

TE 298/598: Communication for Tech Innovators

Credit: 1 credit hour, 1:15 lecture-discussion per week

Schedule: Wednesday 3:00-4:15pm, location TBD

Instructor: Harlee Sorkin

This is an elective course with no pre-requisites that is open to undergraduate (298) and graduate (598) students.

Required Resources:

Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die by Chip Heath and Dan Heath, Random House, 2007. ISBN-10: 1400064287

Course Description:

This class will explore the properties shared by messages that resonate with people in order to change the way they think and act. The course is based on the framework in the book *Made to Stick* by Chip & Dan Heath and consists of hands-on exercises that will teach you how to transform your messages to make them stick. How do you get attention for your idea in a crowded marketplace of ideas? How can you convey complex information quickly? How do you make a broad, abstract idea concrete and tangible enough for people to understand? How do you provide credibility for your idea without resorting to dry statistics? This course is a practical implementation of the *Made to Stick* framework and will consist of a series of exercises that are fun and generally short. Success will be dependent upon prep time outside of class in order to apply the course principles to a specific message. This is particularly true of the final project which involves improving the message of a live client (e.g., a friend with a start-up business, the promotional materials of a current or former employer, etc.). This course will be especially useful for innovators who must pitch their ideas to customers, investors, collaborators and potential employees and for students in the nonprofit sector where resources for spreading ideas are often thin.

Student Outcomes/Educational Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to a broad range of characteristics that make communication effective. [J]
- Students will apply principals learned by analyzing business scenarios and creating effective messages in both written and oral presentations. [B,G]
- Students will develop effective messages for real-world clients that they find on their own. [H,J]
- Students will present final written deliverables. Graduate students taking the course for credit will also deliver final oral presentations during the last class meeting. [G]
- Students will be expected to scrutinize and provide constructive feedback of peer presentations. [B,H]

Topical Outline:

- Week 1
 - Intro: What sticks?
 - The Curse of Knowledge
- Weeks 2-3
 - Concrete
 - Disambiguation
- Weeks 4-5
 - Simple
 - Directedness
- Weeks 6-7
 - Unexpected
 - “Gap Theory”
- Weeks 8-9
 - Emotional
 - Appealing to self-interest
- Weeks 10-11
 - Credible
 - Statistics usage
- Weeks 12-13
 - Stories
 - Schema
- Week 14
 - The Communication Framework
 - Customer Stories
 - Client Message
- Week 15
 - Graduates: oral message for own project
 - Overcoming the Curse of Knowledge

Grading Policy:

Attendance & Class Participation 33%

Assignments 33%

Final Project 34%*

*Undergraduates = written client message only (34%)

*Graduates = written client message (17%) + oral own message (17%)