



Aalto University  
School of Business

# Organizational Communication

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# Program today

- Course assignments & practicalities
- What is organizational communication – or how to understand the role of communication in organizations
- Division to groups/starting to get ideas for the group work

# Practicalities

- 9 classroom sessions via Zoom, NO lectures on 7.10., 9.10., and 14.10. (time for independent study), last session on 16.10
- All sessions in Zoom
- For groupwork, you may choose yourself either you can (or are willing to) meet up also “physically”
- Instructions, assignments and communication via MyCourses



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# Assignments

# Assignments (individual)

- Learning Journal, consisting of 8 journal entries, each entry 200-350 words, uploaded after the lectures (Thursdays and Sundays 23:55 at the latest), 30% of the grade
- Video Presentation: a 2,5-4 mins. brief video presentation of any theme/issue in the course - discuss it in your own words. Style: think it as a public expert presentation or a video blog (vlog).  
Deadline 15.10. 20% of the grade

# Assignment (groups)

## Task:

- Finding out about arrangements and challenges of organizational communication in any organization and analyze/audit its practices of organizational communication. (Auditing = evaluating, “inspecting”)
- Choose an organization (does not have to be an entire firm, may be for example a department, unit, or a team) Find out about how the organization itself feels about, for example
  - *the role of its (organizational/internal communication),*
  - *how they have arranged it,*
  - *what communication tools they use and value,*
  - *and what challenges they see as regards organizational communication.*

## ...cont.

In particular, you are to – on the basis of what the organization **itself sees as a challenge or on the basis of your own observations** – identify a specific challenge or some general development area in the case organization's communication and present your suggestion on how the organization could deal with that challenge/development area.

## ...cont (group work)

- **Deliverables**
  - Presentation, 16.10.
  - Written report, max. 5 pages, deadline 23.10.
- **Group work: 50% of the grade**



# ”Code of conduct”

- Respect the deadlines – if problems, please communicate with the teacher
- Participation in the lectures not mandatory but certainly helpful; also, you can earn ”extra points”
- Please ask if there’s something you don’t understand, but of course read the instructions on the Mycourses page carefully
- Please notify the teacher if there’s something wrong e.g. in the instructions, dates etc.
- Respect your team, participate and do your part
  - Should there be any problems with the work load allocation within teams, please bring this issue up within the team and, if needed, with the teacher
  - At the end of the course, you are to fill in a peer evaluation form

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# INTRODUCTIONS

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# Pekka Pälli

**Ph.D, Senior University Lecturer  
Organizational Communication**

## Teaching

Currently responsible of teaching MSc and BSc courses

- Organizational Communication
- Strategy Communication
- Workplace Communication
- (Academic Writing (in basic studies))
- Communication and Interaction Skills in Business (in basic studies)

## Research

- ✓ Interest & expertise on strategy work, managerial interaction, and workplace discourse & interaction.
- ✓ Work published in journals such as *Long Range Planning*, *Discourse & Communication*, *Organization*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, *Discourse Studies*, and *Language & Communication*.

## Examples (recent publications):

- ✓ Lehtinen, E. & Pälli, P. (forthcoming 2020) On the participatory agency of texts: Using official forms in performance appraisal interviews. *Text & Talk*.
- ✓ Nissi, R. & Pälli, P. (2020) Textual artefacts at the center of sensemaking. Constructing shared understanding in organizational workshops. *Discourse Studies*, 22(2), 123-145.
- ✓ Pälli, P. (2019) Participatory Leadership in Digital Work Environments [Available In Finnish only] ProComma Academic. Yearbook of the Finnish Association of Communication Professionals. Helsinki.
- ✓ Pälli, P. (2018) Ascribing Materiality and Agency to Strategy in Interaction: A Language-based Approach to the Material Agency of Strategy. *Long Range Planning*.

# What is organizational communication?

In your words: 1) what is organizational communication? 2) And why is it important?

# What is organizational communication – or how to understand the role of communication in organizations

- A discipline in itself (sub-field of communicative sciences? A sub-division of organizational science?)
- A way of explaining organizations and organizational phenomena (cf. "organizational psychology" where psyc. is something used for explaining organizations)
- A set of specific phenomena happening in the organizations (annual report published in the website, a unit meeting, CEO giving a speech, manager-employee discussion etc etc.)

# What is Organizational Communication? Definition

- Study of messages, meanings, symbols, and information processing that enact organizations and organizing
  - Essential for doing most organizational functions
  - Entails skills and tools for producing and interpreting messages
  - Provides frameworks for addressing how organizations function
  - Offers analytical and critical thinking skills for understanding organizational life

## ...cont

### Traditional focus

- *Focus on communication practices* (organization of communication)
- *Focus on skills*: How to communicate effectively in any needed organizational situation
  - Write memos, keep minutes, chair meetings effectively, give presentations/write PowerPoints etc

### Newer focus, influenced by developments in philosophy and organizational theory (e.g. social constructionism, practice theory)

- *Focus on organizations* and how "communication organizes"

# Internal or external communication?

Organizational communication: neither (or both as much)

But, the emphasis of OC is *more* on internal than external stakeholders

Communication with external stakeholders oftentimes related to the realm of "Corporate Communication"



# Why is it important?

- **Post-bureaucratic era: shift from a production to a consumption-based economy:**
    - Leaders must manage meanings
    - Reliance on teams and knowledge networks
    - Diversity of communication channels and arenas
    - Telecommuting (remote work) and the blurring of time and space
    - Cultural and geographical diversity of work
    - Flexibility in labor markets; temporary workers
    - (Digital/”phygital”/online work as the new regime of working life)
  - These things mean growing importance of communication, and they underline the need of new skills in managing people organizations through communication
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# Emphasis on this course

- (More) on the phenomena inside the organization and between organizational members (than outside and between different stakeholders)
- More on understanding organizational phenomena than communicational phenomenon
- More on understanding and learning to look at organizational phenomena through analytical lenses than learning the skills of communication

# When approaching the question “how communication organizes” ...

- “...we can view different phenomena related to leading and managing organizations as “communicatively constituted”
- Thinkpoint – a possible eye-opener...
  - Think about any organizational phenomenon. Anything that you know relates to organizing or organization but which you have not thought of as being related to communication. Then, what would “how communication organizes” mean in that particular context?

# Group work

- Forming groups, Zoom break-out rooms
- Introductions (and please talk briefly about your ambition level (e.g. the grade), how committed you are and how and through what media you are able to participate in your group work
- Discussion of what you could possibly do in your group work assignment (please read assignment instructions on MyCourses site)