**From Lost Art to Living Abilities: Business Communication Basics**

**PDW Proposal for EAM 2018**

**Abstract**

My students don’t know how to write or even address emails! Why do they insist on addressing me by my first name or worse yet as “hey?” When I talk to them about memos and executive summaries, they have no idea what they are! And when they wait until 11:00PM to email me about an assignment due at midnight, why are they annoyed when I don’t respond immediately?

This PDW will address the communication basics that we all complain are non-existent in our digital native students. We will discuss which basics seem to be missing, how we might develop them through activities and assignments, and how we might take the first steps to reinforcing them across the business curriculum.

**Key words:** communication basics, etiquette, digital native

**Background**

“Classroom teaching has evolved hugely over the years, from mainly teacher-led to pupil-led learning” (Kay, 2018). Beginning with Marc Prensky, who developed the concept of Generation Z as “Digital Natives” and labelling earlier generations as “Digital Immigrants” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1), much of the recent literature addressing the teaching of these digital natives has focused on their strong reliance on technology, and how teachers have to adapt to reach the technology-driven behaviors of this newest generation ([Adobe Communications Team](https://theblog.adobe.com/author/adobeconversationsteam/), 2018; Cengage Learning, undated; Čut, 2017; Deady, 2017; Gillett, 2014; Lynch 2016; Teo, 2013).

Indeed, Kay (2018) indicated five changes facing educators today:

1. The traditional means of demonstrating knowledge and understanding have been replaced by a multimedia experience
2. Feedback from teachers can now be instantaneous
3. Pupils can work anywhere
4. Pupils develop their own learning styles
5. Pupils now have a wealth of information at their fingertips

This individualized, technology focus, however, appears to ignore the “old school” necessities of how to relate interpersonally at the work site, how to employ citizenship and social behaviors among superiors and peers, and how to behave respectfully and congenially in written and spoken interactions.

Our experience is that many management instructors find today’s digital native students woefully ignorant of the communication basics needed by employers (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Deming, 2015). They skillfully text their friends and interact on newer social media, but often do not even know that they should thank prospective employers after job interviews. Their communication is replete with texting-style words such as “U” and “TY.” In short, they are often ill-prepared to enter the level of the workforce that their degrees should afford them (*AACSB Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation,* 2018*)* and often do not represent their educational institutions well.

**Our Workshop**

We propose to discuss this important issue in a PDW that focuses on the following three questions:

1. What communication fundamentals, including etiquette, are critically important in the workplace that we find digital native students lack?
2. How can we design activities and assignments that teach these key communication basics?
3. How can we advocate among our colleagues for minor changes in assignments and perhaps even course design that will help teach and reinforce these communication basics?

**Learning Objectives**

The principal learning objectives of this PDW are for participants to:

* Recognize that the communication problems are widespread and that they are “not alone.”
* Conceptualize and develop new ways to address student communication shortfalls.
* Build ideas and confidence in advocating among peers for incremental changes to improve students’ learning and retention of important communication skills.

**Workshop Plan**

We request a 90 minute PDW that we will conduct as a general discussion, since we feel that the questions build upon one another. If we have a large number of participants, we will break out into tables with each table discussing the same topic and reporting out. In either case, we will capture ideas and suggestions and will provide attendees with all captured ideas and suggestions discussed.

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| **Minutes** | **Activity description** |
| 5 | Introduction of facilitators |
| 10 | Presentation of communication issues that the facilitators have experienced |
| 25 | Question 1 Discussion: Participants will be asked to contribute their key concerns about gaps in students’ knowledge and skills in basic communications practices and etiquette. |
| 20 | Question 2 Discussion: Based on the responses to the first question, participants and facilitators will discuss how these gaps might be addressed through activities and assignments. |
| 20 | Question 3 Discussion: To avoid the “learn-purge” cycle so commonly visible among students, it is important to use many of these communication basics in multiple courses. How can we, as faculty, advocate for our peers to implement changes in their courses to help students learn and retain this communication material? |
| 10 | Wrap-up |

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