

# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR LEADERSHIP

IFSA Rome

**US semester credit hours:** 3

**Contact Hours:** 45

**Course Code:** MK386-10 / COM386-10

**Course Length:** Semester

**Delivery Method:** Face to face

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Suggested Cross-listings:** Marketing, Communications

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Communication plays a fundamental role in all facets of business, regardless of industry. This course challenges students to explore leadership styles and leverage their strengths to communicate clearly and strategically in a variety of business settings and to a range of internal and external audiences. Students will study and practice effective written and oral internal communication strategies proven to improve morale, inspire innovation and increase productivity. Similarly, students will study strategic communications theories to produce sound, integrated external communications across platforms. Students will gain the skills to identify and communicate effectively with audiences; develop goals, metrics and tactics for lasting, meaningful outcomes; and draft clear, consistent and correct business communications. The class will also explore emerging trends, active listening, conflict communication, ethics, diversity and business etiquette.

## COURSE DELIVERY

Active learning is the basis for this dynamic course, which utilizes a workshopping approach. Content is delivered through a combination of readings and discussions, but students will also learn through various in-class exercises, case studies, video viewings, mock activities, drills, and almost constant application of theory to practice. Active participation is required.

Discussion board posts are also an important component to this course. The instructor will identify the selected platform to serve as the “discussion board” and will provide access instructions.

Students are expected to read or view assigned resources in advance and be prepared to actively discuss them in class. In many meetings, the instructor will overview the topic and then facilitate a group discussion, drawing out relevant themes, following up on specific lines of inquiry, and prompting students’ thoughtful engagement with the topic.

Students are encouraged to bring their prior learning experiences into class discussions (based on experiential learning theory) and to make cognitive connections between this course and others in the IFSA Barcelona Program whenever possible (based on the philosophy of integrative learning).

## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## COURSE SYLLABUS

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Understand leadership styles and how to leverage personal strengths to communicate effectively engage with a range of internal and external audiences.
- Define and explore internal and external communications best practices.
- Understand the benefits and barriers to effective business communication.
- Pair strategic communications approaches and critical thinking to identify objectives, analyze audiences, and choose the most effective structure, style and platform to deliver sound written and oral messages.
- Practice principles of effective business writing, editing and document design.
- Research, outline and deliver oral communications.
- Employ principles of effective group communication to cultivate trust and understanding, strengthen teams.
- Explore various organizational cultures, business practices, and social norms to communicate effectively across cultures and business contexts.
- Analyze a company's communication processes or key messages and recommend improvements.
- Build network of meaningful relationships with business communications professionals.
- Explore ethics and trends related to communicating in business.
- Understand the importance and structure of crisis communications.
- Harness software and strategies for establishing metrics and assessments.
- Gain transferable skills and enhance written job application materials and interview skills.
- Make cognitive connections between learning in this course and other learning experiences in the IFSA Rome.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Week 1

#### **Course Introduction**

Understanding the communication process, types of communication.

Why communication matters in the workplace?

Characteristics of effective business communications (business communications framework, team-based approach).

**Watch:** TED Talk "How Great Leaders Inspire Action"

[https://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action?share=16116640f6&language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?share=16116640f6&language=en)

**Discussion board post:** Write a letter to yourself, draw a picture or however you want to capture goals you want to accomplish during this class. Feel free to expand beyond the class (maybe other goals for your semester or where you want to be in 5-10 years). *Due week 2.*

**Assignment:** Read "25 Business Buzzwords that Irritate Your Colleagues"

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/25-business-buzzwords-tha\\_b\\_11335236.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/25-business-buzzwords-tha_b_11335236.html). Are you guilty of any of these? If so, which ones and why do you think these irritate colleagues and clients? What are the worst offenders? *Due week 2.*

#### **History of business communications**

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History of business communications, significant milestones and people.  
Overview of project management and communications tools of the 21st Century workplace.

**In-class case study:** Assess a few companies who communicate well with internal and/or external audiences. How do they communicate and why do you think they take that approach? Why does each company's approach work for that company (and why might it not work for others)? What do you admire about their approaches and why? What isn't working?

**Assignment:** Engage in additional research about one of the companies or significant milestones/people discussed in class. Share your findings in class and elaborate on why you picked the person, milestone or company and the greatest lessons about leadership, communication and business you learned from the exercise. *Due week 2.*

### Week 2

#### Teamwork

Review common organizational structures and team formations: Discuss opportunities and obstacles of group work and the various structures.

Setting clear goals and roles.

Introduce various communication and project management platforms and strategies (including Basecamp, Asana, Slack and Trello).

**Watch:** TED Talk "Lead like the Great Conductors"

[https://www.ted.com/talks/itay\\_talgam\\_lead\\_like\\_the\\_great\\_conductors?share=1e85d158e8&language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/itay_talgam_lead_like_the_great_conductors?share=1e85d158e8&language=en)

**In-class exercise:** Break into groups and read "10 Common Business Communication Problems" <https://yourcri.com/10-common-business-communication-problems-and-20-solutions/>. Discuss experiences you have had with these obstacles (in class or at work) and how you addressed them. Do you have any additional solutions for the pitfalls listed? What issues do you feel are most problematic and why? What mistakes are you most likely to make and why (i.e. are you disorganized?)? How might you avoid falling into that trap?

**Assignment:** Reflect on your experiences with group work. Why do you think so many classes require group work? What are the benefits and downfalls? Share an example of when a group project went well and another example of a group project that failed. What was the difference between the two? For your next group project, what changes will you make, ground rules would you set? *Due week 3.*

#### The Welcoming Workplace

Culture, gender and personality's influence on communication.

The importance of and how to build welcoming workspaces.

Listening, business etiquette and nonverbal communication.

**In-class exercise:** Practice active listening in pairs as you discuss situations where you have experienced or observed culture, gender and/or personality play into a workplace — good, bad or otherwise. Why is it important for

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people to consider other perspectives and invite those perspectives into the workplace? How can you assess whether you are welcoming?

**Discussion Post: Read “How to Build Trust on Your Cross-Cultural Team”**

<https://hbr.org/2016/06/how-to-build-trust-on-your-cross-cultural-team> and share the five greatest takeaways from the article and how you plan to implement them in your current workplace or future career. *Due week 3.*

**Assignment:** Take the DISC assessment and reflect on the outcome. Were you surprised? How do you think your personality impacts how you interact with others? How can you compensate when dealing with people you don't connect with as easily? How would you describe your leadership style and what are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of that style? *Due week 3.*

### Week 3

#### **Understanding Audience (internal and external)**

Identifying target audience(s).

Connecting with target audiences across platforms (social media, in print, etc.).

How to tell stories, be personal in an impersonal world.

Setting metrics to reach and retain audiences.

**In-class exercise:** Working in groups, pick one of these TED Talks

<https://medium.com/the-mission/how-to-engage-your-audience-d6e6ce13980b>. Work together to create a presentation to explain the talk to the rest of the class, providing commentary about how you can apply these ideas to your future careers. *Presentations during week 4.*

**Assignment:** Pick a company and assess its internal and external audiences. What are the demographics and perceived psychographics of each audience? How does the company communicate with each audience (as much as you can find/infer from research) or how might you anticipate they communicate with each audience? How does the company employ social media to connect with external audiences? *Due week 4.*

#### **Transferable Skills** (critical thinking, creativity, etc.)

What is emotional intelligence and why is it important to work productivity? Review case studies.

**Watch:** Seth Godin's talk “This is Broken” and discuss why it's important to be “the thinker” and to speak up/question.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=this+is+broken&oq=this+is+br&aqs=chrome.69i59j0j69i57j0l3.1222j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

How to leverage and market transferable skills.

**In class exercise:** Discuss and engage in exercises to bolster these skills.

**Discussion post:** Watch TED Talk, “How to get Your Ideas to Spread.” What determines which idea spread? How do you get people to truly listen and feel motivated to act/become ambassadors for your message?

[https://www.ted.com/talks/seth\\_godin\\_on\\_sliced\\_bread?share=1cb02b39e6&language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/seth_godin_on_sliced_bread?share=1cb02b39e6&language=en). *Due week 4.*

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### Week 4

#### **Research and Strategic Planning**

Review steps before writing or starting a project: self-assessment, setting goals/strategy, determine your unique value, choose tools, define budget and assessment metrics, etc.

The importance of aligning goals and calls to action with mission and values.

**In-class exercise:** Review a recent marketing campaign and map out the process and timeline. Get into the weeds of how many decisions and interactions went into its execution.

Plan Bs: How to plan for the unknown during a marketing and communications effort.

How to sell/present ideas to leadership and/or clients.

**Assignment:** Review a PR success story (Tylenol crisis of the 1980s, for instance). How did business communications (both internal and external) play into the campaign's success? *Due week 5.*

#### **Grammar and Outlines**

Overview of types of outlines and brainstorming/organizational structures.

Review basic grammar and strategic writing best practices.

Commonly misspelled and misused words.

Planning for integration: Communicating with audiences across platforms.

**In-class exercise:** Creative writing and grammar drills.

**Assignment:** Grammar worksheet and outline assignment. *Due week 5.*

### Week 5

#### **Writing for Internal Audiences**

Overview of common internal business communications: memos, emails, business letters and speeches, etc.

**In class exercise:** Practice writing various internal communications.

**Assignment:** Write a memo to employees of the given company to reiterate the professional dress code during the summer months (no flip flops, etc.).

*Due week 6.*

**Discussion post:** Take the email given in the rubric and come up with a new way of presenting the email. So, shorten it or use bullets or headings to create a more dynamic communication. *Due week 6.*

#### **Writing for General Public, Customers and Clients/Suppliers**

Overview of common business communications to customers/clients.

Examples of brands that embrace strategic storytelling.

Review best practices re: headlines, subject lines, calls to action, etc.

**In class exercise:** Write a press release.

**Assignment:** You're on the marketing team for the Institute for Study Abroad (IFSA). Go out and take at least five pictures and create five marketing posts (for a platform of your choice) to align with those pictures.

*Due week 6.*

**Discussion post:** Read "20 creative ways to use social media for storytelling" <https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-storytelling>. Take an external

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message and adapt it to two audiences on two different platforms (so, on the website and on FB). Why and how did the messages differ? Is it difficult to write to an audience you are not part of? How do you overcome that challenge? *Due week 6.*

### Week 6

#### **Writing for Investors/Shareholders**

Overview of common business communications to investors/stakeholders.

Establishing assessment metrics and process for feedback.

How often should you keep in touch and best medium(s)?

Review best practices re: headlines, subject lines, calls to action, etc.

**In class exercise:** Write an outline for an annual report.

**Assignment:** Pick a company. How would you determine how often you need to keep in touch with investors and stakeholders? What messages are they most interested in, and how can you keep that information interesting?

*Due week 7.*

**Assignment:** Read “20 creative ways to use social media for storytelling” <https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-storytelling>. Take an external message and adapt it to two audiences on two different platforms (so, on the website and on FB). Why and how did the messages differ? Is it difficult to write to an audience you are not part of? How do you overcome that challenge? *Due week 7.*

#### **Editing**

Good writing is in the rewriting.

Overview of editing marks and what to look for to make work more concise, clear and consistent.

Review common editing processes and timelines.

How to be a good editor (establish expectations and provide feedback) and how to work well with editors/reviewers.

**In-class exercise:** Edit various internal and external communications.

**Assignment:** Edit an internal email and an external press release. Discuss edits with classmates and how you would provide the writer with feedback.

*Due week 7.*

### Week 7

#### **Writing workshop for internal audiences**

Practice writing a variety of internal communications.

**Discussion post:** Share what is frustrating you at this point and any breakthroughs you’ve made with your writing and/or understanding of communications strategies. *Due week 8.*

#### **Editing workshop for internal audiences**

Swap some of your work with classmates, and we’ll review each other’s work in person, providing constructive feedback about your work.

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**Discussion post:** Provide feedback about giving feedback. What went well and what could you have done better, both as the reviewer and the receiver. *Due week 8.*

### Week 8

#### **Writing workshop for external audiences**

Practice writing a variety of external communications.

**Assignment:** Share your best work with the professor. *Due week 9.*

Expect feedback from the professor by the end of week 10.

#### **Editing workshop for external audiences**

Swap some of your work with classmates, and we'll review each other's work in person, providing constructive feedback.

**Assignment:** Post your best internal and external communication piece. *Due week 9.*

### Week 9

#### **Visuals and Audio**

How to incorporate video and audio into business communications.

**In-class exercise:** Case studies of companies that communicate often via visuals and audio.

**Discussion post:** What are the pros and cons of using audio and video to craft messages? Provide an example (not discussed in class) of a good business communication via audio and/or visual. *Due week 10.*

#### **Overview of tools and platforms**

Review various tools and software to create audio and visual messages.

**In-class assignment:** Work in groups to produce a promotional message for the Institute for Study Abroad (IFSA) using your phone and other accessible media and software.

### Week 10

#### **Trends and Ethics**

Overview of trends and ethical considerations re: business communications.

How to create policies and standards to create work cultures that embrace and practice open, productive communication.

**In-class assignment:** Review and discuss ethical case studies.

**Discussion post:** Read "5 Top Trends for Small Business Communications in 2018" <https://www.ringcentral.com/small-business/blog/small-business-communication-trends-2018/>.

What trends we discussed or you've read about do you most look forward to using in your career and which ones do you not gravitate toward/understand and why? *Due week 11.*

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### Week 11

#### **Crisis Communications**

The role of communications in reacting to crises and restoring brand.

**In-class assignment:** Working in groups, review and discuss case studies of good and bad handlings of internal and external business communications.

**Assignment:** Review the case studies explored in this paper, "SOCIAL MEDIA, CULTURE AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION: IMAGE RESTORATION EFFORTS OF SELECTED CASES IN THE UNITED STATES AND SPAIN"

[https://repository.tcu.edu/bitstream/handle/116099117/19811/Coon\\_Michaela-HonorsProject.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://repository.tcu.edu/bitstream/handle/116099117/19811/Coon_Michaela-HonorsProject.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Write a response paper

(see rubric) to reflect on these and other questions: What did the companies do well/not so well? How would current and emerging trends have helped improve the companies' response to the issue? *Due week 13.*

### Week 12

#### **Building Connections**

The role of relationships and networking in effective business communications.

**Speaker:** Engage in a Q&A with a panel of area business professionals responsible for company communications who will discuss opportunities and obstacles of the profession and role, emerging trends and opportunities for employment, etc.

**Discussion post:** Please share five takeaways from the *presentation*. *Due week 13.*

Working in groups, identify and connect with a company in town to request a tour and/or sit-down with those responsible for the organization's communications.

**Discussion post:** Prepare a list of questions for the professional(s). (ungraded)

**Assignment:** Meet with the professional(s) you identified, write a summary of the experience, and report back to the class about the interaction and lessons learned. *Due week 14.*

### Week 13

#### **Oral Communications**

Elements of effective meetings.

Preparing agendas, documentation and follow-up techniques.

Public speaking 101.

**In-class assignment:** Working in groups, review situations where communications are needed and determine whether oral communication is the best approach. If it is, prepare a rough outline of what you might say in the given situation.



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**Discussion post:** What are the benefits and disadvantages of oral communications? What constitutes a text, an email, a meeting or a phone call? *Due week 14.*

### **Business and social etiquette**

A speaker will walk us through mock professional and social situations and the etiquette for each.

**Assignment:** Reflect on the etiquette experience. What social norms/situational expectations did you know already and what ones were new to you? Why is it important for you to focus on etiquette in both social and professional settings? *Due week 14.*

## Week 14

### **Employment communications**

Best practices for cover letters and resumes.

Writing a job description and advertising positions.

Thank you letters.

Guiding interviews and preparing for interviews.

**In-class assignment:** Resume and cover letter writing workshop.

**Assignment:** Finalize your cover letter and resume. *Due week 15.*

### **Mock Interviews**

Mock interviews and resume/cover letter review, feedback from classmates.

**Assignment:** Read “The 8 Cover Letters You Need to Read Now,”

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-8-cover-letters-you-need-to-read-now>. Create a Tweet to sell yourself (distill your strengths and passion into roughly 140 characters). *Due week 15.*

## Week 15

### **Strategic storytelling**

Elements of strategic storytelling in business.

How to integrate storytelling across platforms.

**In-class exercise:** Working in groups, select a company and develop three sample “stories” to share on a platform of your choice, explain the frequency and strategy. Write them and present/discuss.

**Final reflection paper:** What is a brand and why is communication of that brand (both internally and externally) important? What are the greatest lessons you learned during this class and how do you hope to apply the knowledge and skills in your career? Why is effective business communication important for all employees, but particularly for leaders and managers?

## PRIMARY TEXTBOOK & INTERNET RESOURCE

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

The primary required textbook is Courtland L. Bovee's *Business Communication Today*, tenth edition, 2010, Pearson.

The instructor may provide additional articles to support weekly themes.

### **RESOURCES**

- *Business Writing Today: A Practical Guide* by Natalie Canavor.
- *Assess to Asia: Your Multicultural Guide to Building Trust, Inspiring Respect, and Creating Lon-Lasting Business Relationships* by Sharon Schweitzer.
- *Robert's Rules of Order* by Henry M. Robert III and Daniel H. Honemann.
- *slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations* by Nancy Duarte.
- *How to Win Friends and Influence People in the Digital Age* by Dale Carnegie.
- *Resonate: Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences* by Nancy Duarte.
- *Presenting Data Effectively: Communicating your Findings for Maximum Impact* by Stephanie Evergreen.
- *Socialized! How the Most Successful Businesses Harness the Power of Social* by Mark Fidelman.
- *Enchantment: The Art of Changing Hearts, Minds, and Actions* by Guy Kawasaki.

### **EVALUATION METHODS**

The course instructor will provide specific requirements and grading rubrics for individual assignments for the course. Your final grade in the course will be comprised of the following course requirements:

Discussion Board Posts (see Course Outline for details): 10 @ 4 points each: 40%

Assignments (see Course Outline for details): 20 @ 2 points each: 40%

Final Reflection Paper (see Course Outline for details): 20%

### **Timely Submissions**

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be accepted at the discretion of the course instructor and generally only in the event of a documented illness or emergency.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Any academic endeavor must be based upon a foundation of honesty and integrity. Students are expected to abide by principles of academic integrity and must be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work while studying abroad. Any academic work (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill an academic requirement must represent a student's original work. Any act of academic misconduct, such as cheating, fabrication, forgery, plagiarism, or facilitating academic dishonesty, will subject a student to disciplinary action.

IFSA takes academic integrity very seriously. Students must not accept outside assistance without permission from the instructor. Additionally, students must document all sources according to the instructions of the professor. Should your instructor suspect you of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty, you may receive a failing grade for the course and disciplinary

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action may result. The incident will be reported to the IFSA resident director as well as your home institution.

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