



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, on Wednesdays (Q101), and Fridays (V001). **NO lectures on 23.11., 25.11., and 30.11. (time for independent study), last session on 2.12**
- Instructions, assignments and communication via MyCourses



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# Assignments

# Assignments (individual)

- Learning Journal, consisting of 8 journal entries, each entry 350-450 words, uploaded after the lectures (Thursdays and Sundays 23:55 at the latest), 50% of the grade

# Assignment (groupwork)

## 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, 2.12.
  - Written report, 7-8 content pages, deadline 5.12.
- **Groupwork: 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

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

- A discipline in itself (or a sub-field of communicative sciences? Or, a sub-division of organizational science?)
- A way of explaining organizations and organizational phenomena (cf. "organizational psychology" where psych. is something used for explaining organizations)

# What is Organizational Communication (and why is it important)? Definition

- Study of messages, meanings, symbols, and information processing that enact organizations and organizing
  - Essential for doing most (if not all?) 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

# Why is it important?

- **Post-bureaucratic era: shift from a production to a consumption-based economy & knowledge work:**
  - 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
  - (Digital/”phygital”/online work as the new regime of working life)
- These things mean growing importance of communication, and they underline the need for new skills in managing people in organizations through communication

# Internal or external communication?

Organizational communication: neither (or both as much)

- The emphasis of OC is *more* on internal than external stakeholders
- Communication with external stakeholders often related to the realm of "Corporate Communication"

# 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

# ...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"

# 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 – these are the groups in which you'll do your group work assignment
- Introduction, and please also talk about your possibilities of committing to the group work project, through what media you are able to participate in your group's activities etc. (it is highly recommended that you have meetings – whether online or onsite – where you discuss things together)
- Discussion of what you could possibly do in your group work assignment (please read assignment instructions on MyCourses site)
- Please let Pekka know about your group: see that one of you sends an email confirmation including the names of the group members