



Carnegie Mellon University
Master of
Software Engineering

17-603 Communications for Software Managers I

Tuesdays, 8:00 am – 9:20 am (Pittsburgh local time), REMOTE
Section A, Fall 2020, 3 units

Instructor Information

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TA Information

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Course Description

Communications skills are fundamental to professionals in all fields, from architecture to software engineering to zoology, because they enable the exchange of ideas and the completion of organizational goals. The ability to identify an audience, to develop clear, persuasive presentations and written documents, and to handle the complex interactions that occur in the workplace make the difference between those who participate in an organization and those who lead it.

This is the first course in a two-semester sequence designed to help you build and refine your skills so that you can communicate as a leader in your professional work. Through a combination of in-class exercises, case studies, projects, presentations, and written assignments, you will assess your current skill level and build upon it.

Prior Knowledge/Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites to this course, other than a willingness to keep an open mind, to give and receive feedback, and to participate in interactive in-class discussions.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this semester, you will be able to:

1. Explain the concept of leadership communication and how it applies in the professional world;
2. Identify the target audience for a document or presentation and adapt the same for that audience;
3. Build communications strategies for a given task;
4. Create compelling and persuasive documents and presentations;
5. Give a presentation, both individually and as a member of a team, with increased confidence; and
6. Develop strategies for communicating during a crisis.

Learning Resources

We will use one **required textbook** this semester; this textbook will also be using during the spring semester for 17-604 Communications for Software Managers II:

Leadership Communication 4th Edition

By Deborah Barrett
ISBN-13: 978-0073403205
ISBN-10: 0073403202

You may obtain this book from the campus bookstore or any online source that you wish, but please be sure to obtain the 4th Edition as many assignments will be taken directly from the textbook.

Additionally, the following **book** is **optional** for this semester:

The Art of the Start 2.0: The Time-Tested, Battle-Hardened Guide for Anyone Starting Anything

By Guy Kawasaki
ISBN-13: 978-1591847847
ISBN-10: 1591847842

It will not be used directly but provides excellent background material on the art of effective presentations. It may also be obtained online or from the campus bookstore.

We will use the following **case studies** this semester:

Domino's Pizza

Richard Ivey School of Business Foundation

Volkswagen's Clean Diesel Dilemma

WDI Publishing

These cases may be purchased in a package from Harvard Business Publishing (HBP) at the following URL: <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/724942>. You will need to create an account with HBP to purchase these materials.

We will maintain an active course website on Canvas where you may access various materials and submit assignments.

Use of Zoom in the Class

In our class, we will be using Zoom. The link is available on Canvas. Please make sure that your Internet connection and equipment are set up to use Zoom and that you are able to share audio and video during class meetings. Let me know if there is a gap in your technology set-up via email as soon as possible, and we can see about finding solutions.

Students who are in a location that makes attending class during the scheduled time challenging should review their situation with me as soon as is possible so that arrangements can be made to accommodate their needs. Please note that while Zoom sessions will be recorded, recordings will generally only be made available via special request or to accommodate students who cannot attend due to location issues. Please note that you are not allowed to share these recordings when they are made available. This is to protect your FERPA rights and those of your fellow students.

Based on the nature of the course, being able to see one another will facilitate a better learning environment, promote more engaging discussions, and allow you to practice your own communications skills. Accordingly, our default expectation is that you will have your camera on during lectures and discussions.

During our class meetings, please keep your microphone muted unless you are sharing with the class or your breakout group. If you have a question or want to answer a question, please use the "raise hand" feature (available when the participant list is pulled up), unless otherwise directed. The TA and I will monitor this channel and will call on students to participate.

Assessments

Your final course grade will be calculated using the following categories:

7 small assignments [S] @ 5% each	35%
3 medium assignments [M] @ 10% each	30%
2 large assignments [L] @ 15% each	30%
participation/attendance	5%
Total	100%

A specific list of assignments can be found in the course schedule, below.

Assignments will be scored on the following four-point scale:

Score	Description	% Translation
0	Unacceptable	0%
1	Needs Improvement	33%
2	Proficient	66%
3	Advanced	100%

In general terms, these scores mean:

0 – Unacceptable – The work submitted does not meet the basic goals of the assignment and does not demonstrate that the student has attempted to master the learning objectives involved. In a “real world” context, this is roughly equivalent of submitting a report that is incomplete to a supervisor in a manner that demonstrates it was done at the last minute and with no effort.

1 – Needs Improvement – The work submitted meets some of the basic goals of the assignment and, while the student has not yet mastered the learning objectives involved, has begun to internalize them. In a “real world” context, this is roughly equivalent to submitting a report to a supervisor that is complete, but fundamentally lacking or flawed in one or more areas.

2 – Proficient – The work submitted meets the basic goals of the assignment and demonstrates that the student has internalized the learning objectives involved. In a “real world” context, this is roughly equivalent to submitting a report to a supervisor that is complete and lacking in any significant flaws.

3 – Advanced – The work submitted exceeds the basic goals of the assignment and demonstrates that the student has mastered the learning objectives involved to a very high degree of proficiency. In a “real world” context, this is roughly equivalent to submitting a report to a supervisor that is complete, exceptionally structured, and which is noted in your annual performance appraisal as exceeding all reasonable expectations.

Most assignments will be accompanied by a grading rubric to help you understand the expectations of the assignment and the manner in which you will be graded.

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You will be assigned the following final letter grades, based on calculations coming from the course assessments as scored above:

Score	Letter Grade
33 or below	R
34 - 41	C-
42 - 49	C
50 - 57	C+
58 - 65	B-
66 - 73	B
74 - 81	B+
82 - 89	A-
90 - 97	A
98 - 100	A+

Grading Policies

- **Late-work policy:** Deadlines in the professional world are often inflexible; failure to complete a project on-time can result in serious consequences for employees and their organizations. Accordingly, the expectation is that you will turn in your work by the stated deadline for the assignment, in the absence of extenuating circumstances (e.g., a medical emergency). However, we realize that life happens and you may turn in one assignment late during the semester without a documented reason – this assignment will be penalized one level (that is, if it would've received a score of "3", it will receive a score of "2"). Unexcused assignments after the first will receive a score of "0".
- **Make-up work policy:** If you become ill during the semester (as documented by either an external medical professional or University Health Services), you will be permitted to make up any work that you have missed and to turn in assignments late without the normal penalty. Please endeavor to inform me at least 24-hours prior to the due date of any given assignment if at all possible.
- **Re-grade policy:** If you believe that your score on any assignment is incorrect, you may ask me to review the work for a possible re-grade. You should submit this request, in writing, within three business days of the score being given to you. Please note that (1) you may submit no more than two such requests during the semester, and (2) a request for a review of your work does not guarantee that the score will increase. Your score will *never* decrease as a result of a re-grade request.

Course Policies

- **Attendance and participation policy:** You will be expected to attend all class sessions (unless otherwise discussed with the instructor); the instructor or TA will record attendance. Additionally, you will be expected to participate fully in all in-class discussions, exercises, and case studies. This may initially be uncomfortable or challenging, but part of becoming a more effective communicator is learning how to participate in group meeting; our class sessions are excellent practice for your future professional interactions. However, you should not feel obligated to speak during every class session (unless we are doing a simulation or case study). Make meaningful contributions when and where you can. We will discuss this in more detail at our initial session.
- **Academic integrity and collaboration:** Honesty and transparency are important to good scholarship. Plagiarism and cheating, however, are serious academic offenses with serious consequences. If you are discovered engaging in either behavior in this course, you will earn a failing grade on the assignment in question, and further disciplinary action may be taken. For a clear description of what counts as

plagiarism, cheating, and/or the use of unauthorized sources, please see the University's Policy on Academic Integrity here: <https://www.cmu.edu/policies/student-and-student-life/academic-integrity.html>. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism or cheating, please ask me as soon as possible to avoid any misunderstandings. For more information about Carnegie Mellon's standards with respect to academic integrity, you can also check out the Office of Community Standards & Integrity website: <https://www.cmu.edu/student-affairs/ocsi/students/avoiding/index.html>.

- **Use of mobile devices:** You will be expected to engage fully during our class sessions as you would in the professional world during a meeting; this means that mobile devices should not be utilized (except for viewing notes during a presentation) in class. Because the course will be conducted online, this means that you should not be using a secondary device during class (i.e., you should not be using your cell phone to play a round of "Candy Crush" while we are discussing a case or listening to a presentation). Be kind to and considerate of your fellow students.
- **Accommodations for students with disabilities:** If you have a disability and require accommodations, please contact Catherine Getchell, Director of Disability Resources, 412-268-6121, getchell@cmu.edu. If you have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.
- **Statement on student wellness:** As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. CMU services are available, and treatment does work. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at: <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Support is always available (24/7) from Counseling and Psychological Services: 412-268-2922. This semester is unlike any other. We are all under a lot of stress and uncertainty at this time. Attending Zoom classes all day can take its toll on our mental health. Make sure to move regularly, eat well, and reach out to your support system or me if you need to. We can all benefit from support in times of stress, and this semester is no exception.
- **Statement on respect for diversity:** It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

Course Schedule

#	Date	Theme(s)/Topic(s)	In-Class Activities	Learning Objectives Addressed	Assignments (due at 5 pm Pittsburgh time on the Sunday before the next class session unless otherwise noted)
1	09/01	Introduction to Leadership Communication	Overview Presentation; Ethics Discussion	1	Read Chapter 1; Prepare and submit usage assessment and writing assessment [S]
2	09/08	Impromptu Presentations	Student Presentations	3, 5	Prepare and submit Communications Development Plan [S]
3	09/15	Impromptu Presentations	Student Presentations; Presentation on Communications Skills	3, 5	Begin prep work for individual presentations
4	09/22	Interviewing	Presentation and Discussion	3	Complete interviewing assignment [S]
5	09/29	Student Intro Presentations	Student Presentations [S]	2, 3, 4, 5	No assignment
6	10/06	Student Intro Presentations	Student Presentations [S]; Open Discussion of Lessons Learned	2, 3, 4, 5	Read Chapter 2
7	10/13	Purpose, Strategy, and Structure	Presentation and In-Class Exercise (2.1)	2, 3	Complete Application 2.3 (pg. 51) [S]; Read Chapter 3
-	10/20	NO-CLASS - MINI 1 READING/EXAM WEEK	N/A	N/A	No assignment
8	10/27	Language	Presentation and In-Class Exercises (3.2-3.5)	2, 3, 4	Read Chapters 4 and 5; Complete Application 4.2 (pg. 111) [S]
9	11/03	Email, Social Media, and Other Documents	Presentation and In-Class Exercise (4.1)	2, 3, 4	Read Chapters 6 and 7; Complete Exercise 5.1 (team-based, pg. 137) [L]
10	11/10	Leadership Presentations and Graphics	Presentation	3, 4	Review one of the two "master class" videos; record and submit a short presentation on a topic of your choice (details to be provided) [M]
11	11/17	Master Class: iPhone and Amazon Fire Phone Launches	Review and Discussion	1, 2, 3, 4	Prepare Application 7.4 (team-based, pg. 197, for presentation in-class next week)
12	11/24	Team Presentations	Team Presentations [L], Group Evaluation	2, 3, 4, 5	No assignment
13	12/01	Strategy Review: Domino's Pizza	Review Case Study and Discuss [M]	1, 2, 3, 6	Read VW Case
14	12/08	Strategy Review: VW	Discuss Case Study [M]	1, 2, 3, 6	Submit interim assessment of CDP progress [S] – due on Friday, December 11