Instructor: Edward H. Barr  
268-4381  
edbarr@cmu.edu

Office Hours: Scheduled upon request

Introduction
Organizations use writing to tell their story, to state their mission and values, to describe their jobs, to establish their policies, evaluate their employees, and sell to their customers. They use letters, e-mail, RFP’s and sometimes legal briefs, among other things, to do business.

In this class, we will create an organization from the ground up, using the written word to define us, give us purpose and direction, and sustain us. We will create this organization as we go, just as a startup would, either a for-profit or a not-for-profit. This activity will call to question our writing skills as well as other communication and interpersonal skills, including patience and understanding of each other’s unique gifts and points of view.

Course Goals

This course is intended to:
1) Provide you an experience for strategic thinking, consensus building, and creativity,
2) Improve your writing and expression of ideas,
3) Increase your appreciation of the power of language in the workplace, and
4) Provide you an understanding and appreciation of the importance of workplace communication, especially professional writing.

Overview
The success of our class will depend to a large extent on the participation of all members. Therefore, class participation will be recorded and applied to grading. The majority of class time will be devoted to in-class discussion, as well as writing and re-writing. Out-of-class assignments will include research and writing.

Attendance and Other Matters

This course will be somewhat experimental. If it is to succeed, and we are to learn, we must all attend, to the best of our physical and emotional ability. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. If you miss class, your grade will be lowered. (Legitimate excuses will be considered.) We will work together in discussion and in self-directed teams. While in class, cell phones and laptop computers must be used for class-related purposes only.
Class One – Organizational Story Telling. What is our story? What is our name? Who are we, why are we here, what is our vision and how can that help the world. We will exam the names and stories of other organizations. Assignment – Find the stories of other corporations, create our name and write our story.

Class Two – Organizational Mission and Values. To what noble ends do we aspire? What do we value? What models can we use to help us? Enron? Tyco? Apple? Microsoft? Assignment – Find the mission and values of other organizations, both for-profit and not-for-profit, and write ours.

Class Three – Organizational Vision – Where do we want to be next year, five years from now, fifty years hence? How do we express this so that it creates a clear and inspiring message for ourselves and all of our important audiences? Assignment – Find the vision statements of other organizations and use them as models in creating ours.

Class Four – Organizational Strategic Plan – What specific and measurable actions must each of us perform to help us achieve our vision? What words do we use to create clarity and measurability? What words do we avoid? Assignment – Find a strategic plan from another organization and relate it to ours.

Class Five – Job Descriptions – Every organization must describe in detail for each of its employees their duties and responsibilities. A common lexicon exists for creating these descriptions. We will exam this language and use it or adapt it to our purposes. Assignment – Create job descriptions for the positions within our organization by comparing them to other such descriptions.

Class Six – Marketing Writing – Peter Drucker said that organizations have only one purpose, to create a customer. He added that organizations have two ways to create customers, through innovation and marketing. Now that we exist, because we have an innovative idea to satisfy the needs of customers, we must tell them of our capacity to help them. This will require words, many of them. Assignment – Collect organizational marketing materials.

Class Seven – Marketing Writing – We will use writing to define our products and services in ways that match customers wants and needs. We will review web copy and sales literature to use as models in creating our own. Assignment – Bring copies of web copy and sales literature to class.

Class Eight – Marketing Writing – We will continue to exam the many forms of marketing writing. We will review annual reports, RFP’s, and e-mail blasts, among other things, in an effort to understand the role each plays in organizational marketing communication. In particular, we wish to understand the efficacy of such communications as organizations budget ever-increasing sums of money to prepare them. Assignment – Bring copies of annual reports, RFP’s and other designated items.
Class Nine – PR Writing – Most organizations have a public relations function whose purpose it is to understand the nature and interests of internal and external audiences, particularly the employees and news media, and to prepare organizational messages to respond appropriately to those audiences. Assignment – Bring copies of PR materials

Class Ten – Goals and Objectives – Most organizations motivate and evaluate their employees by using the written word. These motivations and evaluations are based on previously agreed upon goal statements. A lexicon exists for writing goal statements. We will exam it. Assignment – Bring to class goal statements

Class Eleven – Employee Evaluations – Every manager will face the task of evaluating his or her employees. This task is made easier when the manager has established measurable and achievable goals and objectives and when the manager understands the language of evaluation. Again, a common lexicon exists for this purpose. We will evaluate it. Assignment – Write an evaluation of a subordinate.

Class Twelve – Technology and Communication – We have entered the age of technology. This has created opportunities as well as problems. E-mail has speeded our messages and our mistake and Instant Messaging has only begun and is not well understood. How can companies use these tools to their best advantage and avoid having their e-mails, for instance, become “e-vil mail” or “e-vidence mail”? Assignment – Review the technology/communication policies of organizations.

Class Thirteen – Contemporary Writing on Business – Non-fiction writing outpaces fiction in books stores today. Why are Jim Collins, Tom Peters, Peter Drucker, John Maxwell, Jack Welch, Faith Popcorn and other so popular? What are they saying that resonates so well with professionals? How do they write? How can an understanding of this help us? Assignment – Share a written piece from a popular business writer.

Class Fourteen – Writing into Speaking – Most speeches begin as written documents. And, many organizations employ speech writers to assist the executives in delivering inspiring speeches. How do written and read words differ from written and spoken words? What similarities do they share? Assignment – Bring written examples of speeches to class.

Class Fifteen – Evaluating writing – Writing is just another physical and mental activity unless it is regularly evaluated. What tools can we use to evaluate marketing writing, speech writing, RFP’s and so on?

Class Sixteen – Summary – How does an organization depend on the written word? How did our organization take form around the written word?