

Communications Reflective Essay

Communication is undoubtedly one of the most important skills to hone. Being able to communicate effectively and clearly in your own environment and comfort zone may seem challenging enough, but it increases exponentially in a different culture. Globalization is unavoidable in this day and age, and therefore being able to communicate in the face of cultural diversity is more important than ever.

There are two parts of communication that hold true no matter what culture you are in. Verbal and nonverbal communication exists regardless of the surrounding environment. Last summer I studied abroad in Valencia, Spain. Obviously the verbal communication was completely different due to the language barrier, but the most difficult part was understanding and using the appropriate colloquialisms and metaphoric phrases. “You’re the bomb” and “Chill out” when directly translated do not take on the same meaning as they do here. It was interesting learning the different phrases and the locals found it funny when we told them they were explosives or to cool off in a refrigerator as they understood it.

The most challenging difference of communication in Spain was the nonverbal aspect. To best explain, Americans typically speak at an arms length distance. The Spaniards, however, have a completely different concept of personal space. If you were to hold out your arm and touch the person’s shoulder in front of you that you are speaking to, you would be at an appropriate distance away from he or she in our culture. Now if you both fold your arms at the elbow and take a step closer to where your elbows are touching, you are at an appropriate distance in the Spanish culture. I found that very difficult to get used to. It was as if our noses were touching. Personal space was just one of many of the nonverbal aspects of communication that was different in this culture but it is by the far the one I remember most.

Although there are many topics that can be covered under the umbrella of communication I chose communication in the face of cultural diversity because I have recently had a personal experience with it and hope to have many more in my lifetime. It is critical that I learn and understand how to communicate in different cultures for my future career and I am excited about future opportunities to do so.

Conflict Management and Negotiation Reflective Essay

Recently I have learned the importance of conflict management in a leadership role. I am planning formal for my sorority this year, and have been in the process with my co-chair for over a year. In December 2010 we had a venue and date booked for this Saturday, February 18, 2012. Eleven days before the event, close to one hundred girls signed up after the specified deadline almost doubling the guest count to four hundred people. This has caused my co-chair and me to go into a craze with changing transportation, catering, and venue costs for the additional people. The formal was originally free as we had been planning and budgeting extremely well for over a year, yet changing the numbers exponentially less than two weeks before the event incurred breach of contract fees, additional staffing fees, additional security fees, additional transportation fees, and additional catering fees per person. Unfortunately after promising our sorority a free formal for the first time in history of formals, we are now having to charge eleven dollars a person or twenty-two dollars a couple due this Thursday by 5:00PM. Obviously any manager or individual in a leadership role can imagine the conflicts this additional charge has caused between my co-chair and me and the members of our sorority. We have received very inconsiderate emails and are dealing with explaining to two hundred why a week before the event there is a charge to attend.

Through the assigned reading I have realized I am going through an intergroup conflict, or a conflict between groups or teams in an organization. Unfortunately the groups are incredibly unevenly divided, as it is two against two hundred. My co-chair and I have been frantically trying to explain the situation and accommodate everyone to ensure a positive atmosphere surrounding the event without severing the relationships and bonds we have with our sisters. Although some understand the situation and are still appreciative of the hard work that we have put in for over a year, others are still upset and we receive emails everyday with questions and concerns that are not always written as appropriately as we would like.

The biggest issue that my co-chair and I have been coping with is the idea of losing trust amongst our sisters. Although some understand the situation, the few that do not have made it clear they do not appreciate the last minute details, even though logically it was not our fault for the situation. We have not placed blame on anyone but unfortunately others have placed blame on us causing a mix between functional and dysfunctional conflicts within the intergroup conflict. We are sure the event will still be pleasant and everyone will enjoy it, but if I have learned anything from this it is that no matter how much time, effort, and organization a person puts into the planning of an event, something will always go wrong and someone will always be dissatisfied. However, it is important to manage the conflict with those that I can and to ensure that I take care of myself and enjoy the event Saturday that I have worked so hard planning for. Customer service is truly an industry that is not the fantasy it is glamorized to be and I am thankful to have learned that now.

Power and Influence Reflective Essay

Influence is the process of affecting the thoughts, behavior, or feelings of another person. Personally, influence is the determining factor of all decisions I make. The ethical question behind influence, however, is where does it come from and which influence tactic is most appropriate and effective in a given situation. Ideally I hope that all decisions I make come from within. However it is difficult to determine how and what has shaped my basis of beliefs. Do I make my own decisions, or does my faith, family, boss, or group of friends influence my decisions?

In addition to where influence comes from, another driving force behind decision-making is influential tactics. According to the reading, there are four influential tactics used most frequently. These four tactics are consultation, rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, and integration. Tactics are used for impression management, which refers to individuals' use of influence tactics to control others impressions of them. Determining which influential tactic to implement depends on the target audience and target goal.

For example, I am actively involved in Relay For Life on campus as I hold the Marketing Executive Co-Chair position benefiting the American Cancer Society. We are always looking for new ways to influence the student body and ourselves to get involved and remain enthusiastic. At each of our meetings and events, we implement the inspirational appeal tactic. We open each meeting with a student's story of why he or she relays. Often these stories are very heart-wrenching and appeal to everyone as we all have gotten involved due to some effect of a loved one suffering from cancer.

Influence is a powerful tool in everyday life and especially in high involvement decisions. It is important to utilize ethics when influencing a person though. Determining which appeal is most appropriate may be difficult but is essential to avoid coercing another's decision that he or she may not be satisfied with at a later date. Overall, influential basis and tactics can and should be used appropriately to help another individual's decision process and not abuse power over someone else.

Leadership and Personal Development Essay

Leadership is extremely important on an individual and group level. In today's world, many top management divisions are done in teams, not by a single individual. Therefore it is important for all team members to use systems thinking and have emotional intelligence as a whole.

The concept of systems thinking refers to the ability to see the synergy of the whole rather than just the separate elements of a system and to learn to reinforce or change whole system patterns. Throughout the year I have been actively involved on the executive board of UGA Relay For Life. Although we started with a common goal in mind, towards the middle of the year, each executive member lapsed into serving his or her own purpose and individual position's goals. This caused a huge rift in our system, as we seemed to place the greater goal aside to achieve short-term, specified goals not consistent to achieving the desired end result.

Recently, our executive board demonstrated team emotional intelligence as we all took a step back and realized this problem. We retreated our past mistakes and vowed to forgo recurring them from now on. As a team we recreated a strong identity, increased trust amongst our members through meaningful exercises, and instilled a belief that we can all be effective in our individual positions while succeeding as a team at the end. We feel our executive board is back on track and ready to plow through the remaining month until our big event April 20th.

Through personal development, each of us has become a leader. We learn from each other, realize each other's mistakes, and use them to make positive changes in the future. Groups often lose sight of systems thinking temporarily. But it is through a team's emotional intelligence that you realize the issues and work together to fix them.