legal risk when doing so.

**Description**

While state and federal laws are often followed for offline marketing activities, they are often not considered for online activities because of questions of whose laws are applicable. An example of this might be when a transaction takes place between a company and a consumer in two separate states, and an Internet service provider located in a different country. Where did the transaction take place? A lack of clarity regarding whose laws apply may compel online marketers to believe no laws apply, or perhaps only the laws of their state or country.

With a growing emphasis on Internet marketing in many industries, companies continue to pursue innovative ways to drive consumers to their websites and social media accounts. Consumers love both games of skill and games of chance. Because consumer engagement can both increase how routinely consumers visit a website and improve attitudes towards a company or brand, games and sweepstakes have moved online. This paper addresses laws and practices online marketers should consider if they pursue conducting online games and sweepstakes. For purposes of legal discussion, the paper is divided into two parts, one focusing on U.S. federal rules about what is required to be a sweepstakes or game. The second part will address some international and state laws that differ from our federal laws, and should be considered when planning the scope of an online game or sweepstakes.

This paper primary focuses on American laws and companies, and outlines federal laws concerning what constitutes a sweepstakes versus an illegal lottery. Online sweepstakes add an element of legal complexity because of differences in opinion on what constitutes "consideration." In most offline situations, consideration would take the form of money. Consideration is when something of value is exchanged, is required in contracts, and is the key difference between sweepstakes and lotteries. Where the laws governing online sweepstakes become complex is what might be considered something of value (consideration). One party may not believe clicking a "like" button, the use of a hashtag, or writing a comment as something of value, while another party may disagree. Because the number of likes may impact the ranking of a video on a site, or the use of a certain hashtag may deliver more viewers to a social media account, legal arguments can be made that these seemingly small actions requested by a company undertaking an online sweepstakes may be the difference between them being categorized as an illegal lottery rather than a sweepstakes. Some legal precedents will be addressed.

The paper will then address the vital importance of well-crafted official rules. Official rules may be viewed as a contract between the company and those involved in the game or sweepstakes. Laws regarding sweepstakes vary by country, and they are illegal in some counties. Even within the United States, there are differences in requirements when running a sweepstakes, with New York and Florida having notably more restrictions. This paper will address ways in which you can use the official rules to reduce your liability through the restriction of certain parties from participating. It will also provide examples of companies who did not appropriate identify problems when developing their official rules, and the issues their oversights brought.

While online games have fewer legal restrictions than sweepstakes in terms of what is allowed, liability concerns remain, and should also be considered closely before an online game goes live. Notably, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 does not allow the collection of information from children under the age of thirteen without parental permission, which suggests that, unless this audience is vital to your game or sweepstakes, they should be excluded from participation within your official rules. The paper will address how to minimize liability concerns if you choose to include this population in your game or sweepstakes. While there are fewer restrictions for people between the ages of 13 and 18, there remain greater liability issues within this population than those who have attained the age of majority. Depending on what is being requested from participants in a game, and what is being awarded in either a game or a sweepstakes, the company running the game or sweepstakes may reduce their liability through thoroughly detailed official rules.

A final are of consideration discussed in this paper is the legal requirements for reporting prizes that have been distributed. There are certain financial thresholds that, when met, require the company to issue financial documents to the federal government and provide legal forms to the prize recipient for purposes of tax reporting.

# What Does Collaboration and Constructive Cooperation Really Look Like?: Exploring Collegiality as an Evaluation Metric for Tenure and Promotion

Ashton Mouton, *Sam Houston State University*
Lindsay C. Clark, *Sam Houston State University*

**Abstract**
Tenure and promotion policies are often subjectively interpreted, especially collegiality as a metric of evaluation. This presentation will share the results of a grounded analysis of interviews, institutional documents, and policies related to collegiality. We explore women faculty perceptions of how collegiality is defined, enforced, and evaluated during tenure and promotion review, as well as recurring rhetorical moves for articulating tenure and promotions guidelines and expectations.

**Description**
Tenure and promotion are objective processes dictated by the university with formal language about productivity in several areas: research, teaching, service, mentoring, extension, and collegiality. Yet, those policies often are interpreted by department and college committees with their own ideas of what it means to be productive in each area, leading to employment issues for faculty. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 2016) defines collegiality as collaboration and constructive cooperation as an official representative of the department, college, university, or professional organization. The AAUP deems collegiality to be an essential component to research, teaching, and service, and they do not believe it should be used as a fourth criterion of evaluation in tenure and promotion review; in fact, they believe using collegiality as a metric of evaluation poses several dangers, including, but not limited to, departmental homogeneity, limits to academic freedom, expectations to foster harmony, threats to diversity initiatives, and a chilling effect on the climate (see also, AAUP, 2017; 2019; Mouton & Clark, 2020). In the current study, we look to the AAUP's recommendation not to use collegiality for review (AAUP, 2016) as well as previous work determining that collegiality is used subjectively during review, particularly for women faculty (Mouton & Clark, 2020). As such, this presentation will combine an examination of collegiality policies related to merit as well as tenure and promotion review with faculty perceptions of how collegiality is defined, enforced, and evaluated during tenure and promotion evaluation.

Structuration Theory was used as the guiding framework for the study. Structuration theory is focused specifically on the duality of structure between actors and policy (Giddens 1979; 1984), and pays particular attention to the rules and resources used to create, enable, and enforce structure (Poole & McPhee, 2005). Rules include formal written policies, human enforcement of policies, and even unwritten guidelines or word of mouth rules of thumb. Whether written, spoken, or just understood, rules are usually accompanied by consequences if they are not followed (McPhee, Poole, & Iverson, 2014; see also Kirby & Krone, 2002). In the context of this study, metrics of evaluation for tenure and promotion as well as merit would constitute rules, as they guide behavior and result in consequences or rewards. Resources, then, are anything that enables the organizational member to accomplish their tasks and follow the rules (Poole & McPhee, 2005). Mouton and Clark (2020) found that where collegiality was used as a rule, it can constrain tenure and promotion by chilling the climate and increasing barriers for non-majority groups (e.g., women, BIPOC); however, when collegiality was treated as a collaborative resource, it enabled tenure and promotion by fostering supportive relationships and multiple avenues to success.

As a result, our current study sought to answer the following Research Questions:

**RQ1**: How is collegiality experienced and negotiated by women faculty seeking tenure and promotion or merit?

**RQ2**: How is collegiality defined and enforced in contemporary collegiality policies for tenure and promotion or merit?

Because of Structuration Theory's focus on the overall structure, from policy, to interpretation, to human agency and interaction, data was collected in two phases. First, interviews and documents were collected from one R-1 institution to gain a better view of the complete organizational structure in one place. In total, the authors completed 49 interviews with women faculty ranging from 30 minute to 2.5 hours and collected 433 documents to contextualize the interviews with formal university policy related to tenure, promotion, and merit. Second, the authors collected collegiality policies as they related to tenure, promotion, and merit from 50 additional tenure granting institutions (e.g., R1, R2, teaching, community college).

To answer the research questions, we utilized grounded theory methods as discussed by Charmaz (2006) in combination with genre analysis (Swales, 1990) for coding and analyzing interviews and documents. For phase one, we first open-coded transcripts and fieldnotes using NVivo data analysis software, as it is beneficial for managing large quantities of data and being consistent with the rigor of grounded theory analysis (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2006). Second, using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) constant comparative method, each response was compared to the others to discover trends and differences that emerged from the codes. Third, axial coding and thematic analysis were applied in conjunction to determine how the codes were related to one another. Axial coding assisted in developing categories (Charmaz, 2014), and the dominant categories were then labeled as themes (groups of consistent categories and codes), emerging from the responses. Thematic analysis was used in this stage to order the categories and label the themes as they relate to the theoretical framework and the questions about collegiality, tenure, and promotion (Owen, 1984). Similarly, for phase two, the tenure and promotion policy samples were open-coded for organizational structure, thematic content, and discourse features to reveal any recurring rhetorical moves for articulating tenure and promotions guidelines and expectations.

Initial analysis of the interviews suggests that while criticism and deliberation are encouraged as collegial, many women on the tenure track express concerns about collegiality. Specifically, collegiality impacts workplace satisfaction, tenure and promotion results, diversity and inclusion practices and initiatives, and work-life accommodations even though it is not a separate metric of evaluation. Additionally, initial results of the genre analysis suggest recurring rhetorical strategies for expectations and evaluation of collegiality. The implications of this study call into question collegiality as a metric of evaluation, particularly as they relate to power and rank

# Needs of International Journal Editors: An Integrative Review

Aimee Kendall Roundtree, *Texas State University*

**Abstract**

This integrative review synthesizes findings from research on the needs and issues that international journal editors face in order to provide a framework and background for designing solutions for the international journal editorial process. Integrative reviews help evaluate existing evidence, find gaps in knowledge, and suggest future research and areas of work. Increasingly global nature of current events and the great need for intellectual and technology transfer to address contemporary needs.

**Description**

This integrative review synthesizes findings from research on the needs and issues that international journal editors face in order to provide a framework and background for designing solutions for the international journal editorial process. Integrative reviews help evaluate existing evidence, find gaps in knowledge, and suggest future research and areas of work. Increasingly global nature of current events and the great need for intellectual and technology transfer to address contemporary needs with evidence-based decisions and innovations has made essential the role of international journals. Despite recent reports suggesting that global research output of journal and conference manuscripts has increased in the last decade, particularly in China, research journals and papers from the United States and the EU tend to have the most impact (White 2019).

On one hand, international journals face challenges making decisions about submissions from developing and emerging countries. They face questions about translations and English reprints. Furthermore, they face unique challenges with issues such as to what extent second-language reprints qualify as self-plagiarism (Lin 2020). On the other hand, local journals (local meaning regional and sub regional in developed, emerging and developing countries) struggle for survival to recruit and publish quality manuscript that could be published faster with farther dissemination elsewhere (Ofori-Adjei et al. 2006). Publications in regional journals often also get lost in translation if the journal reviewers and editorial board request manuscript changes that narrow the scope to specific communities or issues difficult to generalize (Goggins 2015). Furthermore, academic journals proliferate, and fears of predatory journals abound, which heightens competition and cautions about where researchers opt to place their publications.

Methods included a literature search using keywords such as international journal editors, international journals, international research, and international scholarship, particularly pertaining to journals of communication, to find preexisting research in Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, ERIC, IEEE, Xplore, ScienceDirect, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), JSTOR, ScienceDirect, ACM, Taylor & Frances, Elsevier, Google Scholar, Sage, Emerald, MDPI, and Springer. Findings reveal that, while international journals are among some of the top journals in the field, national diversity is low as it pertains to the nationality of authors who publish in these international journals. Most leading journals publish authors in the developed world, with several regions being underrepresented. Self citation might be higher in international journals, even with the journals themselves have low visibility. However, international journal articles seem more likely to cite other international contributions. International journals published in developed countries have more visibility than those in developing and emerging countries. Online publication is perceived as a means of leveling the playing field and providing more promotion of international journals. English language expectations may be pressurizing and slowing progress of international publications and researchers. Differences in scholarship include not only subject matter but also research approaches. International editors use guidelines and author services to improve manuscript quality, to modest success. Manuscript structure is as common an issue as writing quality. Typical revisions include substitutions, additions, deletions, rearrangements, and corrections.

Paragraph patterns may be more deductive than inductive. Results and discussions sections have proven problematic for international researchers. World and plain English might be insufficient to address these issues, particularly in translating complex ideas or subjects. Rhetorical moves differ in part due to cultural differences in international communities, research, and training. Recommendations include improving peer review training and standards, providing author support earlier and more often, finding ways to highlight international work if not reprint English translations, and considering co-publication in English alongside other widely used languages such as Spanish and Mandarin. Limitations of the study include its own exclusion criteria of manuscripts unavailable in English language. Future work should investigate the true efficacy of authors guidelines and services in improving the variety and quality of international journal submissions.

# The COVID Impact: A Changing Business Environment

Marcel M. Robles, *Eastern Kentucky University*
Jasmine White, *Eastern Kentucky University*

**Abstract**
In 2019, Covid-19 was discovered in Wuhan, China. At the time it was discovered, no one could imagine the catastrophic effect it would have on our daily lives. Currently, there are 27 million Covid-19 cases worldwide and cases continue to skyrocket daily. No one has witnessed a pandemic like this in their lifetime. Covid-19 is also severely impacting the business environment. The majority of businesses have been struggling to stay afloat while trying to adapt to rapid changes caused by Covid-19.

**Description**
Businesses are currently facing several challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Employers are trying to find ways to keep their employees and customers safe, while still making a profit. Due to these unprecedented changes, several businesses have been forced to lay off or fire their employees. Although most businesses are struggling to stay afloat, certain businesses are thriving during the pandemic. For example, Amazon has had explosive growth during the pandemic. Amazon has been successful during the pandemic because customers can buy essential items from the comfort of their own home. While shopping online, consumers do not have to worry about going into stores and risk catching Covid-19. Due to online shopping becoming consumers "go-to" during the pandemic, businesses have had to shift their business model. Physical stores have realized that they must adapt to the new changes, and that consumers might not feel comfortable entering stores or interacting with others during this time. Grocery stores and retail stores have started prioritizing curbside pickup, which is a safe way for customers to shop. Customers order what they want online, park in a certain area, and then a store associate brings out the purchases to their car. Many businesses have even started enforcing contactless payments to avoid touching cash and to reduce interaction (Seetharaman, 2020).

During this time, it is important for businesses to show that their number one priority is customer safety. Businesses need to consider their customers' vulnerabilities and concerns. Many businesses have decided to limit the number of people in stores. Walmart and other grocery stores have disinfecting wipes at the entrance so customers can clean their shopping carts. Stores are even closing earlier than usual to allow employees more time to deep clean the facility. The majority of businesses require face masks; and if a customer does not have a face mask, he or she is not allowed into the store. This practice tells customers that businesses value their well-being.

The impact of Covid-19 has directly affected consumer behaviors. Consumers have been stock piling essential items due to uncertainty of the virus. Toilet paper, medicine, Lysol products, face masks, and certain food items have been hard to find in stores ever since the pandemic started. Since businesses are aware that essential items are a top priority for consumers, some businesses are price gouging, increasing prices of goods to a level that is not considered fair. If businesses want to keep their customers, they should reconsider price gouging. Customers will find another business that does not put profit before people. Price gouging will damage the relationship businesses have with their customers (Pantano et al., 2020).

The way consumers are reacting to Covid-19 is directly affecting business supply chains. Covid-19 has uncovered the vulnerabilities of businesses supply chains; businesses have begun to realize that they may not have a reliable supply chain. Supply chains have been slowed down or completely halted production for many reasons, including that some workers have contracted Covid-19, or the drivers are not transporting the products to the store fast enough. Issues with their supply chain has forced businesses to find other resources to receive products for their stores. Many businesses have purchased items from outside of their usual supply chain. This result has been beneficial to small businesses who have been struggling; many have been selling essential items that they have to their community (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020).

**Coopetition for the Greater Good**

Coopetition is when businesses share resources and capabilities for a mutually beneficial outcome. Normally, rival companies do not share their resources with each other, but the severity of Covid-19 has changed that situation. Businesses that choose to share their resources see a higher level of performance, which is why several pharmaceutical companies have been collaborating during the pandemic to create a vaccine for Covid-19. Companies have been sharing scientific data from their clinical trials and experiments. Apple and Google have even been collaborating regarding Covid-19. They are trying to improve Covid-19 tracking technology that shows people how many are infected, the number of cases, and if they have been in close contact with an individual who contracted the virus. They realized that they have the same goal, and they can accomplish that goal faster if they work together (Crick & Crick, 2020).

The pandemic has also increased the level of homelessness since many people have lost their jobs. Nonprofit organizations have created alliances to tackle this growing problem together. Businesses who are barely surviving on their own are collaborating with competitors just to survive. When businesses collaborate, it improves their survival rating. Additionally, it lowers operating costs, boosts productivity, and creates a higher value for customers (Harris & Hongwei, 2020).

**Covid-19 Impact on Corporate Social Responsibility**

Covid-19 has influenced businesses to shift towards more genuine corporate social responsibility. While several companies are struggling in the current economy due to the pandemic, many are still engaging in corporate social responsibly activities. Target, Walmart, and several other retail stores have created certain hours specifically for their elderly and at-risk customers. Since this population is considered high-risk for Covid-19, this restricted time gives them the option to shop safely, considering there will be fewer people in stores (Harris & Hongwei, 2020).

Luxury brands such as Gucci, Bulgari, and Armani have even decided to participate in giving back to their community. Gucci donated surgical masks and medical overalls to a local hospital, and Bulgari is now producing hand sanitizer in their factories. Many manufacturing companies have allowed their factories to be transformed to produce items that are currently needed. Their factories are producing personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and ventilators (Harris & Hongwei, 2020).

When Covid-19 was first discovered in the United States, many states went on complete lockdown; and it was uncertain how long the lockdown would last. Many people were unsure if they would still have a job; or if they did still have a job, would they still be paid. Lyft, Apple, and Walmart promised their hourly workers that they would continue payments for the first two weeks of lock down. It is important for companies to show that they genuinely care about their employees and not just their profit. Due to companies showing genuine corporate social responsibility, their reputation in the public has improved. It also builds a positive brand around their company (Harris & Hongwei, 2020).

**Covid-19 Has Forced Employees to Work Remotely**

Before the pandemic, three to four percent of Americans worked remotely. When Covid-19 first began, the majority of employees were forced to work from home to reduce face-to-face contact. Reports in April showed that half of workers were working remotely. While working remotely, employees were having a difficult time adjusting to the new work conditions. Teleworking can have a negative effect on an employee's productivity, especially if the employee normally works in the office. Transitioning to working remotely can be hard to overcome. A major issue with teleworking is that most employees enjoy face-to-face communication, which is difficult to do while working from home (Kazekami, 2020). Human Resource Departments have realized that they need to adjust to the new changes, which has forced them to create new ideas to keep employees engaged. Some Human Resource Departments have created virtual lunches and coffee breaks to ensure that employees are still communicating with one another (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

While employees are having a tough time adjusting to teleworking, managers are also having challenges adapting to the new changes. Since employees are working remotely, managers must ensure that their employees' engagement and productivity are remaining high. For managers to ensure employees productivity is not decreasing, it is important for managers to communicate effectively with their employees, which is why regular check-ins are needed when employees are working remotely. Regular check-ins give managers and employees the chance to communicate about their tasks and to resolve any issues that the employee might have from working remotely. It is important for managers to give consistent updates to employees so they can stay informed. When a promotion, training program, or specific events are occurring, all employees need to receive equal notice. Managers need to ensure that all employees are still being treated equally, regardless of where they are working (Erickson, 2020).

Most businesses have not returned to working in the office because of the safety conditions that come into play. People with medical conditions, are 60 and older, or immunocompromised are at higher risk for severe complications if they contract Covid-19. A few states have even created a public health order that states that people who are considered high risk cannot be forced to physically return to work. Employers need to consider who should physically return to work. If an employee is considered high-risk for Covid-19, he or she should continue teleworking and not return to the office (Erickson, 2020).

## Workplace Communication Post-COVID: What will be the Residential Impact and How Do We Prepare Our Students for This New Reality?

Lorelei Amanda Ortiz, *St. Edward's University*

**Abstract**
This presentation explores the impact of COVID-19 on workplace communication and explores implications for the ever-shifting professional skills necessary for student career readiness. Set on a continuum, this readiness depends on how quickly and effectively business communication courses can incorporate and deliver just-in-time learning and preparation that provides exactly the skills that students need to meet employer demands during these unprecedented times.

**Description**
The longer workplaces and universities continue to operate remotely due to COVID-19, the more questions arise as to the lasting impact of our interactions via virtual communication technology. Industry researchers are already exploring the potential residual effects to workplace realities post-COVID such as a projected dressing down of workplace attire, the permanent adoption of Zoom for workplace meetings, and an increase in telecommuting now that research is showing that working remotely does not negatively impact employee productivity and, in some ways, has enhanced it (Arruda, 2020; Friedman, 2020; Harter, 2020). Those of us who teach Business Communication, a course that centers on soft skills, employability, and preparing our business students to meet the communication exigencies of the workplace, must now factor in these realities as we prepare our students for the world of work. The generation of students we are currently teaching will be the first to experience a changed workplace after COVID. Most are now becoming experienced at learning and working on Zoom and Webex as a result of two semesters of online education since the pandemic forced a worldwide pivot to remote instruction in March 2020. Yet, using the technology alone is not enough preparation for workplace communication. Students' experience must also include deliberate instruction about how to use the technology effectively, what the rules of play are for engagement, and what expectations employers might have of them in terms of professionalism and decorum—and how these expectations have shifted and been impacted by what we have learned about working remotely the last few months.

The preparation that students receive in the virtual Business Communication classroom can include opportunities to practice professionalism and engagement through measures such as substantive interaction policies for class participation which require, for example, that students keep cameras on at all times during class, sit at a table or desk as opposed to lying in bed while Zooming, and wear business casual/business dress on presentation days. Much of what is required in a substantive interaction policy reflects the same expectations of a seated course (be present, be engaged, dress appropriately for the day's work). However, there are clear and obvious differences between teaching in a physical classroom and teaching online that cannot be ignored. In the physical classroom, instructors have a broad and sustained view of all students and can scan the room to monitor for engagement. In a virtual synchronous classroom on Zoom, unless the class size is small, it is difficult to see all students at all times, especially if using Screen Share, which reduces your view of students and makes it impossible to have them all visible on the screen. This raises the question, how does one monitor and engage all students while also focusing on multi-tasking the screen share, chat feature, and lecturing at the same time? Additionally, there are questions of impact to learning and engagement from the student perspective: are all students disadvantaged from learning remotely? Are there particular students who may struggle in a traditional classroom but thrive in the virtual classroom? How do we assess this and how do we make up the difference in instruction in order to ensure that all students thrive equally in a virtual environment? Anecdotally, some instructors are already finding that remote learning may be more conducive to participation for certain students. Reticent or introverted students, for example, may be more willing to participate in a virtual classroom than they are in a seated class (Heath, 2020).

This presentation will endeavor to answer these questions and, moreover, will provide implications regarding the ever-shifting professional skills necessary for student career readiness. Set on a continuum, this readiness depends on how quickly and effectively business communication courses can incorporate and deliver just-in-time learning and preparation that provides exactly the skills that students need to meet employer demands during these unprecedented times.

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# Instructional Planning in a Pandemic: How Higher Education Institutions in Texas Adapted to COVID-19

Traci Austin, *Sam Houston State University*
Danica L. Schieber, *Sam Houston State University*

**Abstract**
This presentation examines how faculty in Texas have been impacted by, adapted to, and transformed their universities' strategies for delivering instruction and related student services during the COVID-19 pandemic. By understanding this experience, we can offer recommendations to instructors that may help better prepare them for the challenges of teaching in this evolving environment.

**Overview and Purpose**
As of October 2020, COVID-19, a new, highly contagious virus had claimed the lives of over 1.1 million people worldwide, and this number continues to rise (Johns Hopkins, 2020). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 is spread primarily when an infected person coughs or sneezes and others in close proximity (usually within about 6 feet) come in contact with or breathe in the droplets (CDC, 2020a, para. 2). This makes universities and colleges--where large numbers of students learn, study, eat, work and live in close physical contact with others--prime breeding grounds for the disease.

To help slow the spread of COVID-19, both state and federal agencies suggested that individuals take certain actions to protect themselves and those around them. As of March 2020, these suggestions and mandates include limiting or foregoing in-person contact, appointment-only access to facilities, screening employees and visitors for symptoms, practicing social distancing by maintaining 6 feet of distance between people, wearing facemasks, utilizing hand sanitizer, and disinfecting surfaces regularly (CDC, 2020a; Texas Educational Association, n.d.). Most of these suggestions were extremely difficult or even impossible to follow in many common college facilities, like classrooms and lecture halls, dining halls, dormitories, computer labs, gyms, sporting events, and offices. Therefore, in order to ensure the safety of students, faculty, staff, in the spring of 2020, universities and colleges across the United States closed their campuses and moved to remote learning, shortened semesters, or canceled instruction and activities altogether (e.g., June, 2020).

While the "shutdown" of campuses likely helped slow the spread of COVID-19, some states, including Texas, continued to prepare for the possibility of spikes in cases later in the year (WFAA, 2020). As universities looked forward to the fall 2020 semester, they were faced with the question of how to conduct classes, university services, sporting events, and other activities while still following the procedures suggested for controlling the spread of the disease. New, more detailed guidelines for institutes of higher education (IHEs) were issued on May 30, 2020, by the CDC and included familiar recommendations such as allowing faculty to teach remotely and for meetings and services to be held virtually as much as possible. However, the guidelines also recommend some actions that could prove prohibitively expensive or otherwise challenging to achieve in some campus facilities: increasing circulation of outdoor air in indoor spaces; decreasing class size to ensure 6 feet of space between students in classrooms; assigning students their own supplies, lab equipment, or computers to avoid sharing; installing plastic shields between sinks in restrooms; and many others (CDC, 2020b).

Throughout the summer of 2020, universities developed plans for the 2020-21 academic year that would allow them to conduct classes while conforming to CDC-recommended procedures for controlling COVID-19. These plans involved variations of remote, hybrid, or HyFlex instructional models and were aimed at balancing the need to reduce contact among individuals with the need for students to have real-time contact with their instructors and each other. As with many plans, however, the realities of implementation in the still-evolving pandemic caused changes both large and small. In the authors' own experience, the system their college developed over the summer was changed substantially (and suddenly) with only three days to spare before the start of the semester. In universities and colleges across the state of Texas, administrators, instructors, and students alike saw the need to revise these plans as the severity of the pandemic became clear

This report examines how faculty at four Texas universities have been impacted by, and adapted to, their universities' plans for delivering instruction during the pandemic. By understanding this experience, we can offer recommendations to instructors that may help better prepare them for the challenges of teaching in an ever-changing, multi-faceted educational environment.

**Methods and Results**

For this project, we are conducting in-depth interviews of Texas faculty to glean information about their lived experience of adapting to the changes the COVID-19 pandemic caused in higher education. The faculty are all engaged in teaching business communication, professional communication, or a related discipline. The interviews will focus on information regarding:

- Plans for instructional delivery and contact with students for the Fall 2020 semester
- Actual means of instructional delivery and contact with students in Fall 2020
- Challenges and benefits faculty in business and professional communication experienced in their roles as educators during the pandemic
- Adaptations (both current and planned) to their assigned or chosen modality that instructors implemented in Fall 2020
- Interviews will be conducted in December 2020 and January 2021, after the full semester has ended for most faculty. Results will be analyzed in January and February 2021.

# Communication Impacts of Covid-19 in the Short Term: One College's Experience

Michael C. Budden, *Southeastern Louisiana University*
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Heather Budden, *Southeastern Louisiana University*

**Abstract**
The paper centers on the impact on communication activities and skills of the move off campus due to a stay at home order issued March 22, 2020 due to the pandemic.

**Description**
One day students are in class, socializing and having shared, learning experiences with classmates. The next day, without warning they are abruptly dismissed from classes, disbursed and told to socially distance themselves from others. They were told the 2020 spring semester would be finished online using distance technologies.

Students were sent home to finish the spring 2020 semester through distance education technologies without advance notice. The cause—a pandemic—disrupted school, work and life, as most knew it. The term "new normal" took on an ominous tone and became trite in the process.

Ready or not, students— and faculty—were sent off campus and told to finish the semester as best as possible. Some were prepared to take on new pedagogies, others not so. The need for computers, fast internet access, training in new technologies and methodologies, and communication outlets highlighted some of the challenges facing students and faculty.

With all of the changes on life as was known, advancing education in a new world presented specific challenges. Besides access to digital technologies, online coursework presented students who had never taken online classes with additional hurdles of learning, sharing and communicating with others. In addition, the lack of access to campus and campus resources by many left a void in social connections and added to anxieties. More importantly to the present discussion, changes would have to be made in communication efforts if communication skills were to continue to be developed.

A survey was administered to students on one campus located in the southeastern US. The survey featured questions as to the impact of the Covid-19 stay-at-home order on students and their activities related to communication. The survey had 294 respondents who described their situations and their perceived impacts of the stay-at-home order on their efforts.

The survey found a large percentage of students reported being uncomfortable in discussions using online meetings using Google Meet, Zoom and similar sites. In addition, many felt distance education hampered their communication efforts and skills. At the same time, a majority reported using email more after the stay-at-home order than before and many reported using online videos as a learning adjunct increased.

The pandemic impaired communication skills development for many. At the same time, there were bright spots in the darkness. Many students reported reading more and some say their ability to communicate increased.

The paper lists the specific objectives investigated and the findings for each. A summary and recommendations section is included.

# Stakeholder Management in the Digital Age: Quality 4.0

Lila Carden, *University of Houston*
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**Abstract**
A framework is proposed to support project stakeholder management in the digital age with an emphasis on quality 4.0.

**Purpose of Proposal**
The purpose of this proposal is provide a framework for managing stakeholders in the digital age focusing on quality 4.0. Currently, we are living in the fourth generation of industrialization that has been identified as the digitalization period. This period involves a movement of intelligent automation where humans and machines are working collaboratively. This collaboration has called for new communication approaches as well as quality (quality 4.0) management techniques to handle the transition to a disruptive digital transformation (Radziwill, 2018; Gupta, 2019). Quality 4.0 has been used to identify performance excellence during this transition and focuses on the service to stakeholders and the readiness of the organization to support these changes. Therefore, the internal stakeholders need to have a participatory voice when communicating suggestions to organizations about their products and services.

To assist with the quality changes of the future and to prepare for customers' behavioral psychologies and customer responsiveness (Park, Shin, Park & Lee, 2017) in the age of quality 4.0, there needs to be new approaches to optimize processes that will support quality deliverables that are inclusive of all applicable team members and stakeholders. Additionally, there is a need for stakeholder management activities that will support stakeholder engagement and team participation in order to resolve cross-departmental issues and to facilitate the implementation of project activities (Project Management Institute, 2017).

**Methodology**
Conceptual Paper

**Findings**
This research includes a framework that can be used for project communications management related to the DMAIC phases of Lean Six Sigma including the design, measure, analyze, improve and control phases (Brassard, M., Finn, L., Ginn, D. & Ritter, D. (2017). The framework is focused on mitigating misinterpretations and miscommunications by strategically involving stakeholders and developing documents to communicate project information in the age of quality 4.0. Specifically, this framework in the study includes the tools and techniques used to engage and manage key project stakeholders as well as prepare the organization for the change initiative via a communications framework.

**Summary**
In order to effectively move the organization to the future state of quality 4.0, there is a need to manage the communication with project stakeholders and prepare the organization for the transformational change. More specifically, "leadership outcomes are defined as much by followers as they are by leaders" (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017, p. 25). Therefore, the success of the project change is not only based on technical but also non-technical project skills. The

framework in the study includes the tools and techniques used to engage and manage key project stakeholders as well as prepare the organization for the change initiative. One of the impacts to quality based on quality 4.0 is empowerment (Radziwill, 2018) of employees. In this study, we focus on stakeholder engagement activities as a means to involve, empower, and motivate employees to become more participatory in the organization's goals and objectives. The major benefit of stakeholder engagement is it increases support and mitigates resistance to project implementation usually resulting in project success (Project Management Institute, 2019). This study focuses on the use of a project stakeholder communications framework to identify, plan, manage, and sustain stakeholder engagement.

**Implications for Business**

The implications for this research is related to leaders and their ability to manage stakeholders in the digital age focusing on quality 4.0. In quality 4.0, leadership that promotes a culture focused on service quality and speedy management decisions will more likely have a higher value than other organizations (Park, Shin, Park & Lee, 2017). The organization's ability to focus on quality and to make speedy management decisions, is predicated on their ability to communicate and engage stakeholders at various levels of project implementation. The major benefit of stakeholder engagement is that it increases support and mitigates resistance to project implementation usually resulting in project success (Project Management Institute, 2019). Leadership has been identified as a key driver for successful TQM implementations that are based on championing employee participation and engagement in active project implementation steps (Radziwill, 2018).

Employees (as stakeholders) have been identified as one of the major areas of certain types of project implementations that includes executing strategies that are aligned with the goals and objectives of the organization (Truss, Mankin, and Kelliher , 2012). The major benefit of stakeholder engagement is it increases support and mitigates resistance to project implementation usually resulting in project success (Project Management Institute, 2019). Stakeholder engagement studies have focused on the link between employee engagement and performance management (Bankar & Gankar, 2013; Mone, Elsinger, Guggenheim, Price & Stine, 2011). The performance management includes the understanding of interrelated processes and procedures, feedback, development, and communication with a foundation that is built on trust. This link between employee engagement and performance management may be based on sustainability and includes a continuous approach.

# Assessing Online Perceptions of Microsoft's and Google's Sexual Harassment Scandals: A Mixed-Methods Approach

Roxana D. Maiorescu-Murphy, *Emerson College*

**Abstract**
This study contributes to the literature and practice of crisis management and diversity by analyzing online perceptions in the aftermath of Google's and Microsoft's sexual harassment scandals. A mixed-methodology was employed to apply the situational crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2020) to ascertain the main centers of online control and influence and to analyze the influx of communication these triggered.

**Description**
The public relations field has recently started to investigate the ways PR practitioners can contribute to addressing inequalities in the workplace and society. Despite the fact that calls for this research trajectory have first emerged about two decades ago, (Hon and Brunner, 2000; Holtzhausen, 2013; Holtzhausen and Voto, 2002), the field currently lacks research that links public relations functions to specific diversity-centered practices. The current study aims to address this gap by exploring online perceptions of two corporate scandals related to sexual harassment that took place at Google in 2018 and Microsoft in 2019.

The study made used of the situational crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2017; 2020) and employed triangulation, as it analyzed the online dynamics on Twitter in the aftermath of the two crises. This research contributes to the field through its exploration of online reactions that emerged organically, independent of the companies' online crisis communication strategies. It does so by comparing two similar crises, and therefore, adds to the crisis management literature that is currently in need of comparative analyses of scandals. Practitioners may consider its implications as well as its methodology as they identify online dynamics in the aftermath or throughout the development of crises. Theoretically, this study complements past research on the situational crisis communication theory (Coombs 2017, 2020) and highlights its application in the context of sexual harassment scandals.

Within a short timespan, both Google and Microsoft faced crises that displayed eerie similarities. Not only did both crises revolve around allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination of women in the workplace, but they also came to light as a result of journalistic investigations. In addition, both companies responded predominantly by pointing to past corrective action aimed to address gender inequality and sexual harassment. In October 2018, The New York Times revealed that several Google executives had been asked to resigned after the company found them accountable for sexual harassment (Canon, 2018). While Google did not disclose the findings of its internal investigations to either its employees or the public, it paid the outgoing executives tens of millions of dollars in severance packages (Dickey, 2019). As a result of the New York Times' article, over 20,000 Google employees staged a global walkout in the US, Austria, Germany, the UK, Israel, Japan, and Singapore to protest gender inequality at their workplace (The Guardian, 2018).

Microsoft's scandal erupted in April 2019 when Quartz News published an internal email chain started by a female employee who asked for advice on how to get promoted. Dozens of responses followed as employees shared stories of gender discrimination and sexual harassment previously overlooked by HR. As a result, the latter reached out to the company's employees and promised to addressed the situation (Gershgorn, 2019). Similar to Google's response, Microsoft's crisis communication focused on past actions taken to address sexual harassment. For example, the company alleged to have fired twenty employees in the year that preceded the scandal (Fiegerman, 2019). Additionally, both Microsoft's and Google's communication strategies involved promises to commit to meticulous investigations for the purpose of ending sexual harassment and gender discrimination (Guzior, 2018; Levy, 2019).

Given its prevalent application to the practice of crisis management as well as its prominence in academic research, the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) was considered the most appropriate theoretical framework for the current study. Rooted in attribution theory, the SCCT (Coombs, 2017; 2020) posits that, in times of crisis stakeholders will attribute a degree of responsibility to a specific company that is commensurate with the type of crisis this faces. Hence an organization will be held accountable to a larger extent if its crisis classifies as preventable rather than an accident. By contrast, when the company itself is the victim of a crisis, stakeholders may attribute a low level of responsibility to the organization. Undoubtedly, the degree of responsibility attribution has the potential to damage a company's reputation. Therefore, companies should respond in accordance with the situation or the crisis type they face. Underreacting or overacting to the crisis may deepen reputational damage. Coombs (2017; 2020) proposed several communication strategies to address a crisis. Primary response strategies include denial (attacking the accuser, denying the crisis, scapegoating), diminishing strategies (minimizing responsibility, justification), and rebuilding strategies (corrective action, apology). Finally, secondary strategies include bolstering as organizations remind their stakeholders of their positive past and deeds (Coombs 2017; 2020).

To date, the SCCT has been applied to the study of a wide spectrum of crises that range from sports (Brown, Adamson, & Park, 2020; Jordan & Smith, 2013) and celebrities (von Sikorski, Knoll, & Matthes, 2018; Wu & Choy, 2018) to the corporate sector (Choi & Lin, 2009; Jeong, 2009; Zhang, Kotkov, Veijalainen, & Semenov, 2016). The bulk of research on the SCCT has been conducted on the corporate sector with an extensive focus on corporate responses. Recently, researchers have shifted their attention toward the application of the theory to the study of stakeholder perceptions of crises and crisis communication as part of a larger penchant for the understanding of how publics socially construct crises in general and in online settings in particular (Gascó et al., 2017; Smith, Smith, & Knighton, 2018; Subba & Bui, 2017; Zhang, Kotkov, Veijalainen, & Semenov, 2016; Zhao, Zhan, & Jie, 2018). Yet, research is still to explore the application of the SCCT to crises related to diversity and fair treatment in the workplace. To date, research on sexual harassment and PR remains scarce. Three past studies shed light on the detrimental effect of sexual harassment on PR practitioners (Serini et al., 1998) and the role of public relations in addressing it independent of the legal stance of their companies (Bovet, 1993; Fitzpatrick & Rubin, 1995). More recently, Krishna, Kim, Shim (2018) conducted a survey that revealed a negative impact of gender discrimination crises on relationship management.

The paucity of studies on public relations and crises related to injustice in the workplace represents solely one aspect of the research the field needs with respect to specific public relations functions that can inform a company's overall diversity strategy. Past studies looked predominantly into the lack of diversity in the industry and discussed underrepresentation as well as the challenges faced by women and minority practitioners (Applebaum et al., 2015; Gallicano et al., 2012; Grunig, Hon, & Toth, 2013; Mundy, 2016; Sha, 2013; Vaderman-Winter and Place, 2017). However, public relations functions have remained largely unexplored with the exception of a recent study on dialogue and dialogical expectations of LGBTQ+ stakeholders (Ciszek, 2020). As a result of the preceding lacuna of research, the present study made use of the case study methodology, which is employed to respond to the general question of "why" in order to analyze a phenomenon at a deep level and one which has not yet been studied or has been analyzed to a low degree (Eisenhardt , 1989; Yin, 2017).

Therefore, the following research question was asked: How do online users communicate about Google's and Microsoft's sexual harassment crisis?

# AR/VR Training for Emergency Response: An Integrative Review

Aimee Kendall Roundtree, *Texas State University*

**Abstract**

This integrative review sought to aggregate and synthesize existing literature on AR and VR training for emergency and first-responders in order to provide evidence-based recommendations for fire & emergency departments, as well as designers who provide products for these users. Major findings included observations that VR increases engagement in the learner. The greatest drawback included the total cost, the proliferation of developing niche software, and verisimilitude.

**Description**

This integrative review sought to aggregate and synthesize existing literature on AR and VR training for emergency and first-responders in order to provide evidence-based recommendations for fire & emergency departments, as well as designers who provide products for these users. Out of 285 articles retrieved from a search of public reports and articles, we reviewed about 30 case studies and user research studies that included usability data from augmented reality and virtual reality systems designed to train first responders and emergency providers, including firefighters, EMT, and emergency room physicians.

Most of the studies had participants test different VR / AR systems and provide their qualitative impressions. A few used traditional usability study methods that required users complete specific tasks, rating their performance overall. Only a few were quantitative where a large sample size was used, and results were statistically significant, or where participants were randomly assigned groups to help control for variables not of interest and limit any potential confounding variables.

Major findings included observations that VR increases engagement in the learner. Most environments also incorporate sound into the experience to simulate the real world. Users cited the primary benefit being that VR/AR environments allow participants to work in hazardous conditions that are only simulated without real concern of danger. Studies also found that, post-training, VR/AR trainees followed evacuation instructions with more confidence, even in cases where they did not already know the buildings or incident settings.

The greatest drawback included the total cost, the proliferation of developing niche software, and the technology's capacity to only slightly imitate reality and only partially integrate the factors of a real-world experience. Furthermore, in some cases, the information that VR / AR training provided to users bordered on cognitive overload and may have diminished trainees' cognitive ability to manage incidents. Finally, some users needed to adapt to new types of technology, which was, at times, difficult for them.

# #Activism: Investigating the Social Media Communication of Nonprofits during Times of Crisis

Ashley Hall, *Stephen F. Austin State University*

**Abstract**

The COVID-19 crisis is having significant impacts on nonprofits as they seek to help more people while facing a decline in giving due to the economic disruptions of COVID. By analyzing the communications posted on social media before and during COVID, the researcher sought to better understand how nonprofits use social media to communicate with donors or potential donors during times of crisis.

**Statement of the Problem/Purpose**

COVID-19. The topic is pervasive and commonplace. While people worry about getting sick, COVID is also ravaging industries and impacting people beyond just their physical well-being. Jobs and economic well-being are also being impacted. With the stress of the pandemic, many nonprofits are suffering as needs for assistance increase and giving decreases in response to the economic impacts of COVID.

Social media can be used to meet donors or potential donors where they are online, raise awareness of issues, and serve as a way for individuals to engage and give or support the organization. Cramer (2009) noted that nonprofits can utilize social media to "increase traffic, encourage visitors to stay longer, and open a dialogue with and between supporters. Such two-way conversations strengthen relationships, engendering loyalty to programs and causes" (p. 8). One benefit of social media is that it can be used to foster two-way communication. This allows the nonprofit to share about the cause, but it also allows for the organization to listen to their followers and potentially adapt to their interests and needs. Audience adaptation is critical in business communication, so the more nonprofits can learn about the audience, the better they should be able to effectively target their communication (regardless of the platforms used). Research is underway to better understand Millennials and Generation Z. As these large subsets of the population grow to make up a larger percentage of donors, nonprofits may need to modify their communication strategy.

For example, younger donors and potential donors can be targeted using social media. Chung (n.d.) recognizes that "Younger, tech-savvy donors embrace mobile and social giving trends while seniors still give heavily through direct mail. At the same time, the rapid speed at which people adopt new technologies is driving nonprofits to build multichannel strategies to engage these different generations of donors in the ways they like to be engaged." As such, this topic is timely and worthy of further investigation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how nonprofits utilize social media to communicate with donors or possible donors during times of crisis such as COVID-19. This area is ripe for research and includes multiple domains of research such as organizational communication, nonprofit communication, generational differences, and the role of social media within organizations. O'Reilly noted that "The pervasiveness of mobile and online access means that nonprofits will simply have to keep pace. Fundraisers needn't use every social media tool, but multi-channel communication is the new way of donor relations" (Four Fundraising Trends to Watch).

**Methodology**
This study will utilize the publicly available social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and organizational blogs, if they exist) to study the organizational communication used and note any differences that exist between communications made before COVID and those made during COVID. At least 10 nonprofits of various sizes and industries will be studied though more may be added if qualitative data saturation has not been reached.

**Findings**
The findings of the study will be analyzed prior to the March 2021 conference. This presentation will discuss how nonprofits modified their social media communication during COVID-19. Lessons learned across various types of nonprofits will be identified and recommendations on appropriate communication strategies will be discussed. In addition, implications for educators will be highlighted, including how this study's findings vary from those of traditional, for-profit businesses. This will allow students to be exposed to non-profits and alternative career options.

**Summary**
In conclusion, COVID-19 has impacted all of our lives and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. This crisis is having significant impacts on nonprofits as they seek to help more people while facing a decline in giving due to the economic disruptions of COVID. By analyzing the communications posted on social media before and during COVID, the researcher seeks to better understand how nonprofits use social media to communicate with donors or potential donors during times of crisis. This study's findings will benefit nonprofits by providing practical implications and recommendations, as well as helping business educators provide a broader understanding of organizational communication and non-traditional employment options available to students in the form of nonprofit work.

**Implications for Education and/or Business**
This study has implications for both businesses and the field of education. Nonprofits can learn best practices for how to communicate with and engage donors or potential donors using social media. In addition, educators can communicate such lessons to students when discussing organizational communication and specifically how it relates to nonprofits. This study's findings can also benefit the field of business education as instructors teach students how to effectively communicate if they are working in the nonprofit sector.

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## Reviving and Revising Strategic Communication

Philip Hayek, *University of Illinois at Chicago*

**Abstract**
This presentation proposes two case studies to revive and revise strategic communication scholarship. First, I position National Security, Defense, and Military Strategy documents (NSS, NDS, NMS), as specific research objects to be studied from the research perspective of ecologies of composition (Syverson). The NSS is produced by the executive branch and influences the Department of Defense's drafting of the NDS and NMS. These documents, taken together, represent the United States' approach.

**Description**
This presentation proposes two case studies to revive and revise strategic communication scholarship. First, I position National Security, Defense, and Military Strategy documents (NSS, NDS, NMS), as specific research objects for study from the perspective of ecologies of composition (Syverson). The NSS is produced by the executive branch and influences the Department of Defense's drafting of the NDS and NMS. These documents, taken together, represent the United States' approach to security and defense and reveal a strategic attempt at coordinating the communication between the documents. Second, in 2011 the Army Training and Doctrine Command engaged in a years-long effort to reorganize and reprioritize the information captured in all of their Field Manuals by creating a hierarchy of publications that established relationships among levels of doctrine. This initiative was called Doctrine 2015, and resulted in the articulation of the different levels of doctrinal knowledge with respect to different audiences and purposes within the Army itself (Hayek). The Army Doctrine Publications (ADPs), function as specific research objects to study through the ecologies of composition.

I approach these documents from the ecological perspective, which views these rhetorical situations (Doctrine 2015 and the drafting of NSS, NDS and NMS documents), as ecologies of composition that contain multiple complex systems all working in concert to produce strategic communication. Purpose and audience in both case studies are analyzed from this perspective in order to determine the strategies at play, and this analysis reveals relationships between the documents that can serve as a framework for further study in strategic communication.

I analyze how, within these two case studies, the documents produce coordinated action based on a reinforcement of behaviors and a spontaneous self-organization within the ecologies of composition. The communication strategies include establishing a hierarchy of information and a clear purpose and audience in order to coordinate the documents. There are specific relationships established between the documents (The NSS informs and guides the NDS and NMS), and between the subjects in the documents; Army Doctrine clearly articulates a specific relationship between commander and subordinate that encourage a different reading of the documents based on the audience. The ecological perspective can help to reveal the strategy involved in producing the coordinated effects of the documents.

The goal of this analysis is to provide guidance for senior leadership in the military who are responsible for coordinating communication to their superiors and subordinates, while providing clear research objects for strategic communication scholars. The ecological perspective is the appropriate lens to view documents produced with an immediate relationship to other documents in a hierarchy of information. The results of this research are meant to establish a foundation from which to study professional, strategic, military communication.

## Promoting and Protecting: The Underlying Content of Business Speeches

N. Lamar Reinsch, Jr., *Lubbock Christian University*

**Abstract**

This paper builds on two previous papers (2019, 2020). Together the three papers propose an Aristotelian-type teleological genre of business speeches. The two previous papers have discussed the speaker's treatment of audience, time, and goals. The current paper addresses the marketplace roles of various audiences, the relationships among those audiences and the speaker's company, and the underlying content and distinctive challenges of business speeches. These discussions complete a description.

**Description**

This paper is the last of three papers which, taken together describe an Aristotelian teleological genre of the business speech ("a genre of our own"). The previous papers argued that the business rhetor aims at profit (advancing the company's commercial agenda), considers all audiences members as prospects (persons or organizations with which the company might have a profitable relationship at some future time, if not now), and conceives time in terms of kairos (an opportune or "ripe" moment).

Building on that foundation the current paper delineates the audiences (the roles of individuals and organizations who are present in the marketplace). The resulting list includes employees, suppliers, customers, stockholders, competitors, trade associations, and neighbors. The paper then proceeds to discuss how the various audiences are in conflict with each other, how they each experience a mixed-motive relationship with the speaker's company, and how they have the potential to mutate over time. These features help us to understand why a business speaker's primary (if underlying) content consists of materials that promote and protect the company. (Indeed, these two terms differ from but are parallel with the terms which Aristotle used to describe the underlying content of the three genres that he identified.)

As a result of the types of audiences found in the marketplace and their inter-relationships, the business speaker confronts (in addition to the normal rhetorical canon--making good decisions about content, organization, style and delivery) several challenges. These include the need to present the company as self-interested but not selfish, and as strong but not dangerous. Further, the business speaker needs to deliver a message that is memorable but not offensive, and effective but not antagonizing.

An excellent business speech may, then, be identified on the basis of effects and on the basis of rhetorical artistry. Effects (how audiences responded to the text) are helpful but not determinative. The critic must also consider the speaker's rhetorical artistry (given the business speech genre and its distinctive challenges).

Business speeches differ from other types of speeches. Not surprisingly, which this fact is considered, it seems clear that excellent business speeches will be excellent in their own way.

# Sustainable Communications in the University World: A Multimodal Approach

Jose Santiago Fernandez-Vazquez, *University of Alcala*

**Abstract**
The main objective of the investigation is to determine how universities can develop effective strategies in their environmental communications. To do so, the paper aims to develop a specific tool for the analysis of environmental higher education websites.

**Description**
As the 21st century advances, the negative effects caused by the over-exploitation of natural resources have become more evident and so has public awareness of the need to endorse environmentally friendly policies (Ipsos, 2019). Consequently, companies and organisations around the globe try to respond to the demand to "go green" in their public communications. Building a persuasive and well-articulated discourse on environmental protection becomes not only a matter of ethical commitment and social responsibility but also a key strategy to protect corporate reputation, to maintain stakeholder commitment and, ultimately, to promote business. Higher education institutions are not exempt from the need to be perceived as environmentally responsible entities, which means that they must incorporate environmental sustainability issues within their promotional and marketing strategies. Websites have been found to be an efficient tool to communicate about the environment (Bortree, 2011; Rodríguez Bolívar, 2009), which has induced many universities to devise specific environmental sites as part of their public communication policies (Dade & Hassenzahl, 2013). Creating a webpage is a dynamic and complex process, which merges content and form. To measure success in the communication of online sustainability information, different dimensions need to be taken into account, including content quality, graphic resources and stakeholder engagement. Considering the multi-faceted nature of online communications, this paper uses a multimodal approach, based on Critical Discourse Studies (CDA), to evaluate the effectiveness of environmental promotional discourses on university webpages, in terms of language, browsing resources and visual design.

Critical discourse analysis is a branch of linguistics that studies how power and ideology are enacted, reproduced and resisted through discourse (Fairclough, 2013, 2015; van Dijk, 1991). Discourse is understood as a social practice. What people say, and how they say it, is influenced by social structures and has social effects. From the theoretical point of view, CDA is based on Halliday's systemic-functional grammar, which distinguishes among three social functions which are realized by language: the "ideational" function (representing the world around and inside us), the "interpersonal function" (enacting social interactions as social relations) and the "textual" function (how representation and interaction cohere to form a meaningful whole (Halliday, 1985). Ecolinguistics is a branch of CDA that links the study of discourse with ecology. It uses the tools of CDA to investigate the use of language in an environmental context and to show how the linguistic choices that we make promote certain underlying views or "stories" with ecological significance (Dash, 2019; Stibbe, 2015).

The main objective of the investigation is to determine how universities can develop effective strategies in their environmental communications. To do so, the paper aims to develop a specific tool for the analysis of environmental higher education websites, which takes into account previous studies in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility web design. We argue that three major dimensions need to be considered to gauge the importance given to environmental information by universities and the efficacy of this information to impact the recipients: 1) website relevance given to environmental information, 2) information quality, and 3) stakeholder engagement. Sone examples of good and bad practice will be given.

The methodology and the results have theoretical and practical implications for researchers and for policy-makers. From a theoretical point of view, the analytical tool that we put forward can be used in other contexts, facilitating the comparison among higher education institutions at an international level. At the same time, the conclusions of this research will help university administrators to improve the design of environmental webpages and to develop more effective PR policies. Hopefully, this will contribute to reinforce the reputation of higher education institutions and to increase public awareness of their environmental initiatives.

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## Poster Presentations

**The Job Search During the Pandemic: A Perspective from Recruiters**

Carol S. Wright, *Stephen F. Austin State University*
Kayla Sapkota, *Arkansas State University at Beebe*

*Abstract*
What are recruiters really looking for when reviewing job applications? Responses from current recruiters will be shared to highlight the challenges they see that our current students are likely to face upon graduation.

*Description*
With all the changes that have occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the process of looking for a new job has adapted as well. Moran (2020) cites a Jobvite study that found a change in priorities for a new hire, including, "diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as the quality of the candidate" (para. 1). For many companies, the focus has changed from reviewing an applicant's job titles and degrees to looking for candidates with transferable skills and the ability to interview and work remotely. Similary, Lok (2020) suggests using LinkedIn and personal networks to actively seek open positions and to focus on show personality to stand out from others applicants.

As many students are approaching graduation and will be beginning the job search process, it is important to understand the emerging changes that are occurring in the process. The purpose of this study is to share how the job search process may have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This qualitative study that uses snowball sampling, surveyed recruiters for their perceptions of these changes.

Questions to be addressed include:

- How have you seen the recruiting or hiring process change since COVID-19 pandemic begin?
- What long-term effects do you expect this pandemic to have on the hiring process?
- What is one skill new graduates should have in this changing workforce?
- What is one piece of advice you would give new graduates?

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**Boundary Spanning as Threat: A Theoretical Inquiry into Public Relations' Professional Identity**
Vivien V. Angelus, *California State University, Fullerton*

*Abstract*
This theoretical study applied intergroup theory to extant public relations research to show that the professional identity arising from public relations "relationship paradigms" often contributes to the marginalization the paradigms were intended to overcome. Attention is focused on boundary spanning, which the relationship paradigms hold is the basis for public relations' value, but which intergroup theory and empirical evidence suggest also can be a source of threat for organizations.

*Description*
Boundary spanning has grown in popularity as a solution to challenges faced in a multitude of organizational and management contexts. These contexts include marketing (e.g., Sahadev et al., 2015), leadership (e.g., Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2010), government (e.g., Agranoff, 2017), and conservation (e.g., Perz, 2016). Such popularity is understandable, given the benefits of effective boundary spanning. Organizational benefits, according to Calvard (2014), include "better strategic decision making, large-scale innovations, better reputation, learning, adaptation, and achievement of cross-organizational goals" (p. 120). Individuals and teams engaged in boundary spanning also should experience "substantial positive gains," according to Marrone (2010), "such as enhanced influence, reputation, and ability to make valued contributions" (p. 935). Yet, research on public relations, the function that manages communication between top management and an organization's publics (Grunig, 2008), suggests that boundary spanning is far more complex and difficult than is conventionally understood.

Public relations has had boundary spanning at the center of its thinking and identity for decades (e.g., Allen & Dozier, 2012; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Men & Bowen, 2017). In the context of public relations, boundary spanning refers to activity that moves information and influence across organizational lines (Springston & Leichty, 1994) and is an important part of the field's focus on building "mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" ("About public relations," n.d., para. 4). According to the field-dominating excellence theory and relationship management theory, cultivating long-term, mutually-beneficial relationships with the groups upon which an organization depends or which are affected by its decisions is for public relations practice "the appropriate strategic imperative" (de Bussy, 2013, p. 82). Yet, decades after the turn to relationships as the raison d'être of public relations, evidence continues to build that public relations generally is not accepted by organizations as a strategic management function (e.g., Falkheimer et al., 2017; Macnamara, 2016; Wakefield et al., 2015). Instead, public relations is marginalized as a mere messaging activity (Grunig, 2011).

This theoretical study applied intergroup theory to extant public relations research to show that the professional identity arising from excellence theory and relationship management theory, which I term the "relationship paradigms," often contributes to the marginalization the paradigms were intended to overcome. Within the context of public relations professional identity, I focus my attention on boundary spanning, which the relationship paradigms hold is the basis for public relations' value, but which intergroup theory and empirical evidence suggest also can be a source of threat for organizations. To illustrate how professional identity and boundary spanning can disadvantage the public relations function, I use the example of public relations practice in the U.S. military, a context in which relationship cultivation is viewed as a strategic necessity (e.g., Bullis, 2019; Waters, 2019).

*Public relations professional identity and boundary spanning*

The relationship paradigms, dominant forces in public relations research, have coalesced a professional identity for the practice. Professional identity is that aspect of an individual's self-concept derived from participation in a particular career field and the attributes perceived to be prototypical of that field, including cognitions, emotions, and behaviors (Slay & Smith, 2011). Public relations professional identity is important because it is often the basis for relations between the public relations function and other groups within the organization, including senior management (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Turner, 1985). Through these relations, the function is empowered to enact (or disempowered from enacting) its strategic management role and delivering the benefits predicted by the relationship paradigms (Meng, 2014).

Public relations professional identity centers on relationships. For example, Coombs and Holladay (2015) cited the Public Relations Society of America's inclusion of "mutually beneficial relationships" in its "crowdsourced" definition of public relations as evidence that the practice had adopted a "relationship identity" (p. 689). Erzikova and Berger (2011, 2012), using quantitative surveys, found that public relations educators and students said that central principles of the paradigms (e.g., strong ethics, relationship cultivation) are important to effective public relations practice. And Plowman (2013) found through qualitative interviews that high-level U.S. military public relations managers appeared to view relationship management principles as generally compatible with military public relations practice.

Viewed through the relationship paradigms, boundary spanning is the central activity and basis for value of public relations practice. As such, boundary spanning is also the core attribute of public relations professional identity. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), the public relations practitioner performs "a 'boundary' role" (p. 9). Through boundary spanning communication, "practitioners represent the management philosophy to external publics and interpret the concerns of external publics to the organization's management team" (Springston & Leichty, 1994, p. 697; see also Fawkes, 2018). Through such activity, public relations helps the organization identify its strategic publics and build relationships with them that help the organization maintain a stable, symbiotic relationship with its environment (Grunig et al., 2006). Those relationships, according to research in the 1980s and 1990s, "save money by preventing costly issues, crises, regulation, litigation, and bad publicity," (Grunig et al., 2006, p. 35).
Yet, even with the promised benefits of a sophisticated and empowered public relations, institutionalization of public relations as a strategic management function continues to be an elusive goal (de Bussy, 2013; Wakefield et al., 2015). Public relations practice in the U.S. military illustrates the fields marginalization in a context in which strong interorganizational relationships are a strategic necessity (e.g., Bullis, 2019; Waters, 2019).

*Military public affairs, boundary spanning, and marginalization*

Because of its association with boundary spanning and its associated perceived low organizational prototypicality, military public relations, or military public affairs (Levenshus, 2013), appears to be marginalized in organizations. For example, public affairs tends to be identified with its media relations function (e.g., Paul, 2011). This association with civilian journalists, an outgroup perceived as a threat at least since the American defeat in Vietnam (Rid, 2007), by an institution whose members are prone to perceptions of threat (Stephan et al., 2009) appears to disadvantage public affairs. For example, quantitative survey research conducted in the 1980s revealed that military commanders and non-public affairs peers identified public affairs officers (PAOs) with civilian journalists, which diminished trust in their PAOs (see Fletcher & Soucy, 1983; Hill & Cummings, 1981).

Additionally, according to Eder (2011), public affairs is "a small, historically marginalized career field" in the military (p. 27). Evidence of its marginalization includes its chronic under-resourcing (Paul et al., 2009). PAOs also are generally of significantly lower rank than other officers on the commander's staff. This sends the message that "the communications function is significantly less important than the other command and staff functions" (Eder, 2011, p. 25). Marginalization also is suggested by commanders' habit of conducting public affairs activities with little-to-no input from their PAOs and with little training in communication management (Paul, 2012) and the practice in at least two services of placing non-public affairs personnel possessing operational backgrounds in the top communication position (Eder, 2011).

*Intergroup theory, public relations, boundary spanning*

Intergroup theory reveals that public relations, rather than exclusively generating significant and easily-perceived benefits, can appear to be a source of threat for the organization, and be marginalized as a result. As the terms "boundary spanning" and "boundary spanner" imply, public relations and its practitioners are envisioned operating at the margins of their organizations (see Fletcher & Soucy, 1983; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Organizational scholar Adams (1976) argued that a boundary spanner "is more distant, psychologically, organizationally, and often physically, from other members of his organization than they are from each other, and he is closer to the external environment and to the agents of outside organizations" (p. 1176). This relatively greater distance from other organizational members suggests that public relations practitioners also are more distant from the organizational prototype, or ideal member. Whereas the more prototypical member is more liked and more trusted by fellow members, the "prototypically marginal" member is less liked, less trusted, less influential, and "especially vulnerable to social exclusion" (Abrams & Hogg, 2010, p. 185). Additionally, the boundary spanner's greater proximity to external groups can be a source of suspicion (Adams, 1976). As Kroeger and Bachmann (2014) noted, "Doubt about their loyalties is one of the 'classic' problems [boundary spanners] are regularly confronted with" (p. 263).

*Conclusion*

Boundary spanning between and among organizations is an increasingly valued practice and strategy in evermore turbulent business environments. Yet, boundary spanning, at least in the case of public relations practice, is complex, difficult, and fraught. Claims to a distinctive identity, even with its attendant contributions to the larger group, may trigger an us-versus-them response from non-public relations peers and supervisors (Hornsey, 2008).

As organizations become more complex, internally differentiated, and diverse, their ability to successfully integrate and build upon difference becomes crucial. Future research should apply intergroup theory to identify the communicative strategies that organizations and groups, including public relations, can use to ameliorate discrimination and bias and foster inclusion and equity for the benefit of organizations, publics, and employees.

**Enhancing the Discussion Assignment: Asynchronous Assignment Development in Undergraduate Online Classes**
Kayla Sapkota, *Arkansas State University at Beebe*

*Abstract*
Each semester, The Legal Environment of Business offered in an online format. The online format is often the preferred option for our working and off-campus students. This class was recently restructured to encourage both individual study and review of content and to facilitate a group activity to asynchronously discuss content and cases. The revision was largely successful, though changes to further enhance its efficacy will be implemented.

*Summary*
Each semester, my institution offers one or two sections of The Legal Environment of Business in an online format. The sophomore-level class serves an introductory course to legal issues in the business context. While the in-person format is preferred to encourage discussion and group problem-solving, the online format is often the preferred option for our working and off-campus students. The issue addressed in this poster presentation involves structuring the Fall 2020 version of this class to encourage both individual study and review of content and to facilitate a structured group activity to asynchronously discuss content and cases.

*Methodology*
To develop the asynchronous discussion assignment, I built upon preexisting assignments and utilized additional features within Canvas, our university's Learning Management System. Additionally, I integrated feedback from the respective assignment in previous semesters.

In previous semesters, a basic discussion board assignment was given to students each week with cases to be discussed amongst randomly assigned team members. These cases were typically textbook and instructor resource cases from the publisher. In future semesters or terms, I may deviate from the case sources slightly by providing some more current cases to encourage student engagement in current events, which is a tactic employed in my other courses.

One major change in this enhanced assignment was the addition of a detailed rubric and an instructional video on specific assignment requirements. The revised rubric, which includes additional categories, will be detailed on the poster itself. Especially important elements include the requirement to integrate both "inside" (i.e. textbook) sources and "outside" (i.e. Internet) sources via citations within the postings, along with an IRAC (Issue, Rule, Application, Conclusion) summary.

*Findings*
Based on in-semester observations, student questions, and course evaluation feedback, students appeared to understand and adhere to the discussion assignment structure. At first, they attempted to treat the assignment with less formality, often neglecting the IRAC and sourcing. After reminders, a "how to" video, and missed points, they fell into a weekly "rhythm" of assignment completion that merited full (or close to full) credit on the assignments. Faculty feedback was very helpful in promoting this.

*Areas for Improvement*
In future iterations of the course, the groups for the enhanced discussion assignment will be larger in size to account for the possibility of some students not submitting the assignment early

enough to facilitate discussion. An additional manner in which this issue will be addressed will be to require students to post their initial response by Thursday evening (the assignment opens on Monday at 12am). This will serve two purposes: to further facilitate discussion opportunity and to ensure that students are engaging in coursework throughout the week, rather than "cramming" on the due date (Sunday night). Last, some of the older (and less stimulating) cases will be replaced to promote student engagement and interest; this change initiated from a discussion of tips, tricks, and issues regarding curriculum development with the state Business Law Professor Consortium.

**Branding 2.0 in the Era of Social Media AKA Social Media, a Broadcasting Medium for Brand Identity**

Ania A. Drzewiecka, Horizons University

*Abstract*

The purpose of this lecture is to understand the value and the transition of branding and social media from traditional formats to dititalised, more advanced and interactive presence of their versions. To be competitive in the marketplace means to be competent in its own field as well as represent quality-rooted reputation that is born out of exquisite brandom identity assets of which reputation of a particular brand identity by benefiting form its intertwined strengths hidden in social media interactions.