

COMS 361

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION OUR THING 02: "Brands of Coffee"

"It's a small office, Raylan. I'm concerned if we switch brands of coffee."

Art Mullen (Nick Searcy), *Justified*

For your **second individual/group project**, your team is to create an **instructional package** to be used in **training people** how to "read" an **organization**, using the **required and suggested reading** materials for **Units 1 and 2** (although the **focus** here is obviously on **Unit 2**, for this and each of your **subsequent assignments** I will look kindly upon efforts to **incorporate material** from **previous units**—thus, **reading an organization (Unit 2)** should involve considerations of **etiquette** and **good behavior** (the focus of **Unit 1**).

In constructing your **instructional package**, try to take the perspective of a **new entrant** into an organization. Everyone has shared the **scary** experience of trying hard to **assimilate into a new organization**, confronted with an **overwhelming mass** of detail about **how things work**; **who** to know; what your **purpose** is; what to **seek out**; what to **avoid**; and **on and on and on**. Nonetheless, even given the **bewildering diversity** of details about organizations, the study of **organizational communication** and **behavior** tells us that organizations share **certain common characteristics** that work to **create** and **sustain communication practices**. Obviously, you could find **thousands of examples** of such advice on the **World Wide Web**, but that is **obviously not** what I want you to do. Instead, I want you to use the material in your **assigned readings**, backed up (if necessary) by material from the **suggested readings**, to create your own **guidelines** for figuring out how to **survive** an unfamiliar organization.

The readings have been chosen to provide you with a **dense infusion** of **information** from which you draw points to **bring into** your **instructional package** (and of course they will be the **questions** asked on **your exams**). These may or may not be **obvious**; you'll probably have to **dig** to find the **nuggets** to include in this package. We are not looking to offer what's **already** been gone over, **many times**: we are looking for a **deeper understanding** that takes us beyond the **limitations** of simple "**do's and don'ts**." You will still propose **things to do** and **to avoid**, but those results are based on a **solid foundation** from scholarly/applied research.

I'm not big on **examples**, because I do not wish to **limit your creativity** (the **greatest enjoyment** about this **style** of teaching comes from the **delight** I experience as I am **constantly surprised** by what you come up with, literally, **how you teach me**). Now, everyone who's taken a course from me before will **already know** how this process works, so for those who haven't, I offer, for this assignment **only**, an example of what I am talking about. Your team **may not** use this example in **completing** your assignment.

From the Unit 2 reading by **Guzley** on **organizational** and **communication climate**, and **commitment**, there is this quotation: "The **relationships** between organizational climate, communication climate, and organizational commitment may be **moderated by other**

variables." As you will learn in Unit 2, organization **climate** (which, using slang, you might put as **what an organization "feels like"**), is more precisely defined in the Guzman reading as a

...**subjectively experienced quality** of the **internal environment** of an organization: the concept embraces a general cluster of **inferred predispositions** identifiable through **reports of members' perceptions of messages** and **message-related events** occurring in the organization. (p. 29)
[emphasis added]

From our neophyte's view, one's **initial, intuitive impression** of an organization is **important**, addressing the inner question, "Will (would) **I enjoy (feel good)** working here?" Yet Guzley's first quotation warns us that these traits "may be **moderated by other variables**." So, you may want to **remind the trainee** that things are **often more complex** than we think, and that one should not rely on **first impressions** as true (though they **could be**), since there is always **more to be discovered**.

The parameters of the assignment are as follows. You are to find at least **seven specific** ideas/perspectives/viewpoints (the common research term for these is "**lenses**," and this is how we will refer to them **from now on** [review the **mini-lecture** on lenses, on the **OUR THING** page) from among the required readings (an instance of a **lens**, from my example, would be "**communication climate**," or more specifically, **findings** from research on communication climate). You may use **any of the readings**, but there must be **at least two lenses** from each of the readings. Be sure to identify **exactly which lenses** you are using, and where in the readings I can **find them**. In this **first production** of your training manual, you should include this **bibliographic information**, though obviously as we work toward the final product (the **compiled training manual**), this information **would not** be included.

As to **contents**, you should include: (1) your **training manual** (which should be formatted as a **high-quality item** you'd be **proud to provide** trainees as your organization's product); (2) a **PowerPoint presentation**; (3) **handouts** you want your audience to have (you just need to turn in **one copy**, not enough to **hand out to everyone!**); and (4) any other form of communication you need to get your message across (e.g., role **plays**). Your presentation should take no **fewer** than **eight, nor more than twelve, minutes**.

For this and **subsequent** OUR THING assignments, there'll be sessions **set aside** where your group can prepare. Should my lectures often run **short**, you can employ the **remaining time** for group work while I'm on hand to **help**. Hand in a **hard copy** of your documents (with **attachments**) **prior to presenting** (this is primarily to aid me in **taking notes** during your performance), as well as sending an **electronic version** via email attachment (an **attachment** to an **Outlook email**, no **third-party** stuff like Google Docs!). **Your results** will be presented on the **day indicated** in the syllabus. Everything will be graded on the basis of **completeness**, use of **reading material**, **originality**, and **coherence**.