



COURTNEY WHITE

Networking and Career Development Report



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COMM 495 CAPSTONE
Dr. Jeanette Kindred, PhD

Section 1: Personal Communication Skills with Reflection and Goals

Personal Communication Skills Inventory

- Interpersonal Communication
 - Created blogs covering topics about ourselves, perception, love, the workforce, and social issues
 - Learned how to embed articles and videos into blogs
 - Foundations of relationships
 - Communication skills with friends and family
 - The dark side of relationships
 - Managing conflict & improving conflict management

- Voice and Articulation
 - Learned how to mark and edit scripts
 - Correct pronunciation, dropping Michigan accent
 - Self-recording & evaluation
 - Breathing, articulation, phonation, pitch, rate, resonance, timing, and diphthong exercises

- Family Communication
 - Created genogram
 - Self-evaluations of self-introduction, personal narrative and genogram presentation

- Intercultural Communication
 - Five stages of perception – stimulation, organization, interpretation/evaluation, memory, recall
 - Social exchange theory – profit & reward vs. cost
 - Six types of love – eros, ludas, storge, pragma, mania, agape
 - Learning the cultural dimension that these types of love exhibit
 - Implicit bias - the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.
 - Most people are not aware of their own biases.
 - In part because we believe the fallacy that ‘good’ people are not biased.
 - If we notice biases in our thinking or actions, we’re more likely to ignore the contradiction, because we are ‘good’ and simply cannot be bias
 - When in fact, ‘good’ people are biased because all people are biased.
 - Our biases are what can keep us alive during dangerous situations, our biases can get us checked out of a grocery store faster, our biases can help us identify potential friends in a new class.
 - Our biases can also inflict harm by taking away opportunities or damaging other people.

- Some people's implicit (unconscious) and explicit (conscious) beliefs align with each other while others do not.
 - When they do not match, it can be an indication that deep down people have learned more stereotypes and prejudice than they are aware of
- Nonverbal Communication
 - What is your online persona
 - RSVP responses for every chapter
 - Completed three mini projects throughout semester
 - Project 1 - identifying nonverbal functions in videos: substituting, emphasizing, contradicting, regulating
 - Project 2 – use job search engines to find a posting and write a cover letter
 - Project 3 – design a room in feng shui and write a blog post
 - Project 4 – create infographic or poster for “Why you should take nonverbal communication” as a course
 - Discovering your personal brand – passions, superpowers, values, purpose, differentiation
 - Culture presentation – PowerPoint presentation on a specific culture or subculture; mine was on the 90’s
- Organizational Communication
 - Completed four case studies utilizing theories and definitions from the textbook
 - Participated in weekly discussion topics chosen by the instructor
 - Final Paper – reflection on the theories and processes learned during the course and describe how these ideas can apply to and improve in my professional life.
 - This was an opportunity to think about my professional competitive advantage, and how what I learned over the semester will be useful to me in the future.
- Communication Ethics
 - Three reaction papers written throughout semester about something that we covered in class
 - Personal Creed Paper – This I believe, creed of commitments, sources & test of ethics
 - Lead the class – create presentation to “lead class” on topic of choosing; I chose organizational ethics
- Communication Theory
 - Post and participate in 7 group discussions throughout the semester (original post 300 word minimum)
 - Complete six 800-word minimum essays on various topics chosen by the instructor

Reflective Summary

The courses above that I feel have helped me the most to become a better communicator are Nonverbal Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Intercultural Communication, and Organizational Communication.

Nonverbal Communication:

- I find that I am paying closer attention to people's gestures, body movement, posture, and eye contact (or lack of) to determine their mood, attitude, and tone.
- I understand the importance of a handshake, and how confidence can be expressed through this simple gesture.
- I am much more aware of my facial expressions and making sure that they match my tone and verbalizations. I have had instances in the past where I have felt my face "stuck" in an expression of surprise, disgust, or annoyance and my fiancé has told me to "fix my face."
- Keeping strong eye contact but looking quickly away every 5-10 seconds so that my gaze does not seem threatening or intimidating.
- Making sure that all my gestures have purpose to what I am saying, trying to avoid distracting gestures that may seem like I am uninterested or annoyed.

Interpersonal Communication:

- My presentation skills were improved as many of our assignments for this course were presented via video presentation recordings.
- I have made a much larger effort to avoid distractions after taking this course; we live in a digital age where information is everywhere, and we sometimes lose sight of how important human interaction is. I try to keep my phone in my purse when I am out with friends or family.
- School courses, clubs, and fitness classes are a great way to bolster interpersonal skills; the past year made it difficult to do a lot of in person functions which is why my school courses were so important – they kept me in touch with other people. The many discussion posts in this course kept everyone engaged.
- This class emphasized that "keeping your cool" when engaging in conversations is paramount. Controlling your emotions and remaining positive shows that you are a confident communicator.

Intercultural Communication:

- Understanding that nonverbal communication is a large part of cultural communication: gestures that are commonplace in the U.S. may be offensive or misunderstood in another culture.
- Learning that colloquialisms which we use on a day-to-day basis may not be appropriate or understood in another culture or country.
- The realization that you are afflicted with implicit biases when you thought you were neutral. This class helped to make conscious biases which were buried. The demonstrations and videos in class showing how effective social media and culture is in creating these biases was instrumental in helping me to "de-bias".

Organizational Communication:

- Having a competitive edge in your industry can make you a formidable job candidate. Doing research about your potential employer, client, or having firsthand knowledge/experience for the position you are applying for is key.
- Diversity and inclusion are very integral parts of most organizations' cultures, and it is important to understand and respect the menagerie of cultures within our own organization. Productivity is likely to be higher in a workplace with greater diversity because all client's needs are different.
- Learning about the different management styles within an organization was very eye opening for me. I realize now how many jobs I have previously held where management was based off a Classical Approach and represented the machine metaphor. It makes me grateful to now be in a position with a company that clearly demonstrates a Human Resources approach to management.

The three communication skills goals that I would like to work on are:

1. Being a more effective listener
 - a. I tend to interrupt people when they are talking and it can come across rude and as if what they are saying is unimportant
 - b. Not "multi-tasking" when someone is talking to me
 - c. Provide feedback without judgements or interjections
2. Setting measurable goals and objectives
 - a. Use S.M.A.R.T. principles to stay on track: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound
 - b. Starting with smaller goals to achieve larger ones
3. Improve negotiation skills at work
 - a. Gain more confidence when asking for a promotion or higher wages
 - b. Find my own negotiation style where I can contain my emotions
 - c. Know exactly what I want so that I can convey it clearly and concisely

Section 2: Professional Knowledge and Abilities with Reflection and Goals

Networking

What qualities do you admire most in other professionals?

1. Empathy – In my opinion, this is the most important quality for a person to have regarding any type of relationship, e.g., romantic, friendship, work-related. Being able to put oneself in the place of another, and understand where they are coming from, can assist in their life and makes them an incredible resource as it pertains to listening and problem solving.

2. Integrity – It is so important to keep your word and to follow through with what you say you are going to do. If others view you as having integrity, you will then earn their respect, generate trust, feel pride, and be entrusted with responsibility.
3. Humility – The ability to admit when you are wrong shows a sign of great character. Of course, you should always be looking out for yourself and remembering your role in the world, however staying humble and diminishing self-importance is key.
4. Kindness – Being kind to humans and animals is very important to me. It can be as simple as opening a door for someone or helping a turtle across the street. Every day little acts like these add up to a lifetime of good choices.
5. Sincerity – Always acting without deceit or hypocrisy is probably the hardest attribute to possess. I think we sometimes tell people what they want to hear to appease or please them even though we may be doing them a disservice by being disingenuous. There are ways to be kind with your words even if the truth may sting a bit.
6. Professional Conduct – Complying with any laws or agreements which demonstrate confidentiality and privacy.
7. Continuing Development & Education – Having an obligation to be versed in any new policies or procedures which may arise in your field.
8. Conflict of Interest – It is very important to be able to distinguish between harmless gifts and bribery. Boundaries must be set between vendors and clients.
9. Safety – This is probably the most important part of working in the construction industry. Not only must OSHA guidelines be followed, but there are even more safety precautions and protocols put in place at specific jobsite locations vs. company headquarters.
10. Inclusion – The participation and collaboration of a diverse work community creates an atmosphere of learning, knowledge, and cohesion. Without diversity, we are not evolving, but rather remaining stagnant while the world around us changes.

How can you help other people?

I believe that I have a strong ability to lead and inspire others. I have always exhibited an enthusiastic and engaging approach to my endeavors, whether professional or personal. Since 2015, I have been organizing, facilitating, and implementing volunteer opportunities through my company, engaging dozens of my co-workers in these events. I am excellent at forming and sustaining relationships because I follow through and make people feel comfortable. I am forthright in my communication with others, yet aware of people's feelings.

How can other people help you?

For other people to help me, I must ask for help. I tend to take on the world and then wonder why I feel the pressure of its weight on my shoulders. I am fortunate to have a romantic partner who is very supportive, emotionally and in our day to day lives. I never realized how much this was missing in my previous relationships until I experienced firsthand what it is like to feel supported. I appreciate my managers at my job; they frequently check in with me and ask if there is anything I need. The culture of Barton Malow is to help people find their perfect fit within the company and help them to achieve those goals. Again, I did not realize how important this aspect of a working environment was until it was available to me.

How can your networking partners help each other?

I cannot stress the importance of networking, either within an organization, or in everyday life. My current job is thanks to interdepartmental networking. Because I communicated so frequently with members of the risk management and foundations departments, I had connections and positions available to me when COVID hit, and the field projects shut down. Networking partners can help each other by offering job opportunities, creating volunteer opportunities, or connecting other people together who have need for each other's talents, services, or products.

What are the red flags you want to avoid?

I always try to stay away from people who are prone to gossip and negativity. Sometimes it is difficult to avoid these people in a workplace setting, but not getting caught up in the drama is very important to me. I also tend to avoid people who are very materialistic or only focused on money because I feel like they may be doing things unethically or for the wrong reasons. I have had experiences in the past where I have been taken advantage of professionally and personally; I will admit that I can be gullible about certain things. I am much more cognizant now of seeing through people who would take advantage of me.

Career Research

After graduation, my short-term plan is to continue working as a risk analyst at Barton Malow. However, I would like to eventually parlay my work with the foundations department, and my communication degree, into a permanent career shift as a fundraising manager and/or public relations specialist, either with Barton Malow or elsewhere.

Public Relations and Fundraising Manager:

Responsibilities:

- Direct the creation of tasks or materials that will enhance the public image of the employer or client
- Help clients communicate with the public

- Supervise and review activities of staff
- Coordinate campaigns or events that will bring in donations for the organization
- Apply for grants
- Write press releases and prepare information for the media; designate spokesperson
- Meet with donors and sponsors
- Design advertising and promotion programs
- Manage progress toward achieving fundraising goals

Education/Work Experience/Skills Required:

- Bachelor's degree in public relations, communication, English, fundraising, or journalism
- Courses in advertising, business administration, public affairs, public speaking, and creative or technical writing is helpful
- Five years or more in related occupation is recommended
- Interpersonal, leadership, organizational, problem-solving, speaking, and writing skills are all important qualities of a candidate in this field

Work Environment:

- Public relations and fundraising managers usually work in offices during business hours
- Some travel may be required to deliver speeches and attend meetings and community activities
- May be high-stress, managing and organizing several events or projects at the same time
- Most positions are full time including long workdays, sometimes more than 40 hours a week

Salary:

- In 2020, the median annual wage for this position was \$118,430 (U.S. Bureau)
- The lowest 10% earned less than \$66,740, and the highest 10% earned more than \$208,000 (U.S. Bureau)
- Wages vary based on geographic, civic, management levels, and corporate variables

Job Outlook:

- Employment in this field is expected to grow 9% from 2019 to 2029, which is higher than the average for all other occupations (U.S. Bureau)
- 7,600 job openings are projected each year over the decade (U.S. Bureau)
- Organizations continue to emphasize community outreach and customer relations to strengthen their reputation, image, and visibility in the public eye
- These positions are becoming increasingly important, as many organizations depend on donations

Reflective Summary

I feel that a career as a public relation and fundraising manager would make me feel fulfilled and that I am making a difference. It would combine my excellent communication skills with my passion for helping others through fundraising, event coordination and implementation, and networking.

My three networking and career related goals are:

1. Switch careers:
 - a. Utilize current networking base within my company to research alternate career opportunities
 - b. Extend my networking circle to professionals outside my company using platforms such as LinkedIn
 - c. Gain experience and develop skills which pertain to my career of interest
 - d. Get education, training, certifications, and degrees associated with my career of interest
 - e. Create realistic and attainable short-term goals to move toward my new career path
2. Focus on my personal development:
 - a. Continuing education, potentially second bachelor's degree or master's
 - b. Attend as many networking opportunities as possible, whether within my work organization or outside, e.g., Livingston Democrats, Chamber of Commerce, Young Professionals, NSLS
 - c. Take leadership and training courses offered through my company to enhance my knowledge base and skill set
 - d. Create personal website and portfolio, updating regularly to ensure relevancy
 - e. Focus on strengthening soft skills such as teamwork, collaboration, and cultural awareness
3. Create and evolve my personal brand:
 - a. Who am I? What am I good at? How can I help others?
 - b. Determine who my audience is and why
 - c. Expand my online presence through social media tools: LinkedIn, Instagram, personal website/portfolio
 - d. What do I want to be known for? Express and demonstrate my skills, accomplishments, and attractive traits
 - e. Continued education and knowledge-based learning on the industries in which I want to work
4. Feel happy at my job:
 - a. Find ways to learn and grow in my company
 - b. Determine what activities energize me and what activities drain me
 - c. Take breaks to go for a walk, stretch, or play with the dogs
 - d. Get plenty of rest and eat healthier
 - e. Set a time to turn off all electronics

- f. Make sure that my company's culture and values mirror my own
- g. Keep open communication with my manager and peers
- h. Continue to build my professional network

Section 3: Summary

My skills and abilities connect to my perspective on networking and to a career in public relations and fundraising management. Not only will my earned degree in Communication propel me in the direction of this career, but it will open doors to other departments and opportunities within my current organization. My work with Barton Malow's Foundations Department, my partnership with Healers of Color Collaborative of Michigan, and my extensive volunteer experience all pave the way for me to be successful in this career change.

In addition to my degree in Communication, I believe that a second degree in Public Relations, Marketing, or Business Management would greatly benefit me and propel me faster and further into this career. At this time, I am unsure if a second bachelor's degree or a master's degree in a specific course of study would better suit my career goals and ambitions. I plan on meeting with an academic counselor at EMU to discuss potential future programs, and how different or multiple degrees might serve me well. There are specific certifications and credentials that can be obtained through The Public Relations Society of America, CFRE International, and The International Association of Business Communicators; these certifications would add a level of depth and demonstrate higher levels of knowledge and expertise in my field. I will continue to participate in networking and volunteer opportunities with Eastern Michigan University's chapter of NSLS (The National Society of Leadership and Success) as well as attend the broadcast lectures, advanced leadership training, and leadership summit series.

This Communication Capstone course has helped me apply skills and knowledge to a specific project, while building my personal and professional resume. I have learned exactly what I can accomplish during a short, 7-week semester. Taking three courses in addition to my Capstone, I have had to be very well organized and demonstrate exceptional time management. This course has created an environment much like "the real world" where there are contracts, deadlines, and personal accountability. Also, the course showed how one must work collaboratively with a nonprofit team and board members to reach common goals. The biggest takeaway for me with the Capstone is that it allowed me to align myself and my project with my personal passions and

interests. I have always enjoyed the experience of volunteering and organizing for charities and nonprofits, but this project gave me the opportunity to create longevity in donations, corporate partnership, and skill-based volunteer opportunities to strengthen HCCM's infrastructure and capacity. I found the instruction in this course to be above average and was very pleased with Dr. Kindred's level of mentorship, accessibility, and correspondence.

As far as life after graduation goes – I feel like I am already living it. I have been in the workforce for 26 years as a fast-food worker, a busser, a server, a bartender, a singer, a DJ, an events director, an office manager, a project coordinator, and a risk management analyst. All these jobs have helped me evolve into the individual and professional that I am now. I took a ten-year hiatus from school in 2010 and came back to it in 2020 with a vengeance. I have maintained a 4.0 GPA since my return to the academic world and I could not be prouder. I have proved to myself that I can be successful and accomplish great things when I put my mind to it. I have great mentors, extensive networking opportunities, and a supportive friend and family system.

Do I feel prepared for life after graduation? You bet I do.

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