Mike Wiese

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Coursework Paper

The courses that I have taken as communication studies major have prepared me for finding a job and being successful in the workplace. They have made me a better leader by improving my skills in decision making, building networks, persuasion, writing, and thinking critically. Many of my courses and life experiences will help me excel in a business setting, but the most significant are Intercultural Communication, Nonverbal Communication, Advanced Organizational Communication, growing up playing soccer, and past working experiences.

Intercultural Communication gave me a much deeper understanding of how people and cultures become the way they are, as well as people's behaviors and values across different cultures. A great example of this is the idea of a grand narrative or master story of how things are the way they are. Everyone has multiple histories for instance social, intellectual, family, political, and national histories that make up our identity. I found this concept very interesting and it gave me a somewhat different perspective of how I identify people. People are normally familiar of their own identity, but we have misconceptions and know far less about others histories.

Many large and successful companies operate on an International level, so having an understanding of the differences between cultures can really help an employee. Identity, power distance, individualism, and collectivism are all major concepts that can be utilized in an international company. For example, say I am representing my company who is trying to persuade a large electronics company in Japan to buy our parts for their phones, but first I must meet the CEO in person. When I first meet him I consider his history and realize that growing up in Japan means he most likely has a collectivist business culture. This means he has more of a focus on group goals, loyalty, and promoting harmony in the workplace which is quite different from the self oriented individualistic culture in America. These concepts will truly help me express ideas successfully and sell my product by having a better understanding of the CEO's identity. Finally, since there is a high power distance between me and the CEO I can communicate respect to him both verbally and nonverbally by bowing lower then when we first meet.

Nonverbal communication is one of my favorite classes and its major concept can help me find a job and excel in it. The material I learned in this class and the importance of nonverbal behaviors have been frequently referenced in every one of my communication classes. A good example of a when I can use my knowledge of nonverbal communication would be in a job interview. First by dressing professionally, because even clothing can communicate to the interviewer. Appearance is even more important in initial interactions so it is crucial to dress how you want to be perceived by others. This idea is the same for all of the aspect of nonverbal when in an interview. I would make sure to keep a good upright posture in my chair and pay attention to my gaze tendencies by maintaining eye contact. Although silence in a conversation is usually seen as a negative, when used properly it can help in the interaction with an effective pause or by maintaining a conversation.

The nonverbal concepts that I learned in this class are not useful solely for the interview process they have many applications in most professions. Say I received a position in advertising working on television commercials for a product that has not been selling well. I can drastically enhance the effectiveness of the commercial by focusing on the nonverbal aspect the message. We learned in class that people are less guarded against nonverbal influence and less critical of their content. Understanding that advertisements can influence the viewer emotionally I can attempt to incorporate positive emotion in the nonverbal messages of my commercial. You may be asking yourself, how could this be done? Well it is simple nonverbal messages account for an overwhelming amount of the total message. Hair, settings, makeup, clothes, props, and even the background can all be used to nonverbally persuade the viewer into changing their perspective at the product. By realizing all of the nonverbal messages and focusing on making them display the message I want, in this scenario a positive perception of the product, I can excel in the field of advertising.

Advanced Organizational Communication was a harder class for me, but it really made me improve as writer. I learned a lot of important concepts such as cognitive bias and information pooling, and I feel more prepared for both group-work and conflict resolution in a business setting. The best part of the course was the Mt. Everest simulation it was extremely beneficial because it gave me a better understanding the class concepts in an interactive setting. We were broken into groups and we had to work with our group to summit Mt. Everest on a computer simulation. We all shared common goals like summiting and staying healthy, but we also had a set of individual goals. I learned that working together with a group can make monumental task much easier or even possible. It was also apparent that when working in a group it is important focus on the overall groups goals while working on personal goals. When working in a group problems can occur if you withhold information so information pooling techniques should be used to get everything out on the table. In the final section of the simulation we had to divide the oxygen tanks between our group by calculating how much everyone needed and a conflict arose. My teammate wanted me to have the last tank, but I knew that already had enough to make it to the summit. Despite my completely contrary information he insisted that I take the last tank, and that is what we did. He ran out of oxygen and was the only person in the group who did not reach the summit. This is an clear example of cognitive bias and its effect on the group. So I saw firsthand that it is important to share information and take everyone's argument into consideration instead of just holding on to your own personal preferences.

We spent a large amount time with different scenarios involving business conflicts and how to resolve them in Advanced Organizational Communication. For example say I am hired for a Job at toy manufacturer that is behind on orders during a hectic holiday season. No one has the time to properly train me so the four managers all give me work to do. Frantically working to meet buyers demands the managers give me conflicting assignments and in turn they are angry, and one manager yells at me when I am doing things other then what he specifically told me. My new job quickly turned into a hostile work environment. At this point there are two options I could think I am not cut out for this job and quit, or I could attempt to resolve the conflict and excel in the workplace. We saw examples in class of how a work environment can become a disaster, if you avoid the issue the negative trend continues in the future. Knowing this I would address the issue right away and attempt meet with my manager to explain why the issue occurred. By being apologetic opposed to hostile or snide I can attempt to explain that I am sorry for my mistake and communicate that I have not been properly trained yet and I am receiving conflicting assignments from multiple authority figures. This issue occurred due to lack of horizontal communication between the upper management, but if the issue is addressed instead of avoided you can prevent it from escalating over time, causing you to have a lower job satisfaction.

Outside of the major I really excelled in my Statistics class and I felt it went hand in hand with my Communication Research class that I had the same semester. This class has an enormous amount of very useful material for a business setting. Say that get a job with working for the N.Y. Jets football team's marketing department. They want to know why ticket sales have been low for the last year as well as get feedback from fans about the new Metlife Stadium. I can create a survey with a 7 or 9 point Likert scale and distribute to the fans to test for attitudes and behaviors. I can also take the demographic information from my survey and show the distribution of the various information on a curve. Finally I can calculate the standard deviation and reliability correlation between two variables.

I grew up playing soccer year round from a very young age and although I do not play in a league anymore I still play frequently with my friends. Many of the skills I acquired playing soccer translate into a business setting. Both a soccer field and an office building can very competitive, and you have to work together as a team to succeed. On the soccer field I am a leader and always give it my all to help my team win and I try to transfer that attitude into an office setting. The most important aspect of soccer is teamwork and as I learned in Advanced Organizational Communication group goals are more important than my own personal goals. In soccer if you only care about personal goals and do not pass to your team you will not be able to get the ball down the field and score a goal, but it you work with your team and pass it down the field you can take a shot. The same is true while working on a business team, if you are selfish and do not contribute to the team your are destine to be unsuccessful.

I have spent many years working as a lifeguard In the summer and eventually was promoted and began working in their office. I was in charge of scheduling the guards to various locations and talking on the phone with property owners and people who needed local pool repairs. I experienced a lot of conflict in this job because the lifeguards would frequently change their shifts with each other and not report it to me. When people forgot that they switched and no one showed up at a pool the property owner calls me and is extremely irate. He wants to know why he pays for a service if no one is going to show up. If I avoid this conflict the man will stop doing business with our company so I had to communicate and address the issue. I resolved the conflict by telling him I am very sorry that no one showed up I will have a guard sent over immediately. I then called numerous lifeguards until I found someone to cover and called the man back explaining someone is on the way.

In conclusion, my Communication Studies courses and life experiences have really helped to prepare me for the workplace by providing me use concepts. I am a strong communicator who can think critically, resolve conflict, and work well as part of a team. Finally, the knowledge that I have gained at WVU and through my major has set me up to succeed and excel in a business setting.