

Narrative

Topic and Lesson:

Business communication classes prepare students to communicate effectively for business, industry, and government in a global workforce. Students develop communication skills, both written and verbal. They gain hands-on experiences with the technical dimensions of communication and reporting while learning the direct impact that cultural, legal, and ethical considerations have on these communications. These classes have the main focus of preparing students to create written business correspondences. Students learn to create documents such as resumes, memos, cover letters, inter- and intra-business documents, and thank-you notes. We feel strongly that Business Communication classes are important to students at all levels; therefore, we have created our instructional lesson to be presented in a Business Communication class.

Students who have taken business communication courses find them to be very valuable resources of information. In a student evaluation of business communication courses performed in 2003 by Bayless and Johnson (2003), students listed the top five components of the course that they found useful. These components included: resumes and interviewing, teamwork, oral presentations, and memos. For our lesson, we chose a business letter. Business letters are created for inter- and intra-company communication. Students will learn about and create a persuasive business letter in the lesson we created.

In business, an individual may have to create a persuasive business proposal asking a company to carry a certain product or to implement a new program. The art of persuasive writing is important any time you are asking someone to do something for you or on your behalf. The most basic form of persuasive writing in a business setting is the creation of a persuasive business letter. The lesson requires students to create their own business letter addressed to another company asking for something in return. In

doing so, students are combining their knowledge of business, psychological insights, creativity, and their communication skills into one simple, yet powerful, package (Sant, 2004).

Instructional Design Theory:

During the creation of our lesson, we assumed that the student would be in a class similar to the Business Communication classes taught at the University of West Georgia. In other words, we assumed that the class would involve an online component that would incorporate at least 50% or more of the class's participation. For this reason, we adopted the constructivist theory of instructional design. As Merrill (1994) stated, instructional design theory is not just what technology you need to use for lessons, but also why and how the technology is used in the classroom.

We consider learning a process that is engaging and active so choosing constructivist learning theory is perfect for the creation of our assignment. Hein (1991) says that teachers who use constructivist learning/design theory in their classrooms consider learning:

- an active process,
- uses hands on experiences and the mind,
- is a social learning activity that includes more people than just the student and teacher,
- considers knowledge a must-have building block of life
- considers the best way to learn is to be motivated

The social learning aspect of constructivist learning theory interacts well with distance learning technology and classes. Students are not face-to-face, but they collaborate with each other in active learning, which is also a component of this theory. As Tam (2000) states, "The penetration of technology into the learning process can have profound consequences for how learning takes place socially. On one side, one can see even more individual learning in a student sitting in front of his or

her computer. But on the other hand, the technology allows for much more diversified and socially rich learning contexts; peer tutoring via computer; computer networks, e-mail, telecommunications” (Constructivism and Technology Section, p. 56).

Web 2.0 Technologies Chosen and Why:

We incorporated several Web 2.0 technologies in our lesson. Web 2.0 technologies provide students a way to communicate about what they have learned and learn in a new way. Duffy (2007) states that students are engaged in collaborative creation and learning as well as become actively involved in peer evaluation and critique. Students can participate in peer reviews of other students work and learn from each other.

To start the lesson, students will watch an embedded [YouTube tutorial](#) on how to write a business letter. We decided to use YouTube as a vehicle of information in order to better relate the material to our students. The use of web 2.0 technology as a medium for information transfer is increasingly popular in education. YouTube videos have the ability to aid in instruction that is presented in a distance learning course because they are engaging, not just informative and entertaining. Two video are embedded into our lesson page because they illustrate two different topics, How to Write a Business Letter and Creating a Persuasive Business Letter.

Students are then required to take a quiz on what they have learned in the video. We created the quiz using Google docs Forms. Educators are using this Google feature for multiple projects within classrooms and for administrative purposes. Web 2.0 technologies, such as [Google Docs](#), are allowing collaboration among teachers, students, and schools throughout the world. Collaboration is the key word. You’ve heard the old adage, “It takes an army...;” well, this is the idea behind the use of these Web 2.0 technologies in the classroom. They allow users to communicate over long distances. Oliver (2007) states that Google Docs is a tool for collaboration and co-editing that

teachers and students can utilize to share data across distances. If we were to change this lesson in the future or if we were working with other teachers to create this lesson, the quiz could be altered easily by any collaborative teacher. In addition, the quiz can be altered in the future to incorporate any feedback from students or fellow teachers.

The most important part of our lesson, the deliverable, combines two Web 2.0 technologies.

Students will create a persuasive letter in Google Docs and then submit the letter in the class blog.

Students will create the letter in Google Docs because they will be able to receive personal feedback from their teacher that other students will not be able to see. In addition, using Google Docs, the letter will maintain its formatting when published. Students will be able to keep all assignments in their own personal Google Docs account. After publishing their letter to the internet, students will place the address in the [blog](#) site. Students are then required to comment on at least one of their peer's persuasive letters.

We chose to use a blog because it is easy for students to collaborate and keep all of their assignments and comments in one place. The blog is used as a vehicle for instructions and information on business communications topics of the current market. Quible (2005) illustrated the use of a blog in the business communication classroom by requiring students to create request, bad-news, and good news letters. Quible (2005) mentions that the use of a blog is a great tool for educators to use in teaching business communications classes because students can submit their work for easy grading and feedback from both their instructor and their peers.

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