

2010

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Recommended Citation

Lehman, Carol M.; DuFrene, Debbie D.; and Lehman, Mark W., "YouTube Video Project: A "Cool" Way to Learn Communication Ethics" (2010). *Faculty Publications*. Paper 53.
http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/businesscom_facultypubs/53

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YOUTUBE VIDEO PROJECT: A “COOL” WAY TO LEARN COMMUNICATION ETHICS

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DOI: 10.1177/1080569910385382

THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION embraces new technologies as a natural way of accessing and exchanging information, staying connected, and having fun. YouTube, a video-sharing site that allows users to upload, view, and share video clips, is among the latest “cool” technologies for enjoying quick laughs, employing a wide variety of corporate activities, and also communicating relevant, engaging instructional content for today’s students.

This article describes a YouTube video class project that is a natural fit with today’s students because it involves cutting-edge social media while addressing a critical component of professional development—communication ethics. This project encourages critical thinking, creativity, and applied learning in a team environment using a “cool” new media tool.

Ethics Instruction Needed

Employers who focus on responsible behavior as necessary to good business practices rightfully expect business schools to provide instruction in ethics and social responsibility. Although some researchers have posited that ethics education has been integrated across the curriculum, the results of a 2009 study by Nicholson and DeMoss indicated that ethics content in existing programs is not adequate to meet the needs of graduate business students. This finding corroborates earlier conclusions reached by Cornelius, Wallace, and Tassabehji (2007) regarding students at the undergraduate level.

While recognizing its importance, professors struggle to make professional ethics content relevant and engaging to students. Many ethics

educators support using case studies and dilemma discussions that provide practice in ethical decision making in specific situational contexts (e.g., Canary, 2007; Keefer & Ashley, 2001; Kienzler, 2001; Myyry & Helkama, 2002). A variation on teaching through case studies is the use of role-play. It allows the player to “get into the skin” of a character in a particular case and try to feel what the character would feel and to understand the case from that character’s viewpoint (Van Ments, 1999). Role-playing facilitates deeper individual involvement and interest in the content and exposes students to attitudes and viewpoints that they might have not considered otherwise (Doron, 2007). Case analysis provides students with a considerable degree of creativity and independence, as well as enjoyment of the dramatic process.

Project Description

This project involves student teams developing an innovative video presentation that they upload to YouTube as a component of a company’s formal ethics training program. Students screen their videos to the class and present their case analysis using reasoning and ethical judgment. Presentations are followed by a question-and-answer period.

As you prepare students for developing the video content, provide them with a decision-making framework for use in ethical problem solving. Discuss the four conclusions that a professional might reach when considering the advisability of a particular behavior: (a) behavior that is illegal and unethical; (b) behavior that is illegal, yet ethical; (c) behavior that is legal, yet unethical; and (d) behavior that is both legal and ethical. To reinforce students’ understanding of the ethical decision-making model, have student teams consider a sample communication ethics case that you perceive will yield lively debate. For example, you might describe a case in which an employee shares confidential information with his spouse, contrary to a company code of conduct stating that “confidential information is not to be shared with family members unless such disclosure benefits the company.” In addition to providing a written case, you might have students role-play the situation in small groups and to the class. Providing a sample

video of your own or selected videos from previous semesters would help clarify the project and minimize initial apprehension.

Student teams select a specific communication-related rule included in a company's professional code of conduct and film a 2- to 4-minute role play depicting a realistic violation of the rule. Student teams must receive instructor approval for their project before they begin production to ensure an adequate level of ambiguity and to ensure that the presentations address a broad range of communication ethics issues that business professionals may realistically encounter.

Because of students' typical comfort level with technology and the availability of instructional guides for being a "YouTube star," you should have little need to provide detailed technical instructions. A minimal amount of technology is necessary for students to create their own videos and upload to YouTube. While a digital camera or phone is the basic requirement, the process can be refined through the use of auxiliary microphones, lighting, backdrop, scripts and storyboards, and video-editing software.

You will want to discuss adaptations from traditional presentations that must be made to ensure quality in the YouTube delivery mode. Include the following key points:

- Keep the video short and simple with steady shots using a good camera and tripod.
- Avoid gimmicky effects and excessive panning that distract from the message.
- Invest in a good-quality external microphone and speak clearly at an appropriate volume and pace for easy listening.
- Choose clothing appropriate for the scenario, avoiding bright colors and close patterns that tend to vibrate when filmed.
- Edit the video to eliminate dead air and other imperfections that detract from a professional image.

To increase the novelty of the assignment, invite a panel of judges to view the videos and choose the top three videos based on the value of the message, creativity, and production quality. Consider posting the winning videos to YouTube under "Education." For added energy, organize the "screening" of student submissions as a film festival with

adjudicators providing immediate feedback and “film makers” responding to questions from the audience. A playbill, appropriate signage, and refreshments add to the realism and excitement of the event.

You can easily modify a grading rubric for spoken presentations to include the specific criteria for this assignment. A sample rubric is included as a guide in the appendix.

Summary

The popularity of YouTube is growing for business and instructional uses. Whether students view appropriate video content posted by others or create and post their own, the learning environment is enlivened and made more relevant for today’s techno-savvy generation. This classroom project requiring student teams to create an original video depicting communication ethics violations allows students to exhibit critical thinking and creativity while having fun with “cool” technology.

APPENDIX

Grading Rubric for Video Project

1 = Poor; 2 = Acceptable; 3 = Excellent

Criteria			
Topic Selection (20%)			
1. Did presenters select an ethical dilemma that would generate debate or require analysis of stakeholder impact?	1	2	3
2. Did presenters select an ethical dilemma with no obvious answer from the existing audience knowledge base?	1	2	3
3. Did presenters select a communication ethics dilemma likely encountered by business professionals?	1	2	3
Video Production (30%)			
1. Did presenters develop an engaging story line with realistic dialogue that illustrates the selected ethical dilemma effectively?	1	2	3
2. Did all group members have a significant acting role and perform well?	1	2	3
3. Did the video include location and camera angle changes to enhance viewer interest?	1	2	3
4. Was the video edited to produce a polished, professional visual aid? Was the video ready to be viewed without technical assistance?	1	2	3

(continued)

APPENDIX (continued)

Criteria			
Presentation Organization (30%)			
1. Was the presentation structured with a definite introduction, body, and close?	1	2	3
2. Did the introduction gain attention, involve audience, and establish presenters' credibility?	1	2	3
3. Was the ethical model application logically developed and easy to understand?	1	2	3
4. Did the closing clearly summarize a company's expectations for employees' conduct when facing a similar ethical dilemma?	1	2	3
Presentation Delivery (20%)			
1. Were presenters well prepared and fully knowledgeable of the topic?	1	2	3
2. Did presenters deliver with smooth flow of ideas without excessive reading from prepared text or visual aid?	1	2	3
3. Did presenters use correct grammar and standard English?	1	2	3
4. Did presenters add interesting variety to tone and enunciate and pronounce words clearly and loudly enough for the audience to understand?	1	2	3
5. Did presenters avoid verbal fillers?	1	2	3
6. Did presenters use natural, nondistracting body language, including genuine eye contact?	1	2	3
7. Did presenters dress professionally?	1	2	3
8. Was there an appropriate balance between speaking time of presenters?	1	2	3
9. Did presenters respond to questions fully, knowledgeably, and without hesitation?	1	2	3
10. Did presenters fit the required time slot?	1	2	3
Comments	Grade		

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FACEBOOK: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION STUDENTS

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DOI: 10.1177/1080569910385383

I RESISTED OPENING a Facebook account. I did not want to lose precious time to online games or idle chatter. I did not want to lose my quickly eroding privacy to the posting of candid photos. I did not want to be on Facebook with my students and become overly familiar with them, perhaps losing the authority that I liked to think I had. When