



Writing/ discussion prompt:

What's the best job you ever had?
The worst?

Give examples to illustrate each.

Welcome back, everybody. Lets start with this discussion question. Take some time to write your ideas down, then we will talk about it.

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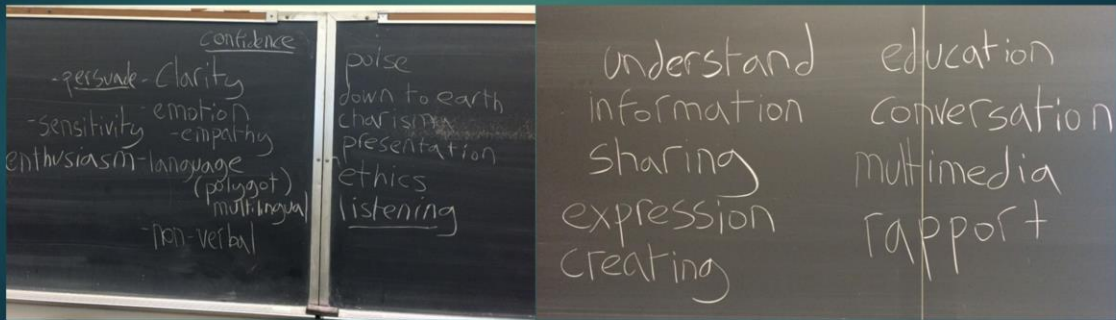


- Barriers to communication
- Self-organizing systems
- Break
- Group exercise
- Resumes, cover letter & draft outline feedback
- Next week: **Mock Interviews**

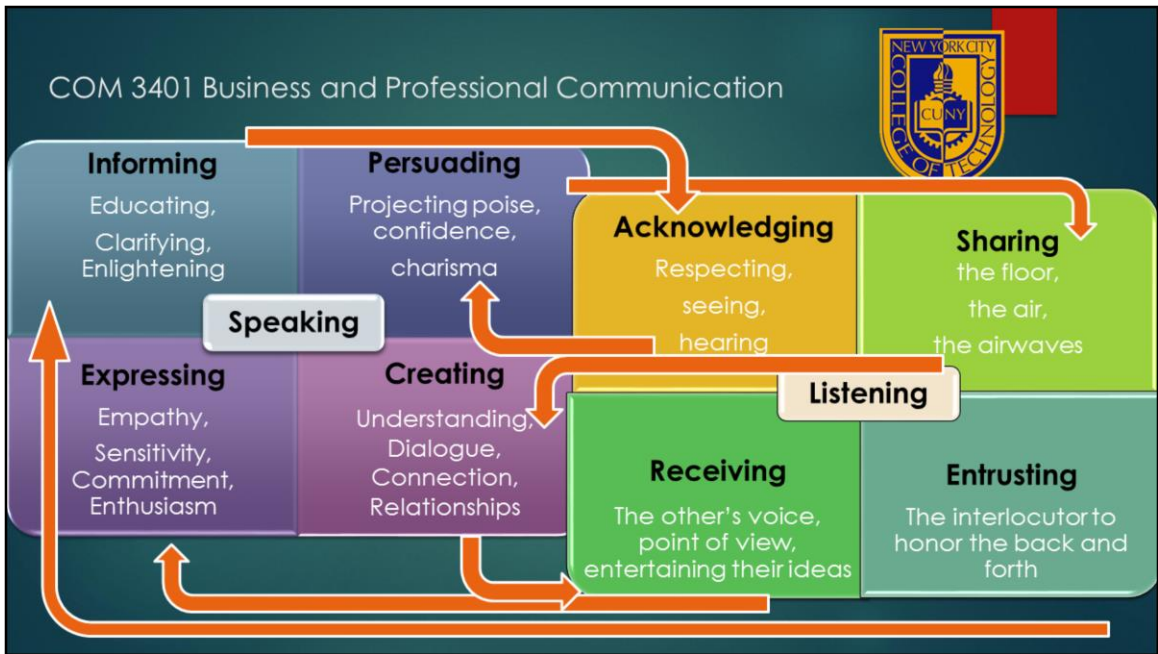
Ok, just to give you a preview of what's on the agenda today.



Revisiting the question, "what is communication?"



Last semester we defined, as a group, our own definition of what communication means to us.



I have taken this rough sketch and devised a back-and-forth, dialogic model of communication, organized around speaking and listening. My point is that, yes, communication is about transferring information, but its about more besides. We also communicate to persuade, or try to bring the listener over to our side. We use communication to express feelings and identification. We also create relationships and even institutions using communication.

Barriers to communication?



Lets go back to the barriers and unpack them further.

Interpersonal issues. So-and-so doesn't like so-and-so. So we all have to rearrange ourselves to accommodate their tiff. What about just 'not going there?'

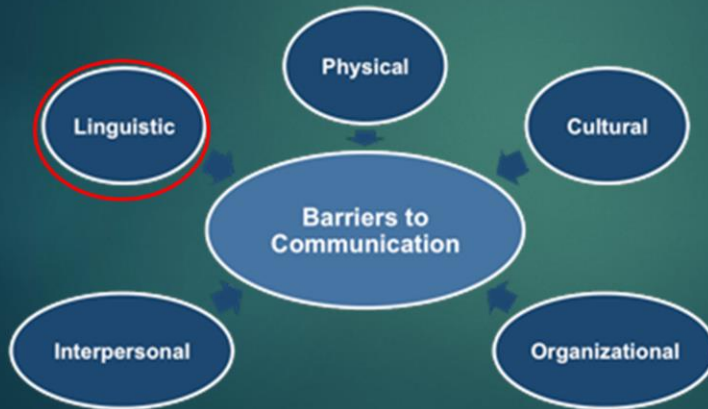
If somebody wants to engage you in a conflict, do you just back out as politely as possible? Or do you confront them? Whats better? Ignore it? Or talk it out? The best way to handle things?

Its different in each case. In some cases, it may be good to move on and let bygones be bygones. If it becomes a pattern—seek support. Seek help from higher ups— talk it out with the antagonist in the presence of another. But NEVER tolerate abuse or bullying.

Have you ever had a conversation that seems competitive? Communication researcher have argued that every message has a “report” and “command” aspect. The “report” is just what the communique is about, ostensibly. The “command” is subtle information in the report that attempts to control or modify the relationship (Watzlawick, et al, 1967).



Barriers to communication?



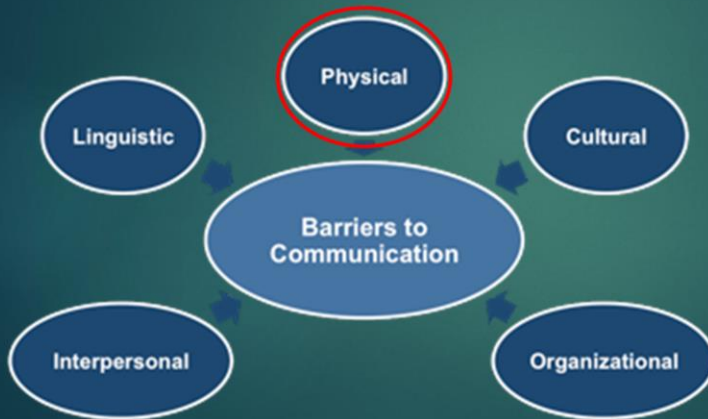
Linguistic barriers...

We are a multilingual nation, city, school and classroom. We need to focus on multilingualism as an asset, not a deficit. For example, I only speak English, except for a few words in Spanish, French, Japanese and Korean. This has hindered, not helped.

Employers are looking for bilingual employees. I think you should emphasize this some more on your cover letters and resumes.



Barriers to communication?

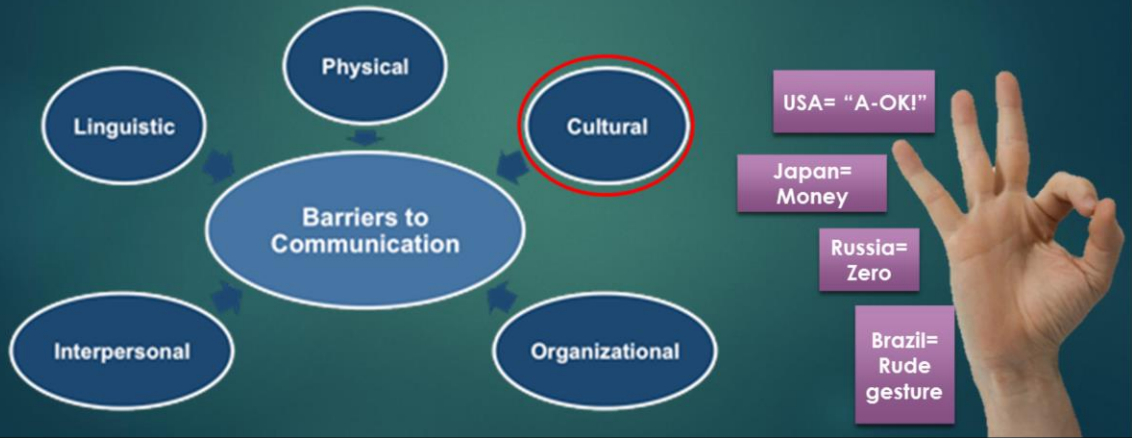


Physical barriers to communication

For example, this classroom. Notice how the computer is at this end of the class which makes it easier for me to “connect” with this side of the class.



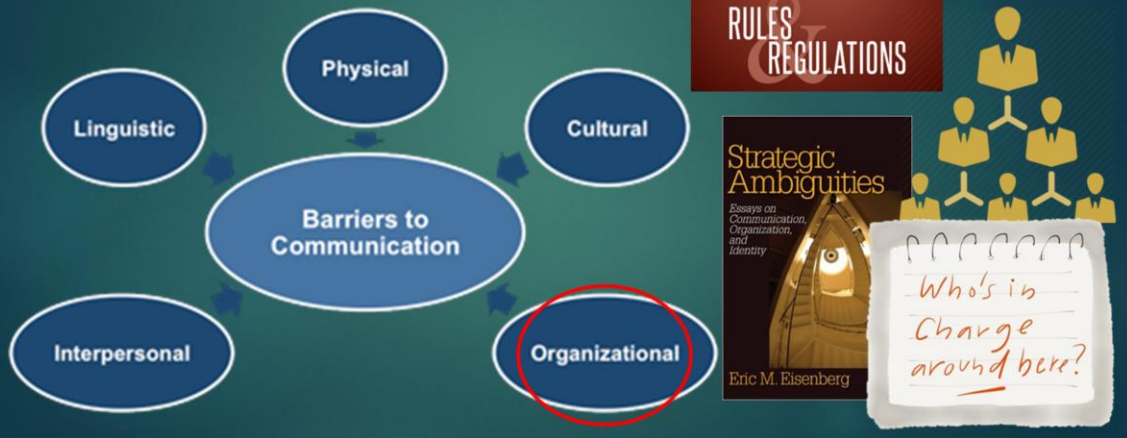
Barriers to communication?



Cultural barriers example, the 'thumbs up' gesture is traditionally considered a rude gesture in middle east. When US troops invaded Iraq they got a lot of 'thumbs up' gestures!



Barriers to communication?



Organizational barriers—we have talked about “chain of command”—how hierarchy delimits communication. For example, my experience at the CDC, getting in trouble with my immediate supervisor by doing things for *her* supervisor. I was serving two bosses.

Rules and regulations can restrict communication in necessary ways (HIPPA, taxes). Sometimes, however, instead of issuing clear commands, those in charge can provide you with the information and expect you to make the necessary inferences needed about how a new mandate may change your work process. Also, some bosses want to leave it open. The idea behind “strategic ambiguity” (Eisenberg, 1984) is that there can be situations where it is advantageous to not be totally forthcoming about your motives or intentions.



Exam system

Who's in
Charge
around here?

So, conflicting, vague mandates... “official” horizontal communication vs. “unofficial” vertical communication. It may lead to the question “Who’s in charge here?” I believe in many cases, orders come from above, but the rank and file figure out, by trial and error, how to actually get the job done.

An example of a self organizing system is a flock of birds. There is no central command instructing birds when to change their flight patterns. Only individual birds responding to the movements of other birds. Each abiding by a simple mandate to fly together and adapt to what their neighbor is doing. Where does the initial change in direction take place, instigating the chain reaction? Would it be possible to determine? This is aka herd behavior.



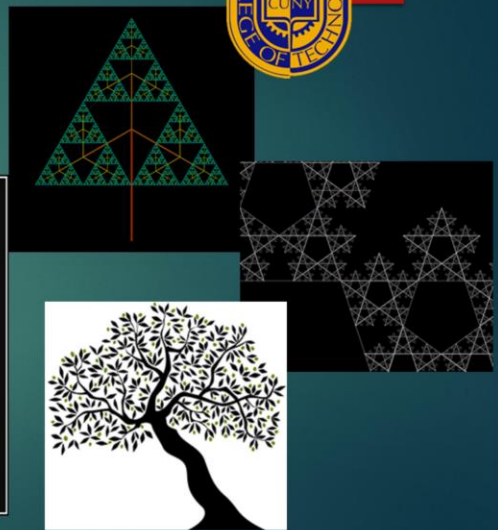
Fractals



Bottomless wonders spring from simple rules, which are repeated without end.

— *Benoit Mandelbrot* —

AZ QUOTES



Fractals are simple patterns or shapes repeated recursively. A simple, self-replicating pattern.



Does self-organization apply to humans?



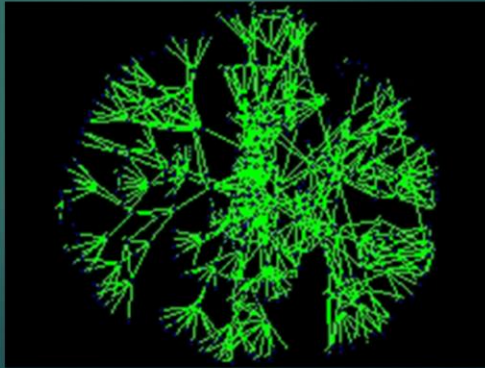
One example of a self-organizing system is the Underground Railroad, where slaves found passage to the north through a clandestine network of sympathetic hosts along the way. The system was successful in spite of there being no central command— you couldn't buy a travel guide or google "underground railroad map."

Actors in the network would provide knowledge of a host in the next town to the north, but there was no overall map of locations. Because the actors lacked overall knowledge of the system, each individual actor in the network was protected from a discovery that would bring down the whole scheme.

Self organizing human systems are decentralized, lacking hierarchy, and information is locally distributed. There is security for the actors in the network by limiting the scope of knowledge of the entire system held by each individual actor. This could be considered "strategic ignorance" or agnotology (Proctor, 2008).



Does self-organization apply to humans?



Social networks are an example of “spontaneous order” arising from individual connection. Social network analysts describe nodes, links and degrees of contact. Notice how the image of a social network resembles a tree, branching out in all directions.



When looking for a job, which position is better?

- 1) Having a huge social network full of people you hardly know?
- 2) Having a smaller social network of close friends?

A side bar about social networks—When looking for a job, which position is better?

- 1) Having a huge social network full of people you hardly know?
- 2) Having a smaller social network of close friends?



When looking for a job, which position is better?

- 1) Having a huge social network full of people you hardly know?
- 2) ~~Having a smaller social network of close friends?~~

**WE HAVE A
WINNER**

It turns out, number one is true.



Strength of weak ties

The Strength of Weak Ties¹

Mark S. Granovetter
Johns Hopkins University

Analysis of social networks is suggested as a tool for linking micro and macro levels of sociological theory. The procedure is illustrated by elaboration of the macro implications of one aspect of small-scale interaction: the strength of dyadic ties. It is argued that the degree of overlap of two individuals' friendship networks varies directly with the strength of their tie to one another. The impact of this principle on diffusion of influence and information, mobility opportunity, and community organization is explored. Stress is laid on the cohesive power of weak ties. Most network models deal, implicitly, with strong ties, thus confining their applicability to small, well-defined groups. Emphasis on weak ties lends itself to discussion of relations *between* groups and to analysis of segments of social structure not easily defined in terms of primary groups.

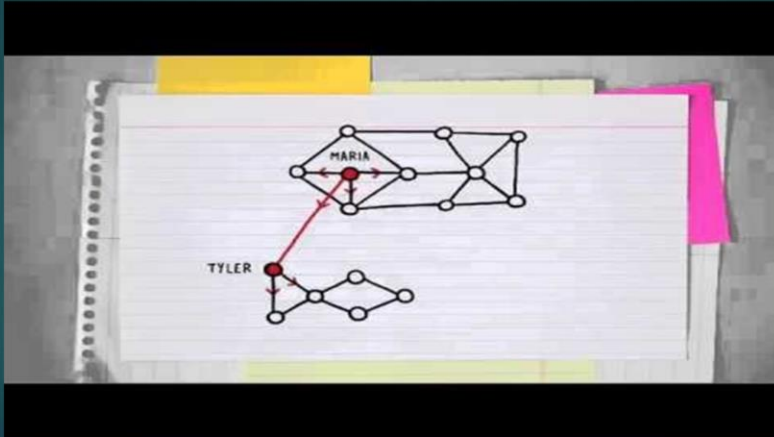
A fundamental weakness of current sociological theory is that it does not relate micro-level interactions to macro-level patterns in any convincing way. Large-scale statistical, as well as qualitative, studies offer a good

Social network analysis shows that for finding a job, knowing a bunch of people a little is more advantageous than knowing less people a lot. It suggests reaching beyond your immediate social circle. This line of research began with Mark Granovetter (1967).

Take for example, the problem of recidivism in criminology—getting out of jail and resuming the same contacts as before.



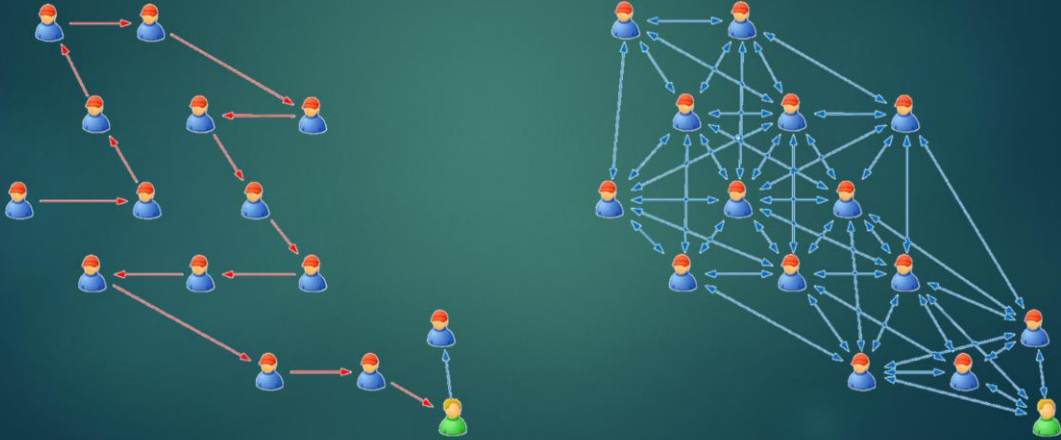
Strength of weak ties



This short video introduces “social entrepreneurs” and “structural holes”



Strength of weak ties



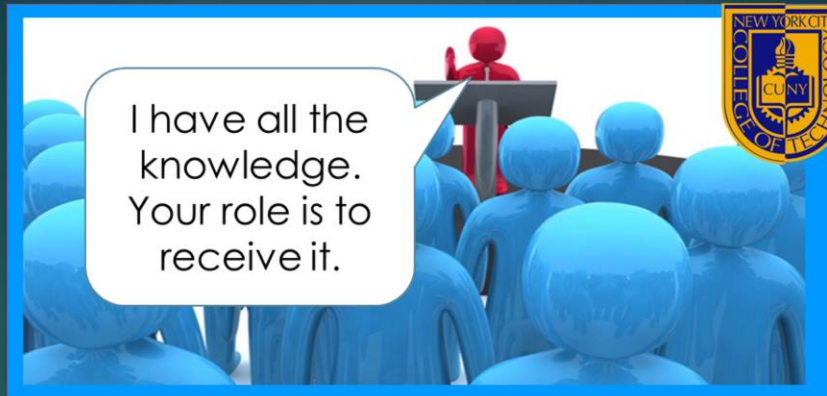
These gifs illustrate redundancy—or why its good to have multiple paths.



Hierarchy




Now let's take this discussion back to the distinction between hierarchy and Heterarchy—returning to these two rubrics or models. It's not that one is superior to the other. Hierarchy provides more established structure. Roles are assigned, not decided on. Whereas, in heterarchy, group members go through a process of self-organization. How do you think it is in your job? Who thinks it is a hierarchy, raise your hand? I figured, because hierarchy is, I believe, vastly more typical. What are other advantages of hierarchy? Disadvantages?



Monologic communication model

I have already set up a heterarchical 'frame' for the course. Not that I am subscribing to a lack of central command, but my purpose is to remain humble and teachable. Everyone in this class has so many interesting experiences, and I want to learn from you.

Therefore I have called upon you to generate the content and subject areas for the final presentations. I believe that in the professional world orders do not always come from above. Your boss or manager may not properly understand how to get the job done. You are the ones out there on the floor, making it happen. Its important to have models and mandates, but when the rubber meets the road, we sometimes encounter unanticipated situations. Therefore I believe in the educational value of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions in the classroom. Instead of spoon feeding you the material, I have called upon you to go out and seek it.

- 
- 1) Collaborate
 - 2) Research
 - 3) Organize
 - 4) Present

**Four simple mandates
deceptively?**

I have provided you with four deceptively simple mandates. Collaborate, research, organize, present. Honestly I have found the results to be predictable so far, but this was anticipated. If you're used to being told what to do it's hard to switch your approach so quickly. I can pick up on some confusion, bewilderment, etc. I apologize for that, but my hope is that it will be a powerful learning experience.

Relate the 911 story, about the girl who asked me "what are we supposed to do??" and the thing was, nobody knew. There were no mandates from above. It was a completely new situation.

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Lets take a five to seven minute break...



Group assignment: "Post-Mortems"

1. Read article
2. Discuss
3. Summarize main points
4. Explain, using examples from the article to illustrate

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General Feedback on Assignments

NOTE: These are not directed at anyone in particular. They are general comments covering issues I noticed across many documents.

Articles for “post mortem” assignment:

[15 Things We Learned About The Downfall Of Target Canada](#)

[Examples of Miscommunication at the Workplace](#)

[How Miscommunication And A Simple Mistake Led To A Toxic Accident](#)

[Words Can Kill In Miscommunication Between Pilot](#)



General Feedback on Assignments

Draft Outlines

- Nice start!
- Final outlines typed
- No cover page



be more
specific
please



Good job everybody. I see you applying the lessons of the lecture and identifying the situations that merit more centralized control, versus those that require input from the bottom up.

Now, I'd like to give you some feedback about the draft outlines; the draft resumes and draft cover letters.

Mainly, I see a lot of people falling into the cliché trap. I have two main suggestions:

Give examples, be specific

Show, don't tell

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General Feedback on Assignments

For example:

"Miscommunication in medicine can have awful results."

"Take, for instance, the tragic case of 8 year old MacKenzie Briant, and the drug interaction that caused her permanent brain damage—all because the prescribing doctor forgot the cardiologist's warning (Bushak, 2013)."



**be more
specific
please**

Whenever you make a claim, you need to back it up with evidence. Statistics, stories—make the issue real to us by providing an specific example.

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General Feedback on Assignments



Don't just tell us that "luxury spas offer a wide range of services."

Show us what you mean:

"For example, the website for Canyon Ranch in Arizona lists 42 menu items, from full body scrub to eyebrow tweezing ("What we offer" 2016)."



Show, don't tell.

Don't just tell us something, show us what you mean with specific examples.

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General Feedback on Assignments

On the resumes and cover letters, I offer similar feedback.

- Be specific
- Provide concrete examples to illustrate
- Show us what you mean, don't just tell
- Reconsider overused clichés



Same thing for resumes and cover letters.

Provide evidence. Make warranted claims.

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General Feedback on Assignments



For example:

"I'm a motivated self-starter."



Instead of a cliché,

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General Feedback on Assignments

For example:

~~"I'm a motivated self-starter."~~



"My recycling initiative at Joe's Bar and Grill netted \$46 in additional revenue each night, enough to cover half of the salary of our dishwasher."

Give an example of something you did. Let the reader make the inference that you take initiative on your own, without being told what to do.

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General Feedback on Assignments



For example:

"I'm a detail-oriented team player."



yawn

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General Feedback on Assignments

For example:

~~"I'm a detail-oriented team player."~~



"In summer 2013 I alphabetized the entire customer database at *A Paw Clips Now Pet Groomers*, adding the name of each dog or cat, which personalized the direct mail effort."

Be specific!

Provide examples to illustrate.

Avoid clichés.

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General Feedback on Assignments

If possible, rephrase "first person" claims about your skills and try to attribute them to feedback you have received:

"I am an excellent communicator."

This resume is going straight to the recycle bin...



General Feedback on Assignments

If possible, rephrase "first person" claims about your skills and try to attribute them to feedback you have received:

~~"I am an excellent communicator."~~

"When my supervisor witnessed me calmly handle an irate customer, he remarked on my excellent communication skills."

Think back on your own experience. Think of something you can reference that will help illustrate your communication skills.

Be specific.

Give examples.

Avoid clichés.

Show, don't tell.

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General Feedback on Assignments

Résumés

- Reverse Chronology (most recent first)
- Explain jargon, technical terms, acronyms
- Elaborate on entries; be specific
- Give examples instead of clichés

Other points about the resumes.

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General Feedback on Assignments

Cover letters: Equivocation

"I hope you might possibly consider me as a candidate for the job."

With the cover letters, we need to strike the right balance of sounding self-assured without being pushy.



General Feedback on Assignments

Cover letters: Equivocation

~~"I hope you might possibly consider me as a candidate for the job."~~

"In conclusion, I look forward to scheduling an interview at your earliest convenience to discuss how my knife sharpening skills will provide value to the *Knives R Us* team."

This alternative is a little more pushy. How else can you change the wording to sound less "wishy washy"?



Next week “Mock Interviews”

- Bring revised cover letter and résumé
- “Dress to impress”