



MBA Assessment Report: Perspective & Communication

To assess the learning goal of **Managerial Perspective & Business Communication**, a team of 6 assessors rated 20 students' business plan presentations in the Spring 2009 BA 710 course.

The assessment team consisted of the following persons:

-  Kathy Barnett, Communication / Mgt
-  Stephanie Mansfield, Asst. MBA Director
-  Michelle Johnston, Commun / Mgt
-  Kendra Reed, MBA Director / Management
-  David Luechauer, Associate Dean
-  Nate Straight, Assessment Coordinator

Each student's presentation was rated on a 0-2 scale on a total of 6 dimensions of this learning goal. A score of 0 represented a student that "failed expectations"; 2 represented "exceeded."

The overall assessment results, by dimension, are as follows:



Observable Dimensions of Learning Goals	Fails	Meets	Exceeds	M or E
1. Participation in the decision-making process	3	7	10	85%
2. Recommendation of sound managerial action	6	11	3	70%
3. Active engagement of the intended audience	3	10	7	85%
4. Emotional connection / impression on listeners	1	9	10	95%
5. Fluent explanation of business information	2	12	8	90%
6. Persuasive communication of proposed ideas	5	9	6	75%

The dimensions map onto learning goals or objectives as follows:





Learning Goal: Perspective & Communication	Fails	Meets	Exceeds	M or E
1. Synthesize knowledge to take meaningful action (# 1 - 2)	4	10	6	80%
2. Engage & persuade a targeted business audience (# 3, 6)	3	11	6	85%
3. Make a professional & well prepared presentation (# 4, 5)	1	11	8	95%

In addition to the quantitative results above, the raters made these qualitative observations:

Qualitative Observations of Positive Behaviors

-  Students seemed capable of making a connection using a conversational tone / humor
-  Students seemed to believe in their ideas, and were able to work creatively as teams

Qualitative Observations of Negative Behaviors

-  Students had difficulty focusing on information relevant to investor / venture capitalist
-  Students seemed prone to present too much information, both verbally and on slides
-  Students had trouble making eye contact with audience; read from slides too often
-  Students were not uniformly able to carry themselves professionally when presenting, and were variously defensive, too technical, detached, not credible, &/or self-indulgent

The assessment team identified the following key learning areas for potential improvement:

1. Ability to be concise and cut straight to the point, selecting only most relevant data
2. Ability to persuasively present a business concept and make a powerful call to action
3. Ability to make a professional impact using appropriate presentation style & materials

In order to improve student learning in these key areas, the team recommends the following:

- 🍷 Include presentation style / impact as part of grading for courses other than communication workshop / orientation course; require students to consider the business plan presentation as an integral part of completing the plan. **(Areas #2 & 3)**
- 🍷 Prepare a presentation template / worksheet to assist non-communication faculty in scoring presentations as a part of grading suggestions given above. **(Areas #2 & 3)**
- 🍷 Assess students' powerpoint slide presentations as well as the spoken portion of the presentation; this will allow students & faculty to receive feedback on both the quality & professional impact of the style, content, & level of detail of the slides. **(Areas #1 & 3)**
- 🍷 Prepare a "Communication Expectations" handbook for students / faculty to clarify & explain the level of performance expected of M.B.A. graduates when giving business presentations; handbook will include standards & guidelines / hints. **(Areas #1, 2, & 3)**
- 🍷 Create a team of knowledgeable faculty to serve as a communication assessment & grading team; offer faculty in later M.B.A. courses the option to have this team come to class to assess &/or grade student presentations of final projects. [Also, the team will allow many faculty members another outlet for college service.] **(Areas #2 & 3)**
- 🍷 Include "communication coaching" as part of the capstone course or other high-level M.B.A. course with significant communication / presentation requirements; 1 or more faculty to work with students during in-class workshops (or out of class) to develop & improve their presentation style, substance, & impact prior to assigned date for final presentation of the business plan or final project. Communication coaching will serve primarily to show the link between strategy & communication of ideas. **(Areas #2 & 3)**
- 🍷 Consider 2-part approach to entrepreneurship course / elective: 1 half devoted to the development of business plan & strategy formulation; 2nd half to cover making the final pitch to venture capitalist or other investor, including selection of relevant information, creation of persuasive & effective presentation, appropriate substance & style for the audience & communication purpose, etc. Could be offered as weekend-format seminar / workshop elective, taught by a small team of faculty; could also be linked to previous coaching recommendation as a follow-up to orientation workshop. **(Areas #1, 2, & 3)**

The assessment worked well, but could be improved. Data summarizing the process is below:

Raw Inter-Rater Reliability by Observed Dimension	% Score Pairs Match
1. Participation in the decision-making process	63%
2. Recommendation of sound managerial action	55%
3. Active engagement of the intended audience	58%
4. Emotional connection / impression on listeners	71%
5. Fluent explanation of business information	45%
6. Persuasive communication of proposed ideas	57%

Raw Inter-Rater Reliability by Learning Goal	% Score Pairs Match
1. Synthesize knowledge to take meaningful action (# 1 - 2)	59%
2. Engage & persuade a targeted business audience (# 3, 6)	58%
3. Make a professional & well prepared presentation (# 4, 5)	58%

With a rating scale of 0-2, the expected level of inter-rater agreement by chance is around 33%. All of the observed dimensions or learning goals display at least some level of internal reliability.

In addition to improvements to learning, the team recommends these process improvements:

- 👉 Reorganize rubric to line-up with P.R.O. (Power – Relationship – Organization) model used by faculty teaching managerial communication class / workshop; this will entail redefining some terms, such as “persuasion” as “power” or “impact” & “fluently” as “with confidence” or “in a logical order” in order to align with the model used in class.
- 👉 Replace assessment of personal decision-making participation or recommendation of managerial action with assessment of performance of team as a whole (teamwork, creativity, transitions, cooperation), since this is easier to observe & can serve as a reasonable proxy for assessment of the preparatory work done prior to presenting.
- 👉 Simplify & focus the entire rubric; use a checklist of specific behaviors rather than all-inclusive descriptions of general behaviors; perform rating / scoring tasks later, after completion of the assessment, & allow assessors to focus on empirical observation of the style & substance; can use the “Communication Expectation” handbook for this.
- 👉 Three things need to be added to the assessment rubric: 1) Presence of a clear & direct “call to action” in the presentation; 2) Use of source citations & direct evidence from data / research; & 3) Quality & usage of powerpoint slides as a presentation aid rather than a narrative to be read or a crutch for unprepared members of the team presenting.
- 👉 Prepare students & assessors better; provide information on assignment to assessors; ensure students are aware of assessment; understand fit of assignment in the course.