

Professional Communications Workshop(A): Overview and Preparation

Workshop 1

Required reading:

Excerpt, Hackman, *Groups that Work and Those That Don't* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 1994).

Oral briefing evaluation form (DUSP)

Further reading (reference): A how-to reference on preparing for and delivering oral briefings (presentations for decision-makers) will be posted on Stellar but need not be read before the workshop.

Session overview. This is the first of two workshops on the skills of professional communication. You'll learn about briefings and help critique student briefings on screen.

Your briefing assignment in this course is a group assignment. Careful preparation for groupwork is sadly rare—far too rare—in planning programs. This session will double as a critical introduction to workgroup performance—how to organize and lead workgroups (teams) to perform. Xav will discuss core concepts of team building and team leadership, as well as tools for assessing your capacity to contribute to teams and lead them.

Questions to consider

1. **Getting clear on core concepts.** According to the introduction excerpt, how should we define the effectiveness of workgroups?
2. **Analyzing a team.** Your workgroup in Gateway will take the form of what this book calls a "task force"—i.e., a project team, of limited duration, entrusted with completing a specific task. Why does the team in the chapter entitled "The Students" seem to struggle with its task? What process mistakes were made, in particular?
3. **You and Teamwork (Self-assessment):** Experts on leading teams often speak of two things teams manage toward: *task* (getting things done) and *relationship* (getting along, connecting, cultivating team members, generating satisfaction in the work). And also three emotional needs, which lead individuals to play very different roles in teams—the needs for inclusion, control, and affection. What kinds of group situations bring out the best in you? Which are more challenging and why? How do these patterns reflect the things you tend to expect or demand when working in groups, i.e. your needs?