INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
KARACHI  

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION  

Course Outline  
Spring Semester 2011  

Instructor: Nadia Sayeed  
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Counseling Hours:  
Main Campus: Mondays and Thursdays – 10:00am to 11:00am  
City Campus: Tuesdays and Fridays – 11.15am to 12.15pm  

Course Description  
This course focuses on techniques of successful communication in the business world. It introduces strategies for various business situations including memos, letters, meetings, presentations, reports, electronic correspondence, creative business writing, the job application process and negotiation skills. The course also examines methods of organizing and presenting information and of developing a professional communication style.  

Course Objectives  
This course is designed to develop your professional communication skills. As a result of this course, you are expected to:  

- Understand the importance of effective communication in a business setting.  
- Understand and utilize the basic forms (e-mail, memos, letters, informal and formal reports, and informal and formal presentations) that are used in effective business communication.  
- Write well-organized and effective business memos, letters, and reports.  
- Reinforce and further develop presentation skills in order to deliver professional presentations.  
- Understand and use computer-aided communication including e-mails and presentation software.  
- Work effectively in a team to improve communication skills and to prepare and present group projects.  
- Polish standard English skills used in writing and speaking to enhance professional communication.
Textbooks

Course Book
- *Business Communication Today* by Bovee, Thill & Schatzman; Ninth Edition
- A course file for Business Communication will be available at the photocopier. This file contains reading material on the various topics covered in the course. All material is part of mandatory reading.

Reference Book:
- *Effective Business Communications* by Herta A. Murphy, Herbet W. Hildebrandt & Jane P. Thomas; 7th International Edition
- *Excellence in Business Communication* - Thill and Bovee

Course Structure

This course will involve a substantial amount of team work as part of the learning process. Simulations and workshops will be conducted on various topics of the course content. There will be short lecture presentations on the key concepts of the various types of business communication. These lectures will be followed by assignments which you will need to complete before the next class when you will submit the assignment.

Course Content and Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Effective Communications in Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Importance &amp; Benefits of Effective Organizational Communication</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Components of Communication- Communication Model</td>
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<td>( internal, external, vertical, horizontal and lateral communication)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The Language of Business</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The Seven C’s of Effective Communication in Business Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Completeness, Conciseness, Consideration,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Concreteness, Clarity, Courtesy, Correctness</td>
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<td>- You-Attitude</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Exercises</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4 Business Communication & the Global Context
- Background to Intercultural Communication
- National Cultural Variables
- Individual Cultural Variables
- Importance of cultural sensitive communication in today’s world
- Conflict Resolution

5-6 Letter & Memo Writing
- Five Planning Steps
- Beginnings & Endings
- Composing the Message
- Business Letters, Memos, Special Timesaving Message, Media etc.

7-8 Formal Report & Proposal Writing
- Prefatory Sections
- Supplemental Sections
- Presentation of the Report

9-10 Good-News & Neutral Messages
- Organizational Plan
- Favorable Replies
- Neutral Messages

11-12 Bad-News Messages
- The Right Attitude
- Plan for Bad-News Messages
- Negative Replies to Requests
- Unfavorable Unsolicited Messages

13-14 Persuasive Written Messages
- Organization of Persuasive Messages
- Persuasive Requests
- Persuasive Sales Letters

15-16 Creative Business Writing
- Enliven marketing campaigns, reports, press releases, and emails
- How to overcome White Page Syndrome so your writing can flow and you can stop procrastinating as deadlines approach.

17-18 Strategies for Business & Group Meetings
- Background Information on Groups
- Purposes & Kinds of Meetings
- Writing Agendas and Minutes of Meetings
- Solving Problems in Meetings or Groups
- Leadership Responsibilities in Meetings
- Participant Responsibilities in Meetings
- Meeting Conducted in a Group of 4-5 Students on Any Business Related Topic

19-20 Job Application Process - Written Job Presentation
- Self–Assessment
- Market Assessment
- Writing the Resume & Cover Letter

**21-23**  
**Job Application Process - Interviews & Follow-Ups**
- Successful Preparation for Employment Interview
- Conducting Yourself during the Interview
- Successful Follow-Up Messages after the Interview
- Successful Negotiating
- **Volunteer Demo Interviews (2-3)**

**24**  
**Negotiation Skills**
- ‘Hard’ Negotiation, such as Negotiating Business Contracts, Debt, or a Salary
- ‘Soft’ Negotiations such as deciding who's going to do what in your team
- Handling Staff Conflict
- Workshop and simulation on negotiation

**25-27**  
**Report Presentations**

**28**  
**Review Session**

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**Course Work**

**A. Weekly Assignments**

There will be a number of weekly assignments. Some of these will be graded but most will only be recorded. However, if you do not submit an “ungraded” assignment **on time**, there will be an automatic point deduction for that assignment.

**B. Portfolio**

Submit a portfolio at the end of the course containing “corrected” examples of all assignments done during the course. While it should include the following items, include any materials that are relevant to showing your skills in business communication.

- E-mail messages
- Business Letters
- Requests
- Adjustment
- Recommendation
- Goodwill
- Persuasive – Sales Letter
- Routine Denial
- Bad News – Customer and Employee
- Informal Reports such as:
  - Progress Report
  - Recommendation Report
  - Minutes
C. **Formal Business Report**

1. **Paper**: Prepare a formal business report using one of the recommended topics (See attached list). Choice of topics will be on a first come, first serve basis.

Submit the formal business report to the instructor in printed form. The formal paper must be 8 to 10 pages in length (2000-2500 words) and must include a one-page executive summary and a reference page. The report should be spiral bound and NOT stapled. No late submissions will be allowed.

D. **Group Book Presentation**

Form a group of 4 and choose one of the following or other books.

**Book Choices:**
5. Nierenberg, Roger. (2009). *Maestro: A Surprising Story About Leading by Listening.* Portfolio. (Suggestions for other books can also be discussed)

Conduct a training presentation (20-25 minutes) in which your group uses appropriate communication techniques to teach the significant concepts of the book along with the business applications of this work. This presentation should be considered as a “corporate training session” in which your group becomes “experts” who use good communication skills to present the concepts of the book to others in a way that they will find interesting and memorable. This presentation will be evaluated for the use of correct speaking mechanics as well as the persuasive technique.

E. **Exams:**

There will be two Midterms and Final.
Grading Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Marks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term Exams</td>
<td>30 (15 marks each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes (n-1)</td>
<td>05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Presentations</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Report</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Marks</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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Regulations

A. Late Work

Late work will not be accepted

B. Plagiarism / Academic Dishonesty

All work submitted must be a student's own. Please understand the difference between plagiarism and quotations. For all research work and reference material, please include the accurate source with name and year of publication.

C. Attendance

IBA policy requires regular class attendance. Late comers will be marked absent.

D. E-mail

Please use the email facility to get approvals of topics and proposals and any other issues that you are facing in class. In order to schedule a meeting for counseling purposes, please inform a day before through email.

E. Dress Code

Please ensure that you are dressed in smart casuals (girls and boys) and closed shoes (for boys) on days that you have Business Communication. Impression Management is part of communicating yourself and you start with appearance!!
BUSINESS REPORT TOPICS

Choose one of the following topics for your formal Business Report. Please note that the report will be compiled on the basis of industry research both primary and secondary and accurate references will be provided for all information written.

Accounting Topics

1. You have started a bookkeeping/accounting service, and you would like to offer your services to Company X (a local business of your choice). You are trained to do some or all of the following: income tax preparation and planning; auditing and financial reporting; retirement, estate, and financial planning; computer consulting, system design, installation, and staff training; business consulting; recordkeeping and banking. You will even prepare business plans for start-up companies. Write a proposal that will get you the business of Company X.

2. Assume you are working for a company that is considering opening a business in another country. Analyze possible accounting problems the company might encounter and offer possible solutions for overcoming these problems.

3. Your company has decided to revise this year's annual corporate report to shareholders. Choose two or three recent annual shareholders' reports and analyze them in terms of their audience, purpose, content, and design. Then, offer specific recommendations for revision.

Finance Topics

1. A frequent topic in business is the issue of CEO compensation. Critics complain that CEO salaries have become exorbitant and should be capped. Is it unethical for executive salaries to exceed, let’s say, 24 times the average wage of employees? Should executive pay be tied to an organization’s profits? Select a large public company for which salary data are available. As a member of a stockholder watchdog group, you have been asked to examine its executive salaries and report to the group, which thinks salaries are excessive. What conclusions would you draw, and what recommendations would you make to stockholders?

2. Your business is considering offering child-care and/or elder-care benefits to its employees. Assess the financial pros and cons of either type of benefit, and offer recommendations.

3. At your last school-sponsored entrepreneur club meeting, many students were enthusiastic about online trading. You aren't so sure. As a result, you decide to evaluate the benefits and possible costs of online trading in order to present to your investment club an objective assessment of the idea.

4. Your entrepreneur club has decided it will go ahead with its decision to trade online. You are part of a team that must recommend which online trading site is the best one for your club. To do so, your team must first establish criteria for evaluating possible sites, and then use these criteria for recommending the best site. Compare Web sites of existing online brokers.

5. A fellow student and you think you have an idea for a profitable, Web-based company. Prepare a business plan that will attract the financing you need to get your business started. Since you're not located in Silicon Valley, you need to assess carefully your financing
options. Should you try to attract a so-called “angel,” an investment network, or try the local bank? What other financing possibilities are there, and which is the best for your situation?

**General Business/Education Topics**

1. The new librarian at your university needs to add business periodicals to the library subscription list. She is unfamiliar with all of the specialized periodicals and has asked for help from the business school. The assistant dean of the business school has asked you to recommend four or more print or online periodicals in your particular specialty. In your report, describe the readership, the contents, and the scope of each periodical. Inform the librarian and the assistant dean about who will use your choices and how your selections benefit your department.

2. Disagreement exists among students, business journalists and others connected with academia about the value of a liberal arts education in preparing students for a career in business. Supporters of liberal arts say that a broad-based education turns out graduates that have a broader range of skills and knowledge and thus broadens their employment opportunities. Critics say that the workplace is not always enthusiastic about welcoming students with liberal arts degrees. Critics also say that the price of a college degree drives students to attend college for vocational purposes and graduate with specialized educations to earn higher-paying jobs more quickly. What skills are important in businesses today? Does a liberal arts education have value to businesses in the industry in which you hope to work after college? Make recommendations to a friend or family member who will enter college soon and one day will want to work in a business discipline.

**Management Topics**

1. Hiring disabled workers has been described as a practice that employers should consider more often, given the need for skilled knowledge workers. Examine the advantages and disadvantages of hiring disabled employees. Offer recommendations.

2. You run a small business, and you've been hearing a lot about the importance of “personalized customer service.” You're not sure what this means, or whether it will increase your profits, but you want to find out more. First, what is personalized customer service? How do other businesses provide this? How have other businesses profited from this? Do hidden costs exist? Overall, is personalized customer service worth providing?

3. As manager of a midsized company, you’ve been asked by the management council to justify the installation of a Wi-Fi network for your company. They are most concerned with security. Without getting into the technology aspects, write a report that convinces your management council that Wi-Fi networks can be secure.

5. In a recent meeting, managers and supervisors for the company (your choice) where you work (your choice) expressed concerns about employees’ customer-service skills. Moreover, they wondered whether the company should establish a specific set of customer service procedures— especially for new employees. They have asked you to investigate the customer service practices at other companies like yours to determine what skills your company should emphasize and what procedures, if any, your company should adopt.
6.  “You should visualize inventory as stacks of money sitting on forklifts, on shelves, and in trucks and planes while in transit. That’s what inventory is – money” (Chase, Jacobs, and Aquilano). Pick a company you’re familiar with that has an inventory of products, parts, etc. that it sells. What are some ways to ensure that this company doesn’t have its money invested in too much inventory, or wrong kind of inventory? Similarly, what are some ways to ensure that this company doesn’t have so little inventory that it loses sales? What recommendations do you have for this company to prevent or fix such problems? What role does the accuracy of inventory records play in this issue? Specifically, what are the consequences of inaccurate inventory records (the actual inventory is more or less than what this company’s records says it has) in terms of profits, cost of sales, customer satisfaction, etc? What strategies do you recommend to this company to prevent or fix such problems?

Marketing Topics

1. Knowing you’ve just graduated from college with a degree in marketing, a family from your hometown asks you to investigate the pros and cons of their investing in a franchised business. The family wants you to recommend a franchise in which they can invest, to explain to them the financial and legal implications, and to choose a location for the business. Of three locations of your choice, which is the best for a new McDonald's, KFC, Subway, or franchise of your choice?

2. What recent advertising campaign on a national level has been a failure? What campaigns have been tremendously successful? Select one or the other, analyze why the campaign failed or succeeded, and offer recommendations to other marketers.

3. You have been asked to conduct a market study of your city (or another, if you choose) to determine the best location for a given business (your choice). The company requesting this study wants basic demographic information (e.g., population, income, age, traffic flow, etc.) to be used as the basis for your recommendation.

4. E-mail marketing is cheap and fast. However, most consumers hate receiving “spam.” Your boss can't decide whether to use direct-mail advertising or e-mail messages to boost your company's sales. He asks you to assess the pros and cons of each from the standpoint of the customer and the company. He's particularly interested in the legal liabilities associated with each one. Ultimately, he wants you to decide which one is better.

5. Your small company has decided to begin advertising on the Web. You're concerned, however, so you decide to investigate the important similarities and differences between Web and print advertising in terms of content, design, and — most importantly — cost. Your task ultimately will be to develop specific criteria for each type of advertising and to decide when each is appropriate.

6. A new Web start-up company has asked you to help it decide the best way to market its product. While advertising on the Web is certainly one option, the company's partners want to know about alternatives such as the local newspaper, magazines, and even the local business-to-business directory. Certainly, cost is an issue; however, the main concern is getting the best exposure for a reasonable price.