

# WISCONSIN BUSINESS EDUCATION JOURNAL

WINTER 2007-08

VOLUME 56; NUMBER 1

## *In this issue*

Notes from the Editor .2

Putting Reality into  
Keyboarding .....2

President's Message ....3

Member Application ...4

Top 10's .....5

Research article:  
Administrative  
Professionals .....6

Research article: Quality  
of Technical Distance  
Learning ..... 14

Spring Seminar info...21

Hall of Fame nomination  
form .....22

SIEC-ISBE Conference  
Information .....23

Hosler Award nomination  
form .....24

Friend of WBEA  
nomination form ....25

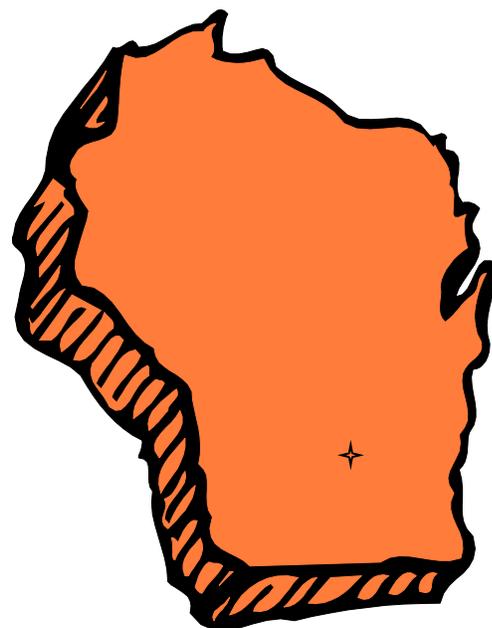
Teaching Page Layout  
and Design .....26

Job opening .....32

Call for Manuscripts ..33

Executive Board  
Directory .....34

Pay it Forward in Waunakee  
April 26  
WBEA Spring Seminar 2008



## NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Get ready to read. This month you'll find two reviewed research articles – as well as several helpful classroom teaching tips. If *you* have a classroom tip you'd like to share with others, submit it to the *WBE Journal*. The deadline for the spring issue is March 15.

If your *WBE Journal* is coming to you with a wrong address, please let me know so I can fix it.

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### Deadlines for submitting articles:

Spring issue—**March 15**  
Convention wrap-up—two weeks after fall convention  
(next fall, **October 13**)  
Winter issue—**November 15**

North Central Business Education Association will be publishing *Reach for the STARS—2008-2009 Business Education Classroom Activities Created by Teachers for Teachers!*

You're invited to become a STAR! Just submit a classroom activity written by you!

An activity need only be 1-2 pages in length (it may be longer) and be specific enough for a classroom teacher to follow and use. If your work is accepted, you'll receive a free CD of all published activities.

Activity must be submitted on the STARS Template that may be found at [www.ncbea.net](http://www.ncbea.net).



**S**—Setting the Stage  
**T**—Timeline for Activity  
**A**—Assessment for Activity\*  
**R**—Resources available with activity  
**S**—Step-by-step instructions for activity

Remember that each activity needs to be correlated with the 3rd Edition of the NBEA National Standards for Business Education.

Activities may be submitted immediately or by May 15, 2008.

\*Assessment should include answer key if applicable.

## Putting Reality into Your Keyboarding Class

Add some reality into your memo-writing and letter-writing units by having students communicate with your school's principal and superintendent. Begin by spending some time brainstorming with your students various changes that could be incorporated to make your school a better place; i.e., more vending machines, better hot lunches, eating during class, less homework, rolling chairs, softer toilet paper. It's surprising what many of them come up with. They then select one of the topics (or create a new one of their own) and key a three-paragraph memo explaining why they are writing, giving details about how this can improve the school, and thanking the reader for spending the time to read the memo. Sometimes, I actually share these memos with the principal because the topic seems relevant or to show that the class is incorporating some Language Arts standards. However, I ask the principal that comments be reserved until after the letter-writing unit.

When we are in the personal-business letter-writing unit, we discuss the fact that we have not heard from the principal regarding the memos we sent. This is a good time to discuss tactics for resolving communication issues and/or conflicts—contact the person again in writing or orally, ask to speak to their boss, write a complaint letter. Pretend that the students have tried everything to bring attention to their “concern.” Now is the time to write a letter to the superintendent to mention that a memo was sent to the principal but no response was received. The students reiterate their concern, attach a copy of the memo, and thank the superintendent in advance for taking the time to address the issue.

Although I don't send these letters to the superintendent, it gives the students a sense of reality when communicating outside the classroom walls. It also is great for reinforcement of formatting when in the beginning stages of keyboarding. The students have lots of fun thinking of a topic and enjoy writing to someone they actually know.

- submitted by Mary Trautschold

## MESSAGE FROM THE WBEA PRESIDENT



Another successful convention under wraps. Thank you to Janet Alison, Cindy Kratky, and the convention planning committee for a very informative convention. The 2008 fall convention will be the 60th WBEA Convention—one I know I will not want to miss. The planning has begun not only for convention, but for many, for next year's curriculum. Do we ever stop to smell the roses?

After reading an article published in the *Business Education Forum*, titled "This We Believe About Rigor in Business Education," I felt motivated to dig through my notes and handouts from current and past conventions to add a little zing to my current curriculum. Sometimes it is easy to get stuck in a rut of doing the same old things over and over again, but as business educators, we need to make sure we don't get stuck. Our programs of study need to help prepare students for life after high school and to hold a competitive edge in the ever expanding global market. The article states that essential skills such as: problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication will allow students to become more engaged and will challenge them to reach the next level. The next level is where they start to become "self directed" and "independent learners." To help students reach the next "level," we as teachers, need to add fuel to our fire by continually updating our knowledge and skills.

There are many avenues available to add "fuel" to your fire: starting a Master's program, becoming Nationally Board Certified, completing a PDP, or by simply attending conferences and workshops, which is an easy and fun way to gain new knowledge and skills for the classroom. WBEA offers both the fall convention and spring seminar, which are great resources for some new "fuel." Waunakee High School will be hosting this year's spring seminar on April 26, 2008. Be sure to mark your calendar and check the WBEA Web site at [www.wbeaonline.org](http://www.wbeaonline.org) for more information after the first of the year. I hope to see new and old faces at the spring seminar and can't wait to get some new "fuel" for my classroom.

Amy Bires  
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### WBEA Wants You!

Serving on the Board is a great and exciting part of being in Business Education. We are currently looking for people who would be willing to serve on the Board. See pages 34-35 to see which officers' positions are expiring in October. Believe it or not, we need to find potential replacements *now* so that their names may appear in the spring issue of *The Journal* and then on the ballot at the fall convention in Appleton.

As an Executive Board member, your responsibilities would be to attend all Executive Board meetings (one in the winter – usually held on Saturday, one in the summer – held on a week day, one at the conclusion of the annual convention) and the annual business meeting at the fall convention. You will be appointed to one or two committees. Members of the Board are compensated for mileage to the Board meetings and for phone and mailing expenses not covered by their schools.

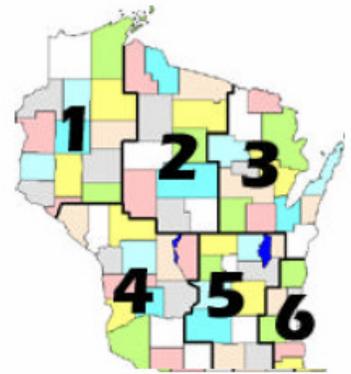
We currently have one unfilled position on the Board. We are looking for a representative for District 1 to serve this school year and next. WBEA districts coincide with FBLA Regions. If you live in District 1, please consider this opportunity. In addition to the above described responsibilities, you would submit one small article for the *Journal* – usually a BIT Tip or Trick. Why not give it a try?

Contact either Jen Wegner at [jenwegner@charter.net](mailto:jenwegner@charter.net) or Amy Bires at [abires@neenah.k12.wi.us](mailto:abires@neenah.k12.wi.us).

# 2007-2008 WBEA Membership Application

Membership year runs from July 1–June 30. Please read your label.

P06-07 Professional dues paid for 2006-2007  
 S06-07 Student dues paid for 2006-2007  
 L\*\* Last time LIFE member directory was updated



Please complete **all information** listed below.  
 Place a check mark in front of your preferred mailing address.

*For more information about WBEA, visit [www.wbeaonline.org](http://www.wbeaonline.org).*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

School or Campus \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home or Permanent Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Using your preferred address from above, indicate the county and WBEA District in which your school/home is located.

County \_\_\_\_\_ WBEA District \_\_\_\_\_ (see map above; same as FBLA)

**WISCONSIN BUSINESS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

\$40—Professional     \$15—Retired     \$10—Student (must be full-time)

**NATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

Expected grad yr. \_\_\_\_\_

\$75—Professional     \$105—Professional & ISBE     \$40—Student     \$50—Retired\*

To expedite your membership to NBEA, you may pay NBEA directly.

Total amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

\*Must have been a continuous member for past 10 years.

Check No. \_\_\_\_\_ Check Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to **WBEA**. Send application and dues to:  
**Cindee Loos, Membership Officer, Loyal High School, 514 West Central Street, Loyal, WI 54446**

Note: Purchase orders can no longer be processed for payment of dues.

*Duplicate this form and share it with potential WBEA members in your department or community!*

## TOP 10'S

### The “WHO”

#### BUSINESS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

#### The “WHAT” for our students

1. Develop “life skills” needed by all consumers
2. Expand their educational options
3. Provide two educational options in one – college prep and job prep
4. Offer students a path to success
5. Help teenagers acquire lifelong skills and habits to apply to any career
6. Broaden teens’ lifelong work and study options
7. Skills learned will aid in employment, thus helping to pay for college
8. Explore career interests before going to college
9. Provide teenagers with opportunities to apply academic content
10. All encompassing program to become lifelong learners and contributing members of society

#### The “WHY” for our teachers

1. Shape America’s future
2. Teacher shortage
3. Preparing students for the workforce
4. Work with a variety of technology
5. Ability to use your creativity
6. Teach courses that you enjoy
7. Share knowledge with others
8. Work independently
9. Ability to grow professionally
10. Because it’s the right thing to do!



*Unlock the future with your keys!*

#### The “HOW” to promote our business programs

1. Create Business Department logo to put on documents used in and out of your classroom.
2. Recognize a “Business” student monthly, quarterly, or at year-end. Have the student’s name engraved on a plaque for permanent recognition.
3. Communicate good news to parents and the community (use the local paper, e-mail, letters home)
4. Have Business Education t-shirts made and sell them. Select a local charity to donate proceeds to.
5. Make presentations about other course offerings in business prior to registration.
6. Create and distribute a Business Department newsletter.
7. Have Business Department staff shirts made and wear them on Casual Friday.
8. Collect testimonials from current business students on “why” to take a business class.
9. Write lots of press releases for your local paper telling everyone the great things that you do in your classroom.
10. Create a slide show using pictures that you’ve taken during classroom activities and show during a parents night and/or registration.

*- submitted by Lisa Perry*

**Are you a member of NBEA?** Don’t let another day go by without joining (or renewing your membership in) NBEA. By joining NBEA, you automatically become a member of NCBEA, too.

**Why join NBEA?** Among other things you’ll get a subscription to *Business Education Forum* magazine, the NBEA Yearbook, reduced costs on publications, and leadership opportunities. This year’s convention will take place March 19-22 in San Antonio, Texas.

**To find out more, visit [www.nbea.org](http://www.nbea.org) and [www.ncbea.net](http://www.ncbea.net).**

**Changes in Administrative Professionals'  
Communication and Management Tasks  
and Interests in Training**

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Dr. Melody W. Alexander is a professor in the Department of Information Systems and Operations Management at Ball State University. Her teaching areas include business communication and microcomputer applications for business.

Dr. Jensen J. Zhao is a professor in the Department of Information Systems and Operations Management at Ball State University. His teaching areas include business communication, negotiation, and information systems.

Dr. Allen D. Truell is a professor in the Department of Information Systems and Operations Management at Ball State University. His teaching areas include business communication, computer applications in business, and technical teacher education.

Dr. JoAnn Wiggins is a management professor at Walla Walla University. Her teaching areas include business communication, human resource management, and international management.

## Abstract

The focus of this study was twofold: (1) to document administrative professionals' job tasks and interest in task-specific training, and (2) to identify any changes of administrative professionals' tasks and interests in training between the years of 2000 and 2005. All participants attending the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) Conference in 2000 and also those attending in 2005 were asked to complete a task and training interest questionnaire. A total of 539 responses were gathered in 2000, and 570 responses were obtained in 2005. The questionnaire requested information on tasks performed in the areas of communication (written and oral) and management skills, and interest in additional training for task specific skills. Respondent data were collected from each conference and then compared. After analysis, conclusions and implications are provided for business educators and trainers.

## Introduction

Companies and organizations are continually looking for methods to remain competitive by increasing the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of their employees (Chura, 2007). Employee training is essential for skill development, and nearly \$110 billion is invested yearly in training to improve employee performance (Chura, 2007; ASTD Council, 2006a; Ketter, 2006; White, 2006).

There are many risks to businesses when they do not work toward developing essential communication skills (Gates, 2006). More than half of 1,400 chief information officers polled reported that their companies do not provide instruction in areas that are not technical (Swartz, 2005). Businesses need employees with good basic communication skills (Pentilla, 2007). Lack of basic skills, such as written, oral, and management skills, can lead to higher employee turnover rates (It May Be Skills, 2007). In an effort to succeed, businesses must address training needs for necessary communication skills (Chura, 2007; Tindall, 2006; Zahn, 2007).

Downsizing trends have forced employers to use fewer resources, reducing training budgets and staffing levels (Hymowitz, 2003). The loss of mid-management level jobs has led to untrained employees assuming management tasks. Over the past five years, basic management skills deficiency has become common in the workforce (Lewis, 2006; Future Workforce, 2006; Greiner, 2005). Administrative professionals have been described as "the heart of the organization's workflow and communications" (Swingline's Admin Pro, 2006). They are given additional responsibilities and are assigned multiple specialized tasks, resulting in a need for various skills and related knowledge (Administrative Professionals, 2005; Domeyer, 2005). As a direct result of downsizing, administrative professionals are being asked to perform mid-management responsibilities for which they have had little or no training (McCune, 2006; ASTD Council, 2006b; Hi-Tech Firms, 2006).

The foundation and first-line support of management is the administrative professional. Administrative professionals function in an environment where the lines between administrative and managerial duties have become blurred. This fluctuating profession requires competency in a variety of constantly changing skill sets including communication and management skills, which have become fundamental task responsibilities for administrative professionals (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006). For the present study, the research team focused on documenting the communication and management skills job tasks of administrative professionals. In addition, their interests for additional task-specific training were identified. This study gathered data from administrative professionals in the years of 2000 and 2005 to identify and evaluate how tasks and training needs have changed over a five-year timeframe.

## Purpose

The fast pace of change in the business world requires better insight into which skill sets are being used by administrative professionals (Hartman, Bentley, Richards, & Krebs, 2005). Therefore, the purpose of this study was twofold: First, to examine administrative professionals' tasks and additional task specific training interests; and second, to document any changes over a period of five years. Identifying administrative professionals' tasks and interest in specific task training and determining any changes over time will provide business educators and trainers with information to prepare future or current employees for administrative professionals' job responsibilities.

## Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was: How have administrative professionals' tasks and interests in task-specific training changed over the past five years? To address this problem, a survey was administered to International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) members at the international yearly conferences in 2000 and 2005. The following research questions were investigated:

1. What are administrative professionals' task responsibilities in relation to communication (written and oral) and management skills? Are there significant differences between administrative professionals' tasks in 2000 and 2005?
2. What are administrative professionals' interest in task-specific training in the areas of communication (written and oral) and management skills? Are there significant differences between administrative professionals' training interests in 2000 and 2005?

## Method

To document administrative professionals' tasks and interest in additional task-specific training, a questionnaire was used to gather data in 2000 and 2005. The researcher-designed questionnaire was based on the literature and the researchers' classroom teaching experience. Part I of the questionnaire requested respondents' personal demographic factors and included: gender, age, education, and years of professional work experience. Part II included: (1) job tasks performed in the areas of communication and management skills and (2) interest in additional task-specific training for these areas.

Validity. A 15-member panel was used in 2000 to review questionnaire items for content validity. The panel included four secondary business educators, six postsecondary business educators, and five business administrators. The panel concluded that the questionnaire met the stated objectives. In relation to the new purpose, the content was reviewed again in 2005. The panel consisted of the same combination of educators and administrators as indicated above, with some substitutes to replace original panel members who were unavailable. The panel agreed that the questionnaire met the stated objectives for a comparison study.

Population and Sample. The population for this study was administrative professional members of IAAP. Administrative professionals in attendance during the yearly international conference during both 2000 and 2005 were selected to participate as a convenient sample for this study. The procedure for both years included placing questionnaires on all chairs prior to a general session of the conference. The research purpose was explained during the opening remarks, and session attendees were guaranteed confidentiality, assured that participation was entirely voluntary, and provided instructions for receiving a summary of the results. The session had seats for 1,000 attendees, and approximately 750 members were present. The collected questionnaires resulted in a total of 539 completed instruments in 2000 and 570 in 2005. Due to the large number of surveys collected each year, a follow-up was not deemed necessary.

Data Analysis. To provide a profile of the respondents in 2000 and 2005, descriptive statistics were compiled that included frequencies and percentages. Data were analyzed using Pearson's chi-square test to address the research questions and identify areas of difference. As a large number of responses were obtained, significance was set at .01.

## Findings

Profile of Administrative Professionals' Personal Factors. Table 1 presents a profile of the personal factors of administrative professionals in 2000 (n=539) and administrative professionals in 2005 (n=570). In both 2000 and 2005, nearly all (over 99%) of the respondents were female, and the majority (78% in 2000, 89% in 2005) were 40 years of age or older. While slightly less than half (48%) of the administrative professionals in 2000 held high school degrees, certificates, or had taken some college courses, this number increased to 54% in 2005. Those with Associate's degrees slightly decreased from 29% in 2000 to 24% in 2005. Those holding Bachelor's or Master's degrees remained fairly stable (23% in 2000 and 22% in 2005). Seventy percent or more of respondents during both 2000 and 2005 had been working in their profession for 20 or more years (70% and 78%, respectively).

**Table 1**  
Profile of Administrative Professionals' Personal Factors: 2000 and 2005

Factor	2000		2005	
	Frequency (N=539) <sup>a</sup>	Valid Percent	Frequency (N=570) <sup>a</sup>	Valid Percent
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	3	.6	2	.4
Female	524	99.4	563	99.6
<b>Age</b>				
<40	111	22.5	64	11.4
40-50	199	40.3	191	33.9
>50	184	37.2	308	54.7
<b>Education</b>				
H.S./Cert./College Courses	241	47.8	303	54.1
Associate	145	28.8	138	23.7
Bachelor's/Master's	118	23.4	127	22.3
<b>Professional work experience (years)</b>				
<20	148	30.0	124	22.2
20-25	149	30.2	168	30.1
>25	196	39.8	266	47.7

Note<sup>a</sup>: Some respondents elected not to provide personal information.

Comparison of Administrative Professionals' Task Performance Between 2000 and 2005. Research question one identified differences in administrative professionals' tasks between 2000 and 2005. In relation to written communications, there were four areas of significant difference. Significantly more respondents in 2005 were performing tasks that involved writing e-mails, e-mail etiquette, technical report writing, and press releases as compared to respondents from 2000. In the area of oral communications, there were three areas of significant difference. Significantly more respondents in 2005 were conducting customer interviews, making calls that required telephone etiquette, and giving in-house presentations as compared with respondents from 2000. With regard to management skills, there were four areas of significant difference. Significantly more respondents in 2005 were involved with employee evaluations, recruitment and selection, interviewing, and coaching/mentoring as compared with their counterparts from 2000. These differences are shown in Table 2.

(continued)

**Table 2**Comparison of Administrative Professionals' Tasks Between 2000 and 2005

Tasks	2000		2005		Chi-Square	df	p
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%			
<b>Written Communications</b>							
Letters and memos	519	96.3	518	95.6	.095	1	.44
Writing e-mails	496	92	519	96.5	9.811	1	.00*
E-mail etiquette	432	80.1	494	92.5	34.666	1	.00*
Technical report writing	186	34.5	285	52.8	36.604	1	.00*
Press release writing	167	31.0	211	39.1	7.758	1	.00*
Grammar	495	91.8	504	93.5	1.106	1	.18
Punctuation	499	92.6	504	93.5	.358	1	.32
Proofreading	502	93.1	510	94.8	1.308	1	.25
Formatting business documents	480	89.1	494	91.8	2.385	1	.08
<b>Oral Communications</b>							
Public communication	451	83.7	441	82.1	.456	1	.28
Customer interviewing	204	37.8	280	51.9	21.658	1	.00*
Communicating with employees	506	93.9	488	90.9	3.44	1	.06
Following instructions	499	92.6	477	88.8	4.492	1	.02
Giving directions	480	89.1	466	86.8	1.311	1	.25
Using voice mail	491	91.1	494	92.0	.280	1	.34
Telephone etiquette	509	94.4	486	90.7	5.523	1	.01*
Giving presentations	311	57.7	378	70.3	18.432	1	.00*
<b>Management Skills</b>							
Working in teams	439	81.4	411	76.4	4.133	1	.03
Evaluating employees	176	32.7	245	45.5	18.777	1	.00*
Training employees	323	59.9	345	65.2	3.191	1	.04
Delegating work/duties	369	68.5	366	68.9	.027	1	.46
Conflict management	326	60.5	320	60.0	.022	1	.47
Problem solving	437	81.1	426	79.9	.226	1	.35
Recruitment and selection	76	14.1	222	41.6	100.93	1	.00*
Interviewing	227	42.1	274	51.0	8.581	1	.00*
Coaching/Mentoring	369	68.5	324	60.0	8.403	1	.00*

\*Significant at the .01 level.

Comparison of Administrative Professionals' Interest in Additional Task-Specific Training Between 2000 and 2005. Research question two identified differences in administrative professionals' interest in additional task-specific training between 2000 and 2005. Within all studied areas of written communications, oral communications, and management tasks, significantly more respondents from 2005 indicated an interest in additional task-specific training in all areas of communication and management skills as compared to respondents from 2000. These comparisons are illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3**

Comparison of Administrative Professionals' Interest in Additional Task-Specific Training Between 2000 and 2005

Training Interests	2000		2005		Chi-Square	df	p
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%			
<b>Written Communications</b>							
Letters and memos	30	5.6	154	29.7	107.274	1	.00*
Writing e-mails	42	7.8	176	33.9	110.262	1	.00*
E-mail etiquette	49	9.1	155	31.4	80.776	1	.00*
Technical report writing	57	10.6	113	39.6	96.237	1	.00*
Press release writing	44	8.2	81	38.4	99.744	1	.00*
Grammar	41	7.6	169	33.5	108.863	1	.00*
Punctuation	38	7.1	156	31.0	98.282	1	.00*
Proofreading	32	5.9	174	34.1	131.869	1	.00*
Formatting business documents	43	8.0	178	36.0	120.636	1	.00*
<b>Oral Communications</b>							
Public communication	52	9.6	169	38.3	114.186	1	.00*
Customer interviewing	35	6.5	117	41.8	151.851	1	.00*
Communicating with employees	50	9.3	171	35.0	100.669	1	.00*
Following instructions	26	4.8	117	24.5	81.243	1	.00*
Giving directions	34	6.3	135	29.0	91.758	1	.00*
Using voice mail	20	3.7	115	23.3	86.883	1	.00*
Telephone etiquette	19	3.5	112	23.0	87.359	1	.00*
Giving presentations	105	19.5	170	45.0	68.774	1	.00*
<b>Management Skills</b>							
Working in teams	59	10.9	158	38.4	100.034	1	.00*
Evaluating employees	43	8.0	101	41.2	124.173	1	.00*
Training employees	40	7.4	143	41.4	148.377	1	.00*
Delegating work/duties	57	10.6	144	39.3	104.425	1	.00*
Conflict management	85	15.8	145	45.3	89.382	1	.00*
Problem solving	64	11.9	178	41.8	113.295	1	.00*
Recruitment and selection	26	4.8	107	48.2	205.108	1	.00*
Interviewing	54	10.0	134	48.9	154.522	1	.00*
Coaching/Mentoring	71	13.2	161	49.7	137.138	1	.00*

\*Significant at the .01 level.

## Conclusions and Implications

This study compared 2000 and 2005 IAAP conference attendees. The team of researchers recognizes that the sample used was convenient, not random.

Research question one was asked to document the tasks performed by administrative professionals and identify any changes between 2000 and 2005. As compared to 2000, the number of administrative professionals' written communication tasks of writing e-mails, using e-mail etiquette, writing technical reports, and writing press releases has significantly increased in 2005. A rise was also seen in oral communications skills, as customer interviewing, knowing and using telephone etiquette, and giving in-house presentations were tasks performed significantly more by respondents from 2005 as compared to those from 2000.

In the area of management, the tasks of evaluating employees; recruiting, selecting, and interviewing employees; and coaching and mentoring were performed significantly more by respondents from 2005 when compared with those from 2000. As written communications, oral communications, and management tasks are increasing for administrative professionals, it is important that business educators and trainers provide exercises and opportunities for their students to learn and practice these skills.

Research question two was asked to document administrative professionals' interest in task-specific training and identify any changes between 2000 and 2005. When compared to 2000, administrative professionals reported an interest in training for all tasks listed in the written, oral, and management skills areas. It is apparent that continuous training to keep current is considered an integral part of the administrative professionals' job, and that they are most interested in training opportunities. Business educators and trainers should provide these training opportunities, as it appears attendance would be high.

## Recommendations for Future Research

1. As this study focused on the administrative professionals' tasks in written communications, oral communications, and management skill area, further research is recommended that would analyze other types of task requirements. This type of study could be especially beneficial in the technology area.
2. As this study found those administrative professionals' interests in additional task-specific training in the areas of communication and management skills have increased during the past five years, further research should identify whether business educators and trainers are addressing this need.
3. Additional research should identify where administrative professionals are learning skills, i.e. through educational settings or company training offerings.
4. This study identified that administrative professionals' tasks and interest in task-specific training has significantly increased over the past five years. Therefore, this study should be replicated in another five years to identify additional changes.

## References

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## **Hiring Managers' Perspectives of the Quality of Technical Distance Learning**

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Wayne Machuca graduated from Northcentral University with his PhD in Business Administration with a concentration in Management Information Systems in March 2007. His dissertation, "The Quality of Technical Distance Learning from the Perspective of Hiring Managers" was the foundation for this manuscript. Dr. Machuca is part of the Computer Information Systems faculty at Mt Hood Community College in Gresham, Oregon, where he is responsible for the Web Mastery program and Computer Game Design. He is currently researching methodologies designed to increase student learning outcomes for CIS courses.

## Abstract

The difference in the quality of employment candidates with computer technical distance learning (DL) courses versus similar individuals with traditional courses from the perspective of hiring managers was examined. Managers nationwide who advertised for computer technical entry-level positions were surveyed online using surveymonkey.com. Respondents indicated a no-difference opinion in the outcomes of entry-level computer technical job candidates who received their credentials from institutions using DL programs versus those candidates who received their credentials from institutions using traditional programs when making a hiring decision. However, when comparing the abilities of candidates from the two venues across 10 skill-sets, these same managers revealed a preference toward traditionally trained candidates in most skills, especially social skills, such as communications and team work. Additionally, managers revealed that when they had a positive prior personal DL experience, they tended to be more neutral towards DL trained applications. But if a manager revealed a negative prior personal DL experience, they showed heavy preference towards traditionally trained candidates.

## Introduction

Distance learning programs have become a dominant force in education in the last few decades. Colleges, universities, and students have taken advantage of the flexibility of distance learning as a method of earning credentials. There are thousands of courses and degree programs available through online venues. Providers of distance learning software are among the fastest growing companies in the United States ("College Distance Learning Programs," 2004). Blackboard, Inc., for example, saw a revenue increase of 11,047% between 1998 and 2002 ("More than 11,000%," 2003). While there has been much research concerning distance learning as an educational tool, research on the opinions of hiring managers as to the adequacy of employee skills resulting from distance learning outcomes has, however, been generalized in many cases.

There has been research into the acceptability of distance training from the private sector perspective; however, it tends to be generally applied to all distance learning venues ("Is an Online Degree Worthwhile?," 2001). The problem is that success in some areas cannot be assumed to translate into success in all areas. Therefore, this study surveyed managers hiring for technical entry-level positions nationwide to investigate the perception of the equality of computer technical entry-level job candidates, comparing those who experienced technical distance training to those who experienced technical traditional training, from the perspective of hiring managers before the hiring selection process takes place.

Information about the Research. This research was part of a dissertation designed to examine if hiring managers have a selection preference for candidates who obtained their credentials from either a traditional or from a distance learning program. The questions this research was designed to study were whether hiring managers perceived distance-trained job candidates as equal to traditionally trained candidates, and does the existence of distance training have an impact on the hiring decision?

There is specific information relevant to this manuscript to which the reader must be made aware. First, as the original research was done for a dissertation, it was restrained by particular time limitations that if removed could have yielded different results. Second, the survey pool was made up of hiring managers who posted help wanted advertisements for entry-level computer-based positions on various Internet job sites. The survey itself was located on surveymonkey.com. Unique e-mail addresses were e-mailed an invitation to participate in the survey. Over 1,000 invitations were transmitted. To protect the participants, the responses were kept anonymous. Non-respondents were not identified nor tracked. Third, there were only 32 respondents to the invitation. The reasons for the poor response rate were not a part of the original research and are conjectured at length in the dissertation. This number is statistically inadequate and, as such, no "proof" or "truth" can be established. However, from the data of those who did respond, an interesting trend began to develop. It is upon this trend that the manuscript is based. Therefore, it is the intention of the researcher to lay a baseline of findings upon which future researchers may confirm or invalidate.

## Summary of the Study

This study was guided by the following three questions: (a) Do managers perceive candidates with technical distance training to be equal to candidates with technical traditional training?; (b) Can managers typically identify

distance training programs in application packages, and if so, does the existence or non existence of distance training have an impact on the hiring decision?; and (c) Do managers perceive a distinction between the two types of candidates across a specific set of skills?

The first question was a general inquiry as to whether managers perceive candidates who obtained educational credentials from a traditional educational program to be equal in technical knowledge to candidates who received credentials from a distance learning program. Managers were surveyed directly on their opinion of the technical equality of candidates from the two venues. The survey question was designed to be a standard opinion question typical for customer satisfaction surveys.

The second question consisted of two parts. The first part was designed to be a confirmation of the previous question. The second part was designed to determine if managers could identify distance training backgrounds in candidates prior to the hiring decision, or if they became aware of the background only after the hiring decision was made. In other words, when a manager has an application in his/her hand, can the manager determine whether the candidate was distance trained? If managers could identify the presence of said programs, the follow-up question investigated whether that knowledge led to a particular hiring bias either for or against candidates.

The third question was a specific inquiry into the managers' perceptions of candidates' individual skill-sets, which allowed a comparison of abilities between candidates from the two learning venues. For this question, managers were asked to rate their perception of candidates from different venues across 10 skill-sets of time management, communication, perseverance, problem solving, interpersonal communication, learning skills, initiative, creativity, general skills, and team skills.

The skills evaluation (or evaluative variables) was designed to be a validation of the responses of the first two questions. That is, if a manager held a particular opinion either for or against a venue, the cause for that opinion would need to be investigated. By subdividing the general opinion of the manager into a number of skill-sets, the reasoning and experiences of that manager with regard to the recruitment of technical entry-level personnel could be considered.

Definition of Terms. For this study, *distance learning* is defined as any nontraditional training program, including self-directed and remote-directed programs, whether synchronous or asynchronous, in which student participation is not based on strict proximity to an instructor, such as in a classroom. Distance education is used synonymously with distance learning. *Computer technical* is used to describe any of a variety of computer-oriented technical careers. These positions may include programming, networking, web design or management, database design, tech skills, help desk positions, etc. This definition excludes technical office and/or business skills such as word processing, spreadsheets, e-mail, or presentation software-oriented positions.

### **A Brief Review of Related Literature**

The realm of education has been widely researched from the perspective of academia, business, and graduates. In addition, since the concept of distance learning has entered the educational scene so quickly, a remarkable amount of research in this area has already taken place. Most notable is the "No Significant Difference" research by Russell (n.d.), which contains hundreds of studies on distance learning. Although generally considered a standard for distance learning research, some have argued that parts of the research are flawed by self-study and bias (Meyer, 2003; Phipps & Merisotis, 1999).

Several projects had a direct influence on this study. Two examples of managerial research are the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) ("Employer and Student Perceptions," 1999) and the Vault ("Is An Online Degree," 2001) study. Both studies approached distance learning quality from the hiring manager's perspective and developed a set of specific skills which managers sought. The Anderson, Dougherty, Miller, Rentfro, & Roach (2003) study demonstrated the need to study a career group that was plentiful and which had multiple opportunities. The "Maryland Workforce Educational Needs Assessment Survey" (2001) demonstrated the need to research managers outside of a particular geographic area. The Distance Education Training Council (DETC) ("Graduates and Employers," 2001) study demonstrated the need to bypass DL graduates in finding a pool to survey. Peat and Helland (2003) demonstrated the need to study entry-level graduates with lower-division training.

## Findings

**Demographic Findings.** The response averages for the demographic variables are listed in Table 1. As this research is a survey, the statistical analysis to be performed on the data is mean analysis based on the ANOVA method.

The variable “Manager Distance Trained” displays the percentages of respondents who personally experience distance learning in some form. The variable “Prior Experience” displays the manager’s knowledge of hiring a candidate who had distance training. The “Manager Distance Trained Exp (Experience)” displays the manager’s perception of the experience of hiring a candidate with distance training. The “Manager Opinion” variable was designed to determine how managers felt about technical distance education specifically.

The responses of Neutral at 48% for “Manager Distance Trained Exp” and of 59% for “Manager Opinion” would indicate a no difference attitude. Additionally, with a “Negative” response rate of only 10%, it can be argued that managers have a typically positive opinion of technical distance training.

Table 1  
Results of Highlights of Demographic Questions

Variables	Yes	No	Don't Know
Manager Distance Trained	40%	60%	X
Prior Experience	52%	9%	39%
	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Manager Distance Trained Exp	48%	48%	4%
Manager Opinion	31%	59%	10%
	Always	Seldom	Never
Manager Awareness	26%	59%	15%
Manager Influence	9%	52%	39%

The “Manager Awareness” variable also identified an interesting result. This variable indicates the ability of the manager to identify distance training in an applicant based on information in the application. Only 15% of managers indicated that they were never able to tell if an application showed distance training experience, with the remainder being able to detect this training sometimes to always.

The Manager Influence variable indicates the impact that the existence of distance education in the application has on the hiring decision. The results here are significant. Managers responded that the presence of distance learning experience impacts their decision seldom, at 52%; and never, at 39%. Hence, managers do identify the existence of distance training in an applicant, and that existence is viewed as unimportant. Therefore, in general, it can be concluded that, as perceived by a hiring manager, the difference between technical distance training and technical traditional training is unimportant.

**Evaluative Findings.** The response averages for the evaluative variables are listed in Table 2. The skill sets were evaluated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with 3 as the median or center point. Different skill-sets were evaluated by the managers, and their opinion of the ability of one venue versus the other to produce successful outcomes is indicated. A mean value greater than 3 indicates a tendency toward the superiority of traditional training, while a mean value less than 3 indicates a tendency toward the superiority of distance training.

(continued)

Table 2  
Results of the Skill Set Evaluative Questions Ranked by Means

Skills	X-bar	Rank
Interpersonal	3.95	1
Teams	3.8	2
Communication	3.65	3
General Skills	3.3	4
Problem Solving	3.3	4
Creativity	2.925	6
Perseverance	2.85	7
Learning	2.85	7
Initiative	2.775	9
Time Management	2.725	10

The results do demonstrate the perception of a significant difference in the ability of some candidates to perform better in specific skills. Managers revealed their opinion that traditionally trained individuals show greater interpersonal skills ( $\mu = 3.95$ ), team player skills ( $\mu = 3.8$ ), and communication skills ( $\mu = 3.65$ ). This clearly indicates the perspective that students trained in distance venues miss the social skills of students interacting in a classroom environment. Traditionally trained candidates also ranked slightly higher in general skills and problem-solving skills (both  $\mu = 3.3$ ).

Although slightly higher for distance-trained candidates, means for the skill-sets of creativity ( $\mu = 2.925$ ), perseverance ( $\mu = 2.85$ ), and learning ( $\mu = 2.85$ ) rank the different venues about the same. Distance-trained candidates scored highest in the skill-sets of initiative ( $\mu = 2.775$ ) and time management ( $\mu = 2.725$ ), indicating that managers recognize a student studying on his/her own would necessarily learn to develop his/her own level of discipline and self-management.

Some significant issues are noted as a result of this analysis. First, the skill-sets of Time Management and Perseverance, skills that were highly perceived as stronger towards the distance learning side, and Communication, a skill highly perceived as stronger towards the traditional side, had the highest standard deviations, and hence the greatest volatility. The conclusion is that while these skills tended toward one learning venue or the other, there was not full agreement within the population.

Second, Teams ranked as one of the skills with the least volatility. As Teams was very highly perceived as stronger towards traditional learning, it can be concluded that the population is in agreement.

Third, and the most significant finding from the analysis, is that the skill of Creativity, which also demonstrated a low volatility, had the mean closest to 3. It can be concluded that the pool is in agreement that distance-trained and traditionally trained technical candidates have the same degree of creativity.

General Conclusions. Several points can be made from the results of this study. Based on the demographic results, the following conclusions can be made: (a) Managers are aware of technical distance education, and their stated perspective is generally favorable; (b) Managers can usually distinguish if a candidate has technical distance training in his/her background; (c) Managers indicate that the existence of technical distance training in the background of a candidate usually has no impact on the hiring decision; and (d) Managers indicate that they are generally satisfied that candidates with technical distance training are equal to candidates with technical traditional training.

Yet, while managers state a general acceptance of distance training and indicate a relative equality with traditional training, these same managers do perceive differences between the two types of candidates with consideration towards their skill sets. Based on the evaluative results, the following conclusions can be made: (a) Distance-trained graduates are considered to have weaker social skills than their traditionally trained counterparts: these areas include interpersonal, team player, and communication skills; (b) Traditionally trained graduates are considered to have a slight edge over distance-trained graduates in general job skills and problem-solving skills; (c) Distance-trained graduates are perceived to have a slight edge over traditional graduates in creativity, perseverance, and learning skills; and (d) Distance-trained graduates are perceived to be stronger than their traditionally trained counterparts in the personal discipline skills of initiative and time management.

Overall, U.S. managers tend to perceive traditionally trained graduates as stronger in the sort of skills inherent to learning in a group setting. Interpersonal skills, team player skills, and communications skills are a definite part of the classroom learning environment. Additionally, U.S. managers perceive distance-trained graduates as stronger in the sort of skills inherent to learning in a self-directed environment. Personal initiative and time management skills are critical to success in a distance learning environment.

The results also indicated those areas where managers tend to see no significant difference in the abilities of distance and traditionally trained technical graduates. Graduates tend to solve problems with equal ability. Both groups also tend to be similar in creative ability, perseverance, and learning skills, each of which is indicative of any candidate who would complete a degree or training program.

Results of Data Mining. Some significant trends did emerge which indicated the difference between managers' stated opinions and actual opinions of quality for candidates from the two venues. By using some simple data mining techniques, telling results arose from the data. Care must be taken not to imply gross or general conclusions from this mining; however, they are included here for intellectual consideration.

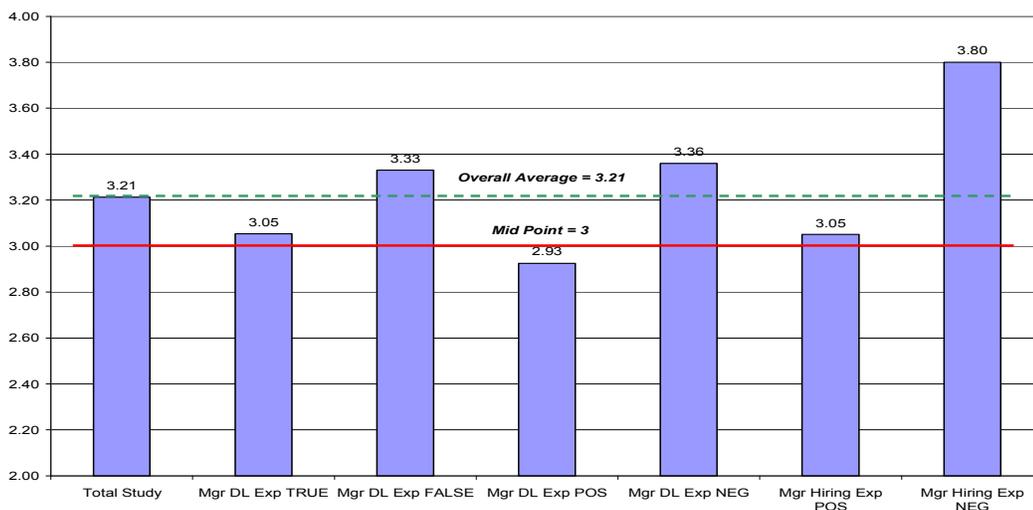
Analysis of the Demographics. Included in the demographic question set were four very specific questions designed to compare demographically influenced results against the overall results. These questions were:

- (a) "Have you ever participated in a distance learning program?"
- (b) "If yes, what was your opinion of the experience?"
- (c) "Have you ever hired an individual who had technical distance training (either knowingly, or discovered later)?"
- (d) "If yes, how would you rate your experience with that event?"

The purpose of these questions was to determine whether the manager's previous personal experience with his/her own distance training or the manager's previous experience with an employee who was distance trained had an effect on their opinion of the quality of technical distance education. It is important to emphasize that the selection pool for these responses is very small and that a single respondent responding harshly (high or low) would have a substantial impact on the means.

It is important to note that the order of the skill sets remained relatively consistent across the different rankings. For ease of translation, the data mining described here is limited to an analysis of the mean of means for the skill sets. A comparison of the mean of means across different demographics is displayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**  
Comparison of Mean of Means Across Specific Demographics.



Each of the ten skill sets were evaluated and averaged creating a mean which was ranked (Table 2) for comparison. The means were themselves averaged to generate a mean of means. In the study, the mean of means was hypothesized to identify true equality at 3. That is, if there truly was no significant difference in the comparison of the two venues, then the mean of means should come out to 3. It did not.

The mean of means for the total study is 3.21. With the middle point of the Likert scale at 3, there is a definite skew toward traditional graduates for many skills. The first demographic analyzed was personal distance learning experience for the manager. The mean of means for managers who had personal distance learning experience dropped to 3.05, or very close to the mid-point. Managers who did not have personal distance learning experience had a mean of means of 3.33. This indicates that managers with a personal DL experience are more neutral in their opinion of equality where managers who did not have a personal DL experience tended to lean toward traditional education.

The next demographic analyzed was to investigate those managers who had prior distance learning experience to separate their responses based on if their experience was positive or negative. Managers who had a positive DL experience had a mean of means of 2.93 where managers who had a negative DL experience had a mean of means of 3.36.

The third demographic analyzed was to investigate those managers who had previously hired a candidate who was distance trained, and if that experience was positive or negative. The results here are very telling. Managers who had previously hired a candidate who was distance trained, and that experience was positive, had a mean of means of 3.05, or very neutral. However, managers who had previously hired a candidate who was distance trained, and that experience was negative, had a mean of means of 3.80 (with interpersonal, teams, communications, problem solving, and creativity all scoring 4.00 or higher). This strongly indicates that the manager's personal experience with personal distance learning or with a previous hiring who was distance trained has a direct influence on that manager's perception of a candidate's ability to be successful in particular skills.

## **Conclusions**

There are two general conclusions which can be drawn from this study. First, even though hiring managers indicate that they have a neutral opinion of the difference in the quality of traditional candidates when compared to distance trained candidates, in reality they do have an opinion of said candidate's ability to perform across specific skills. Additionally, while a significant portion of research on distance programs from a variety of directions do imply no significant difference in the academics between distance and traditional programs, for computer technical managers, there is indeed a perception of difference.

The second general conclusion which can be drawn from this study is that not only do managers have a preference, that preference is heavily influenced by their personal prior distance learning experience and by the prior experience with a distance trained employee. Specifically, if the manager's experience were positive, then their perspective of distance trained candidates was neutral. However, when a manager's experience was negative, then their perspective of candidates will be skewed towards the traditional learner.

## **Implications for Colleges and Graduates**

The impact of these findings is important. Whether or not it is true, technical distance trained graduates are viewed as being weaker in "social" skills where technical traditionally trained graduates are viewed as being weaker in discipline and time management skills. Since it may be difficult for an applicant to glean from the hiring manager that manager's prior experiences, the entry-level technical job candidates should take special care in emphasizing skills deemed weak in the study. For example, the traditionally trained graduate should underscore skills that demonstrate time management, discipline, and initiative. The distance trained graduate should underscore skills that demonstrate interpersonal communications, team building, and perseverance. Equally for college programs which contain distance learning courses, special emphasis and even curricular modifications should be created to include group work, communications (e-mail, list servers, blogs, etc.), and especially collaboration. Such programs should also emphasize these skill outcomes in marketing campaigns directed at hiring managers.

## **Final Thoughts**

Care must be taken not to use the results of this project for sweeping generalizations about distance learning programs in general. This project was limited to an inquiry of managers seeking to fill entry-level technical positions.

Future inquiries should be made in other specific venues. Managers hiring for office technical positions were intentionally omitted from this project due to the widespread and established nature of such distance learning programs.

Business programs have several venues that should be researched individually. Accounting programs, business management programs, and marketing programs may have unique skill-sets leading to success. Science programs also have many branches whose programs should be researched individually. This would be especially true with health-related programs. Only as individual subject areas are researched can general conclusions about the overall quality of distance learning programs best be understood.

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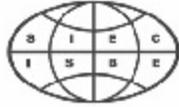
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- Business and industry, with definite implication and significance in education
- Teaching methodology
- Professional literature
- Research (original research or the guiding of research)
- Organizations (committees, associations, etc.)
- Administration of business education programs in K-12 or post-secondary schools



## Plaque and Cash Award

Each recipient of the Russell J. Hosler Award will receive a plaque and a gift of \$500.

## Administration

Two independent committees composed of prominent business educators administer the award. The Administrative Committee (6 members) oversees the administration of the award. The Board of Selection (6 members) selects the winner.

## Selection Criteria

The recipient of the award is a person who, in the judgment of the Board of Selection, has made an outstanding, meritorious contribution to the development and advancement of business education.

## Nominations

Nominations may be made by any individual other than members of the Administrative Committee or the Board of Selection. Further, members currently serving on either Committee are not eligible to receive the Award. No member of the Administrative Committee or the Board of Selection shall submit an endorsement or recommendation on behalf of any nominee. A candidate, to be considered, must be nominated on the official nomination form. Selection of the recipient of the award will be solely and exclusively the responsibility and authority of the Board of Selection. Selection is to be made strictly on the merits of the contribution of the recipient.

**Nominations must be postmarked no later than April 1, 2008.** Only one form will be accepted for each individual nominated.

Send by first-class mail to:

Administrator  
P. O. Box 412  
Two Rivers, WI 54241

NOTE: Once your nomination form is received, the Chair of the Administrative Committee will contact the nominee directly for the necessary supporting materials.

## The Russell J. Hosler Award in Business Education Official 2008 Nomination Form

**Type or print all information.**

### Nominee:

Name (Mr. Mrs. Ms. Dr.) \_\_\_\_\_

Position (Title) \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Your Information:

Name (Mr. Mrs. Ms. Dr.) \_\_\_\_\_

Position (Title) \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**A FRIEND OF WBEA is someone who. . .**

- **supports business education or business educators but is not an instructor**
- **contributes to the advancement of business education**
- **shares their knowledge of business education**
- **promotes business education**
- **makes the time to support others in their pursuits**
- **is considered by many to be indispensable!**

WBEA is asking for your help in finding and making nominations of those people in your life who support you as a business educator! We would like to honor them! The nominee does not need to be a WBEA member or a business education teacher.

WBEA honors one FRIEND OF WBEA each year at its annual convention. Don't you know someone like that? If so, please nominate that person.

**FRIEND OF WBEA NOMINATION FORM**

**Name of Nominee** \_\_\_\_\_

**Present Title/Position** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**Name of Nominator** \_\_\_\_\_ **Position** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

On a separate sheet of paper, please indicate the nominee's contributions to business education. Be sure to include support for the bulleted criteria at the beginning of the nomination form and the number of years of contributions. Information should be limited to one single-spaced page.

**Return completed form by February 15, 2008** to: Sheila Piunti, Chairperson / WBEA Awards Committee / Winneconne High School / 100 Wolf Run, PO Box 5000 / Winneconne, WI 54986 / piuntis@winneconne.k12.wi.us

*Note: Following is a non-refereed article, chosen for publication for its content and possible usefulness to classroom teachers.*

## **Instructional Strategies for Teaching Effective Page Layout and Design Techniques**

*by Lisa E. Gueldenzoph and Mark J. Snyder*

*“Right and wrong do not exist in graphic design. There is only effective and non-effective communication.” ~ Peter Bilak, *Illegibility**

In every content area of business education – e.g., accounting, business law, communications, networking, e-commerce, etc. – students’ abilities to research and present information are critically important to their workplace success. For that reason, most instructors at both the secondary and post-secondary levels assign student presentation projects. Students are taught about the importance of organizing the content of a presentation to help the audience understand the intended purpose. Instructors design rubrics that assess students’ speaking skills, content, and organization. Although the content and organization of the information are the first steps in designing an effective presentation, the “look and feel” of the visual aids is also important. If the colors, graphics, or design of the visual aids distract the audience from the intent of the presentation, they may not get the full benefit of the information. This article defines the foundational aspects of page layout and design and describes methods to help students create professional presentations that effectively support their ideas.

### **Page Layout and Design**

The fundamentals of page layout and design involve the process of placing, arranging, and rearranging content of visual aids to develop a professional-looking document (Walsh & Frontczak, 2003). Page layout and design elements define the structure and function of a printed page. Consider the phrase, “image is everything.” A professional image is defined not only by effective speaking skills, manners, and attire, but also by the documents that are created to support a presentation. A professional image will not compensate for poor content, but it will convey nonverbal messages. How the presentation looks in terms of fonts, colors, and graphic choices can affect the audience’s judgment of the information. To ensure the focus stays on the content, students should consider several design basics as they create their visual aids. Coach students to begin by making formatting decisions based on the purpose of the presentation and audience analysis.

#### **Identify the Purpose of the Visuals**

Students are taught to define the purpose of a presentation before the content is organized and outlined. This stated purpose should be used to determine the format of the visual aids. Creating a visual aid that supports the purpose will help persuade the audience to understand and agree with the presentation. To do this, students must determine the goal of their presentation. For example, to present a timeline for a day-long workshop, select a design theme that relates to time (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Slide design theme is related to purpose.

To persuade prospective business clients to purchase specific products, create visual aids that focus on the benefits of the product and highlight its strengths over the competition. To present declining sales figures to upper management, use graphs and charts that easily depict sales figures and trends. In effect, ensure that the theme of the visual aids relates to the purpose of the presentation.

**Analyze the Audience**

In addition to supporting the purpose, visual aids should relate to the audience. Students are typically instructed to conduct an audience analysis when organizing the content for their presentation. This analysis should be applied also to format options. For example, using a Comic Sans font on a crayon-themed presentation template may be appropriate for a presentation to elementary school teachers about new children’s books (see the image on the left in Figure 2), but not to business professionals. Visual aids to support business presentations should include professional-looking graphics and fonts to support the professional image of the presentation (see the image on the right in Figure 2). Font choices, background options, and color selections should not only support the purpose of the presentation, but should relate to the specific audience as well.

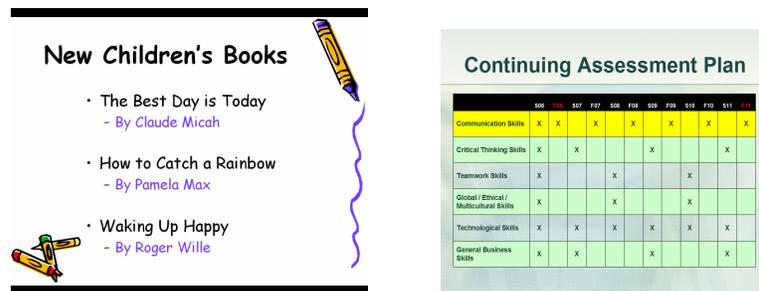


Figure 2. Design theme based on audience analysis.

**Critically Assess the Wording of Visuals**

Visual aids should be a supplement to, not the focus of, a presentation. They should support rather than define the presentation. Relying too heavily on visual aids not only detracts from the presenter’s role, but if something should happen to the visuals (e.g., the computer crashes, the power goes out, etc.), presenters who are too dependent on visuals will lose the confidence to speak effectively without them (Mausehund & Dortch, 1999).

To ensure that visual aids support the presentation, instruct students to use one line heading-type bullet items rather than complete sentences or paragraphs. Bullet items should direct the flow of the presentation, not be read verbatim to the audience. Note the two slides shown in Figures 3 and 4.

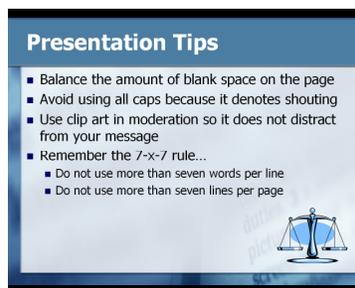


Figure 3. Slide example of poor wording and layout.

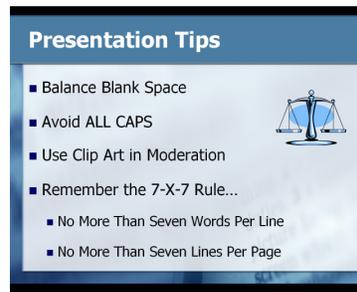


Figure 4. Slide example of better ease of reading and page balance.

Both examples present the same information; however, the slide in Figure 4 is much easier for the audience to read, understand, and remember. The bullet items list only the important elements of the content of the presentation. In addition, students should be instructed to use parallel structure in their wording – all verb phrases or all noun phrases – for consistency. Use title case to highlight the important words since bullet items are headings, not sentences.

### Create Balanced Pages

Refer again to the slides in Figures 3 and 4. Although the slide in Figure 3 contains more words, the slide in Figure 4 makes better use of the blank space by increasing the line spacing between bullet items. This spacing not only balances the page, but – assuming builds are used (formatting the slide to display one bullet line at a time as the presentation is delivered) – knowing that the bullet items stretch to the bottom of the slide helps students know when they will transition the presentation to the next slide.

The **7-X-7 Rule** also helps students create balanced pages. The slide in Figure 3 uses sentences or phrases, one of which wraps to a second line within the bullet item. An audience often finds wrapped text difficult to follow. Keeping line items to seven words per line (using a heading format rather than sentences) and seven lines per page ensures that the audience can easily read the visuals. Finally, encourage students not to overuse clip art. Clip art should relate to the message of the slide rather than simply fill blank space. For example, the clip art image of the scales in the slides in Figures 3 and 4 help support the message of the slide, which includes the need to “balance” the page layout of visuals.

### Aid Comprehension

*“One of the best ways to make a page easy to grasp in a hurry is to make sure the appearance of things on the page ... clearly and accurately portrays ... which things are related and which things are part of other things.”~ Steve Krug, Don't Make Me Think*

After students have formatted the page layout and design of their visual aids, they need to ensure the audience will understand how the content of the visuals relate to each other. The following techniques can define the importance and priority of the content to aid the audience’s comprehension of a presentation.

### Use Headings and Sub-headings

Important elements such as titles and keywords should be placed at the top of the page and should use a larger or bolder font so they stand out. Using meaningful headings and sub-headings will also provide a visual navigation for the audience; they will understand the relationships among the points.

### Determine Readability

Poor visual aids are often the result of font sizes that are too small for the audience to read or color combinations that do not work well together. Instruct students to consider the effect of font sizes, colors, and typefaces when designing their presentations (Van Horn, 2004).

**Use readable font sizes.** As a standard, the font size for presentation visuals should not be less than 24 points. The number of fonts on one page should be limited. Typically, a different font style can be used for page headings, but the rest of the text should conform to a single font style. A consistent font should be used throughout the visuals. Text should not be ALL CAPS since this denotes shouting in cyberspace. These standards typically apply regardless of the room size. However, the larger the room, the greater the distance is between your visuals and your audience. Therefore, larger fonts should be used when presenting in larger rooms.

**Select contrasting font colors.** In addition to font size and style, color is also important. The use of light blue text on a medium blue background as shown in Figure 5 does not provide enough contrast to be seen well, even at a 48-point font size.



*Figure 5.* Slide example of poor color contrast between font and background.

Contrasting colors should be used for fonts and their backgrounds. A bright yellow or white font would be easier to read in this example. The color of the slides should also be dependent on the brightness of the room in which they will be presented. If the lighting in the room is unknown, students should use a light background with dark text, which is the most visible combination in any environment.

**Choose appropriate typefaces.** The typeface that is selected also contributes to the readability of visuals. Typically, font styles include serif, sans serif, and decorative.



*Figure 6.* Note the “little feet” on the ends of serif letters.

**Serif** fonts have “little feet” on the ends of the individual letters. In Figure 6, notice how the capital letter “A” has little lines (feet) at the bottom of the letter. The capital letters “B” and “C” have short lines extending from their tops. These lines are called serifs. Figure 7 displays an enlarged example of several serif fonts including Times New Roman, which is a traditional serif font.

**Times New Roman, Garamond, Georgia**

*Figure 7.* Examples of serif fonts.

Note the serifs at the top and bottom of the letter “T.” Serifs also are evident on the “i” and the “m” and can appear to be nearly connected when keyed in succession. In fact, Times New Roman text can look underlined in poor quality documents such as copies and faxes. For this reason, serif fonts are not recommended for most electronic purposes.

**Sans serif** fonts do not have these lines or feet. “Sans” is French for “without”; sans serif means “without feet.” Because the individual letters do not include feet, they are easier to read. Therefore, sans serif fonts should be used for most visual aids. Popular sans serif font selections include Verdana, Arial, and Tahoma, as shown in Figure 8.

## Verdana, Arial, Tahoma

Figure 8. Examples of sans serif fonts.

**Decorative** fonts are used for special purposes. For example, Lucida Calligraphy is often used for formal invitations. Comic Sans is appropriate for presentations made to children or to adults when the topic is very casual. For standard business presentations, avoid decorative fonts. Examples are shown in Figure 9.

*Brush Script, Lucida Calligraphy, Comic Sans*

Figure 9. Examples of decorative fonts.

### Use Color Wisely

Colors have a significant nonverbal impact on visuals (Downs & Clark, 1997). Some colors produce a physical reaction. For example, red can raise blood pressure while green has a calming effect. Additionally, colors have different meanings in different cultures (Kitao & Kitao, 1986). Black is a traditional color of mourning in Western cultures, such as the United States. However, in Asia, it is traditional to wear white to funerals. Therefore, the colors that are chosen for visual aids should not only support the purpose of the presentation, but should relate to the audience as well.

### Select Meaningful Colors

Colors can be used to communicate meaning. Shades of blue and green are considered cool and calming. Reds and yellows are warm and exciting. Neutral colors include brown, beige, and ivory. Although there are no clear-cut rules about the impact of color, Katherine Nolan of Inkk Design, an Ireland-based Web development company, noted that one color can have both positive and negative connotations (Nolan, 2003). The trick is to determine the purpose, analyze the audience, and select colors that support the meaning of the presentation. Some examples are provided in Figure 10.

<b>Color</b>	<b>Positive Connotation</b>	<b>Negative Connotation</b>
<b>WHITE</b>	clean, innocent, pure	cold, empty, sterile
<b>RED</b>	strong, brave, passionate	dangerous, aggressive, brash
<b>YELLOW</b>	happy, friendly, optimistic	cowardly, annoying, brash
<b>BROWN</b>	warm, earthy, mature	dirty, sad, cheap
<b>GREEN</b>	natural, tranquil, relaxing	jealous, inexperienced, greedy
<b>BLUE</b>	strong, trustworthy, authoritative	cold, depressing, gloomy

Figure 10. Examples of colors and their connotations.

## Summary

Page layout and design fundamentals can significantly enhance the professional image of a presentation. To ensure students' visuals are professional and effective, business educators should guide students on page layout and design concepts when assigning presentation projects. To be successfully prepared for the workplace, students must be able to create documents that support the purpose of their presentation and meet their audience's needs. To do this, students must critically evaluate the wording of their visual aids to support rather than define their presentations. They should use the 7-X-7 Rule to create balanced pages and help their audience understand their presentation by using effective headings and sub-headings that demonstrate relationships between points. Students should conceptualize "professional layout" in terms of readability. To self-assess their visuals, students should answer the following questions:

- Is the text size large enough to be read by the last row of the audience?
- Do the font and background colors work well together?
- Are color combinations appropriate for the theme of the presentation?
- Is the typeface easy to read?
- Do colors communicate the intended meaning of the presentation?

By determining the nonverbal effect of the page layout and design of their visual aids, students can create effective, professional visual aids that support the goal of their presentations and portray a positive image.

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**University of Wisconsin-Whitewater  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Tenure-Track Position in Business/Marketing Education**

Description	<p>Full-time faculty position at the assistant professor level to teach methods courses, supervise field experiences, and advise undergraduate and graduate students in business/marketing education.</p> <p>Founded in 1868, The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater is a regional comprehensive institution located in southeast Wisconsin, with easy access to Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago, with an enrollment of 10,500 students in 43 undergraduate majors and 13 master’s degree programs. The College of Education, whose 100 faculty members serve 2,200 undergraduate and 450 graduate students, is accredited by NCATE, and its programs are approved by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The Business Education program has received national recognition for its outstanding quality.</p>
Starting Date	August 24, 2008
Qualifications	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master’s degree required. Candidates who have initiated doctoral studies are invited to apply for this position with the understanding that should they be appointed, at completion of the doctorate (if achieved within a 6-year period), with departmental recommendation and acceptance by the chancellor the appointment may convert to the faculty tenure track.</li> <li>• Teaching experience in middle-school or high-school business education or business and marketing education</li> <li>• Evidence of scholarly productivity or a well-developed research agenda</li> </ul> <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least three years of K-12 teaching experience</li> <li>• Teaching experience at the university level</li> <li>• Teaching experience in both business and marketing education</li> </ul>
Responsibilities	<p>In addition to teaching and advising, responsibilities include conducting educational research and service on college and university committees, and coordination of the business/marketing education licensure program.</p> <p>Possible graduate and undergraduate courses to be taught include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methods of Teaching Basic Business Subjects</li> <li>• Methods of Teaching Marketing Education</li> <li>• Methods of Teaching Computer Applications</li> <li>• Methods of Teaching Accounting</li> </ul>
Salary	Dependent upon qualifications and experience.
Application	<p>ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST BE IN ELECTRONIC FORM. Interested persons should send a letter of application, curriculum vitae, three current letters of recommendation, and copies of all transcripts to Linda Kinson, <a href="mailto:kinsonl@uww.edu">kinsonl@uww.edu</a>.</p>

Review of applications will begin January 22, 2008, and will continue until the position is filled. For further information, contact John Zbikowski, Search Committee Chair, (262) 472-4860, or [zbikowsj@uww.edu](mailto:zbikowsj@uww.edu). Unless nominees and applicants make written requests for confidentiality, their names, and the names of all finalists, will be provided to the public on request.

UW-Whitewater is an AA/EEO employer. Women, minorities, Vietnam-era veterans, and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

Mark your calendar for upcoming WBEA fall conventions ~

Appleton Paper Valley Hotel – September 25-27, 2008

Stevens Point Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center – September 24-26, 2009

Wisconsin Dells Wilderness Hotel & Golf Resort – September 23-25, 2010

Green Bay KI Convention Center/Regency Suites – September 29-October 1, 2011

## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The *Wisconsin Business Education Journal* is a refereed journal listed in *Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Education*. All manuscripts are given a blind review by three external reviewers. Accepted manuscripts are published twice a year, in fall and spring. The deadline for submission of manuscripts for the fall issue is June 1 and for the spring issue is November 1.

The purpose of the WBEJ is to provide educators with articles reflecting present and future teaching strategies, research-based articles, and technology ideas in business and marketing education. Only manuscripts which meet this purpose will be considered for review.

### Publishing Guidelines

1. All manuscripts should use APA style and be between 1-10 single-spaced pages in length. Leave one blank line between paragraphs and before and after headings.
2. The manuscript should be submitted in camera-ready format, typed in Microsoft *Word* using Times New Roman, 12-point font.
3. All graphics (tables, graphs, charts, etc.) should be encased in boxes.
4. Manuscripts should have 1-inch top, side, and bottom margins with no page numbers.
5. A title page that includes manuscript title and name, address of institution, email address, and phone number of each author must be attached to the manuscript. No identification information of authors should be included within the manuscript.

Four original hard copies of the manuscript should be mailed *and* one electronic version (an e-mail attachment, on CD, or on 3.5-inch diskette) should be submitted to:

Lila Waldman, Ph.D.  
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Whitewater, WI 53190  
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Phone: (262) 472-5475  
Fax: (262) 472-4863

**Make plans now to attend the spring seminar in Waunakee on Saturday, April 26!**

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PO Box 68  
Shiocton, WI 54170

Check your address label to see if your dues are current. If they aren't, please use the **membership renewal form on page 10** or go to *wbeaonline.org* to renew your membership. **The membership year runs from July 1-June 30.**

**Remember to inform Cindee Loos, Membership/Information Processing Officer of any address or name changes.** Her address is in the directory at the back of this issue.

Also contact Cindee Loos if you are aware of any WBEA member who is not receiving his/her copy of the *WBE Journal*.