

Strategic Communication

Communications Series

Instructor's Guide

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DEVELOPED BY THE TEACHING AND LEARNING LABORATORY AT MIT
FOR THE SINGAPORE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN



Introduction

When to Use this Video

- In Tech 201, as preparation for the first class presentation.

Learning Objectives

After watching this video students will be able to:

- Analyze the audience, context, and purpose of a presentation.
- Convey their own credibility.
- Decide on content, structure, channel, and style.
- Evaluate their own and other's messages for sound arguments and effective strategy.

Motivation

- Effective communication is consistently rated as one of the key competencies that industry expects from graduating engineers.
- A strategic approach to communication will provide students with the tools to develop effective messages in courses, at meetings, over email, at conferences, and to clients and investors.

Student Experience

It is highly recommended that the video is paused when prompted so that students are able to attempt the activities on their own and then check their solutions against the video.

During the video, students will evaluate several components of an MIT student presentation for effective communication strategy.

Key Information

Duration: 18:42

Narrator: Prof. Joanne Yates

Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Pencil

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Video Highlights

This table outlines a collection of activities and important ideas from the video.

Time	Feature	Comments
1:09	Chapter 1: Strategic communication	The elements of strategic communication are defined.
2:08	Interview explaining the context and audience for the student presentation featured in this video	
2:32	Chapter 2: Presentation Segment 1	The first part of a MIT student presentation from a senior-level course on product engineering is shown. The students introduce a product they have developed called Walker Prime, discuss who might use it, and why it is useful.
5:27	SUTD students are asked to consider the purpose for the first part of the presentation.	Students then hear a member of the Walker Prime development team describe the purpose of the presentation.
6:12	SUTD students are asked to consider what the presenters did to establish and build credibility with the audience.	Students then hear a member of the Walker Prime development team describe how they needed to re-establish credibility with part of their audience.
7:34	Chapter 3: Presentation Segment 2	The product design is described in detail.
10:35	Interview with Walker Prime developers	Students describe how they decided on the content of the presentation.
11:26	Chapter 4: Presentation Segment 3	The financial analysis is presented.
13:16	Interview with Walker Prime developers	Students comment on the presentation structure.
14:49	SUTD students consider the channels of communication used.	Students then hear the Walker Prime developers elaborate on this point.
16:26	Chapter 5: Wrap-up	
17:24	Advice for student presenters	After the credits, Walker Prime developers end with advice about giving similar presentations.

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Video Summary

This video describes the key elements of strategic communication. Students watch and evaluate three segments of an MIT student presentation that exemplifies these key elements. Interviews conducted with the presenters illuminate the process they used and the considerations that influenced the development of their message.

Tech 201 Materials

Pre-Video Materials

When appropriate, this guide is accompanied by additional materials to aid in the delivery of some of the following activities and discussions.



1. Have students work in small groups to construct the outline for a class presentation.



2. Ask students to think about a presentation that they have seen that stands out in their minds as being particularly effective and engaging. What aspects of the presentation made it effective? Have students create a list of attributes so they can refer to it later.

Post-Video Materials



1. Have students revisit the presentation outline they created before watching the video, and revise it based on the strategic communication concepts discussed in the video.



2. When structuring a message, one can use a direct or indirect approach. This idea was not discussed in the video, but is important in effective communication strategies. Have students look at their presentation outlines and assess whether they are using a direct or indirect structure. The following explanations of direct and indirect structures might be helpful:

- In general, “direct” communication places the conclusion or recommendation at the beginning of the message. Using direct structure is often effective when communicating to busy professionals. The speaker states his or her main idea or recommendation immediately and then outlines the evidence that supports it. This saves the audience time and makes it easier to follow the logic of the argument.
- “Indirect” communication saves the conclusion or recommendation for the end. Although it may be tempting to take the audience through your entire thought process before you tell them your conclusion, this structure is often more difficult to follow. While a direct approach is generally more effective, there are times when an indirect approach may be appropriate. For example, using an indirect structure to present a controversial idea to a hostile audience may help soften the message.



3. The audience for the Walker Prime presentation was broad. Ask students to consider what they might change about the presentation if they were preparing for an audience of potential investors, manufacturers, or users. You may wish to have students work in groups and focus on one stakeholder group. Then, have the groups report their strategies to the class.

Additional Resources

Going Further

The elements for strategic communication developed in this video can be applied to writing papers that contain persuasive arguments or research material.

References

The following MIT OCW courses focus on communication.

- Breslow, Lori. 15.279 Management Communication for Undergraduates, Spring 2005. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology: MIT OpenCourseWare), <http://ocw.mit.edu> (Accessed 20 Mar, 2012). License: Creative Commons BY-NC-SA
- Hartman, Neal. 15.280 Communication for Managers, Fall 2008. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology: MIT OpenCourseWare), <http://ocw.mit.edu> (Accessed 20 Mar, 2012). License: Creative Commons BY-NC-SA

The following websites are good resources for professional communication.

- MIT Online Writing and Communication Center
<http://writing.mit.edu/wcc>
- Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>
- Purdue Engineering: Rethinking the Design of Presentation Slides: The Assertion-Evidence Structure
<http://writing.engr.psu.edu/slides.html>

The following books might be helpful references for you or your students.

- Munter, M. (2012). *Guide to Managerial Communication: Effective Business Writing and Speaking*. (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Prentice Hall.
- Strunk Jr., W. & White, E. B. (2000). *The Elements of Style*. (4th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

The following links to the Walker Prime Question & Answer session with the audience.

- http://web.mit.edu/2.009/www/grading/finalReview/final_media/movies/q_and_a/green.mov

MIT Professor Dave Wallace has been posting videos of student designs and presentations from his Product Engineering Process course since 2004. You can find them at the URL below.

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

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