

Integrating Technology to Answer the Question: Why Is the Study of Communication Important?

Kimberly M. Cuny

Objective

To offer visual, auditory, and kinesthetic student-learners a practical exploration of the demand for communication skills in today's job market.

Approximate Time Required

10-minutes of class instruction while introducing the activity and entertaining questions; followed by 10-minutes of student-generated discussion and questions about the activity

Actual student activity and follow-up questions and discussion will vary according to how many students are in the class and the time assigned by the instructor; this will easily take 1-2 hours

Materials Needed

Student: World Wide Web access (computer lab or home) and a printer

Professor: Assessment tool for activity; copies of assignment handout; easel paper; markers approved for easel paper (others will bleed onto wall); and masking tape

Rationale

Students often ask the question, "Why should I take a communication course?" Because knowledge of communication can be beneficial to any career (Morreale & Vogl, 1998), this assignment allows students to start to make the connection between communication studies and their own career goals.

Things To Do Before The Activity

Become familiar with the Newspaper Association of America's gateway to local newspapers web site located at <http://www.newspaperlinks.com/>.

Create and photocopy assessment tool for class activity. Match students with states. Assign some of the class to the first half of the alphabet and some to the second. (To avoid getting an accounting ad from every student in your class.) For many students, this is the first time they have looked at the classified

ads. Consider assigning the research over the course of a weekend so students will be exposed to the Sunday ads.

What To Do During The Activity

When assigning project: 1. Distribute "Looking to the Classified Advertisements for Answers" handout, review the assignment, and entertain questions, 2. Refer students to course calendar for scheduling.

During classroom activity: 1. Divide class into groups each having one person to serve as the writer and another the speaker; 2. Give each group a marker, a blank sheet of easel paper, and tape, 3. Instruct groups to tape their paper on the wall, 4. Have each group use the paper to create a master list/poster of jobs found by all members (employ writer here) as they discuss why the jobs found might require communication skills, 5. Ask each group speaker will read the list to the class, and 6. facilitate class discussion that explores why the jobs might require communication skills.

What To Do After Activity

Allow for class discussion or assign a written reflection. Ask students questions that allow them to critically analyze what they have learned as a result of the assignment.

Sample Questions:

1. What did you learn from this assignment?
2. What was the hardest aspect of completing this assignment? Why?
3. What are the negative aspects of completing this assignment?
4. What are the positive aspects of completing this assignment?
5. What did the jobs found by your group have in common?
6. Why do some colleges and universities require all students to successfully complete a communication course?
7. Why is such a requirement a good idea?
8. What are the limitations of such a requirement?
9. Why is the study of communication important?

Alternative Uses Or Extensions

This activity could be used as group element for the basic course.

Create an easel page that ties the lists together (i.e.: Careers That Require Communication Skills). Leave it and the posters, with the lists, on the walls for a few days to allow other students to be exposed to the ideas involved. Consider marking the posters with class section number(s) as students often respond favorably to ownership.

References

Morreale, S. P., & Vogl, M. W. (1998). *Pathways to careers in communication*. Washington D. C.: National Communication Association. Also available online at: <http://www.natcom.org/Instruction/Pathways/5thEd.htm>

Additional Readings

What can you do with a communication degree? (1984). Glenview: IL: Scott Foresman Publishing.

Looking To the Classified Advertisements for Answers

Task: To use the world wide web to find out if communication skills are desired in the workplace.

Goals:

1. To understand why it is important to study communication.
2. To reduce uncertainty related to the kind of jobs communication studies can lead.
3. To explore the need to study communication regardless of career goals.
4. To introduce students to the availability of newspapers and classifieds online.
5. To recognize why the study of communication is required.

Assignment: Research communication skills desired in classified ads, around the country, using the Newspaper Association of America's gateway to local newspapers web site located at <http://www.newspaperlinks.com/>.

Step #1: How to get started

Each of you will be given a different state to research and you will be assigned either the first half or the second half of the alphabet (classified ads are listed alphabetically). You must find 10 newspaper "want ads" that are looking for communication skills/knowledge in a perspective employee. It is strongly suggested that you conduct your research over the course of several days. You must find different types of jobs; for example you can not simply find a collection of the same kind of television position. You might even use this opportunity to explore careers you have in mind. You will be looking for a variety of positions that require communication skills and/or knowledge. Stay away from telecommunications and computer communications, as that is not what we are studying in this class. If you need a list of key words to use for your search, check out our course textbook.

Using the web address above, you must find "want ads" in at least 3 different papers.

Step #2: What you need to do after you locate each ad

Print the ads and offer a brief rational for why you think communication skills might be needed for the position. Be sure to have these with you at the start of class on _____.

You will research the following state: _____

In an effort to reduce duplication of jobs found by the entire class, you will limit your search to the _____ half of the alphabet.