

# The Organisational Analysis

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## Guiding Premise

This course works on the premise that organisations are constituted in communication – that is created through, and manifested in language, interaction, and practice. Therefore, communication is not simply a tool that managers use to make organisations work better. Moreover the act of organising is nothing but communication. So, when we talk about organizing we are talking about communication phenomena... organisational communication.

So following on from the above, how organisational members perceive their jobs, work, roles, and the organisation, and the communication practices they observe, and the language, metaphors and stories they use to talk about these things both influence and respond to the organisation (noun) and organisation (verb). That is, the achievements, relationships, ways of working, climate, goals, etc ... and by association may be the bottom line! Therefore, finding out about organisational members perceptions and analysing the language, metaphors and stories may help organisations and their members.

## Assignment Purpose & Focus

The purpose of Organisational Analysis Assignment is to for you to:

- Apply ideas and concepts covered in class and readings, in the analysis of a real organisational setting
- Learn to work effectively with others doing different and yet related tasks that contribute to a group effort
- Lecture and tutorial material and activities are designed to support you achieve both of these.

The three areas of focus in the organisational analysis are:

1. The ways in which organisational members perceive their jobs, work, roles, and the organisation, the communication practices they observe, and the language, metaphors and stories they use to talk about these things.

2. How these perceptions, language, metaphors and stories may influence or impact on the organisation itself – e.g. in organisational achievements, communication practices, relationships between members, ways of working,

organisational climate, strategic and operational goals... and in turn may be even the bottom line!

3. Identifying alternative perceptions, language, metaphors and stories which may benefit the organisation.

### **Practical Parameters**

The Organisational Analysis is comprised of the following related assignments:

1. Individual Interview Schedule (and subsequent interview)
2. Individual Review Abstracts (practice and final)
3. Individual Interview Essay
4. Group Presentation
5. Group Report

Each of the individual assignments contributes to the group outputs. Each of these assignments is discussed separately in the following pages. This current section addresses the overarching aspects you need to consider.

Your group will need to find an organisation which is amenable to your undertaking this assignment with some of their members.

- Do not use an organisation in which one of you is employed, because this may cause problems in relation to organisational confidentiality, and/or member participation and anonymity.
- Your group may consider “swapping” an employing organisation with that of another group in another tutorial (not the same tutorial –for reasons above). In this case, any student in this course would not be a participant in any interview – again for the above reasons.
- Once you have consent from an organisation, each group member will undertake separate interviews using their own interview schedule. Each interview schedule will need to include one “group” question.
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To fulfil the requirements of the Ethics Approval for this assignment, you need to:

- Read and understand the documentation related to Ethics Approval
- Ensure the representative who authorises the organisation’s participation, receives a copy of the Information Sheet and signs a consents form
- Ensure that participants receive an Information Sheet, and that you explain the project and their involvement
- Be prepared to answer any questions (potential) participants may have – refer them to the Course Convenor if you need to

- Ensure that participants sign a Consent Form when they agree to be interviewed
- to provide you with the opportunity to analyse organisational communication and its influence on organisational goals

## The Task

You will find out how organisational members perceive their organisations, and individual work and roles, and communication practices within the organisation, and analyse the ways in which these perceptions may influence the organisation and its ability to achieve its stated goals.

The relationship of the components to the task:

1. *Individual Interview* is the data gathering method for the individual essay, and the organisational analysis. The Interview Schedule sets the parameters and focus of the interview. The aim is to enable the interviewee talk about their perceptions of organisation, their work and roles, the communication practices they observe.
2. *Individual Review Abstracts* (practice and final) is the mini literature review to identify topics, concepts and theory that will help you to analyse the data.
3. *Individual Interview Essay* explores your initial analysis of the interview. You may choose focus on specific aspects, themes or foci from the interview data; or you may choose to take a more global approach. You are expected to use topics, concepts and theory from course material in your analysis. The important thing is to demonstrate how the outcomes of your analysis are meaningful to you.
4. *Group Presentation* is preparation for the final report. It is your opportunity as a group to present and get feedback on your initial analysis of the relevant interview material, and your ideas about how these perceptions, language, metaphors and stories presented in the interviews influence/impact on the organisation and its ability to achieve its stated goals.
5. *Group Report* is your final written presentation of the project. It will include a detailed account of the investigation, and discussion of your analysis and outcomes. You will highlight how organisational members' perceptions, language, metaphors and stories, and communication practices benefit (or not) the organisation, and/or you may suggest alternatives or actions that the organisational members could adopt.

## Assignments Required to Complete the Organisational Analysis

### **1. Group Project Plan & Contract 5%**

***Due in tutorials Week 3 (Jul 28-30)***

#### **Guiding Premise**

Group work is included in this course, because in organisations, people work together sharing resources, perspectives, ideas and abilities to complete tasks and achieve organisational and individual goals.

When recruiting, many employers place great store on evidence that you can work well with others. Therefore, we pay particular attention to the processes of group work.

The first task for your group is to complete a Group Project Plan & Contract.

#### **The assignment will help you to identify:**

- Tasks to be undertaken to achieve the goals
- Roles and responsibilities needed to carry out tasks and achieve goals
- Support mechanisms needed to carry out tasks and achieve goals
- Values and conduct your group identifies as enabling the group to carry out tasks and achieve goals
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#### **Practical Issues**

- The Group Project Plan & Contract will be started in tutorials in Week 2.
- You will receive guidance in the tutorials to help you complete the Project Plan and Contract
- Your group may choose to complete it during Week 2 tutorial
- Or take it way to finish and bring it to Week 3 tutorial
- The template for the Group Project Plan & Contract is in your Reader and online in Files on your "My Web"
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#### **Assessment criteria includes**

The extent to which, and how well each of the following is carried out:

Each section is complete with correct information (20%)

Each section has enough detail to inform an outsider (20%)

Steps 4 & 9 are congruent (20%)

Steps 3 & 5 are congruent (20%)

Steps 5, 6, 7 are congruent (20%)

## ***2. Individual Review Abstracts Assignments***

***Practice: 5% on completion. Due in Week 4: 12 noon Mon 10 Aug at MSC***

***Final: 20%. Due in Week 9: 12 noon Mon 8 Sep at MSC***

The review abstracts assignments are a mini literature review to help you identify topics, concepts and theory that will enable you to analyse interview data, and synthesise findings in your organisational analysis.

Practice Assignment:

- The task is to write one review abstract of a set reading in approximately 800 words
- You will receive 5% on handing in the review abstract.
- You will receive feedback on the practice assignment
- The set reading will be selected by the Course Convenor from the course reader
- More details will be given in class

Final Assignment

- The task is to write three review abstracts in approximately 800 words each
- A review abstract summarises a reading in a way that is meaningful to you and your topic of study
- The total assignment should be approximately 2500 words excluding reference list and cover page
- The final review abstracts assignment will comprise the following:
  - Review of one chapter from Cheney et al (text book) within the following parameters: Chapters 4 to 9 inclusive, and 11 to 13 inclusive. All other sections are excluded.
  - Two reviews of articles or book chapters from the New Zealand and Australian organisational communication bibliography (on line)

### **Purpose of the assignment**

The purpose of the Review Abstracts Assignment is for you to develop:

- Individual understanding about topics you may apply to your subsequent assignments

- Resources for you and your group members to use in subsequent individual and group assignments
- Areas of shared understanding among your group members

### **Practical Parameters**

The assignments ensure that you cover some of the essential reading for the course, and that you have some material to work with as you carry out your individual and group assignments.

Because you are working in groups to achieve a single goal, it is important that your group:

- Uses its numbers to work effectively and efficiently in gathering information
- Casts a wide net when reviewing reading topics, concepts and theories. The broader your coverage, the greater areas of choices when it comes to analysis, discussion, and suggestions

Therefore:

- Ensure that between the members of your group, at LEAST two chapters of Cheney et al are reviewed (within parameters stated above)
- Ensure that all group members review DIFFERENT articles or chapters from the New Zealand and Australian organisational communication bibliography. That is no one should be reviewing the same reading in the bibliography.

### **Practical Aspects: Tasks**

In tutorials, you will be given opportunities to examine examples of review abstracts, and go through the following steps to create your first review abstract.

#### 1. Reading the article

- First read the abstract, skim over the headings in the article, and then read the conclusion
- Read the article carefully through once
- Read a second time (and more) paying attention to Steps 2 through 6

#### 2. Define terms and concepts

- List all the words you don't know

- Look them up and write down their definitions(accept that this could be time consuming)
- You will get a minimum of 5 words per reading – any fewer than this and you are skimming past them

### 3. Statement of author's message

- Sum up in one or two sentences what the reading is about e.g., where, what, when, why, who
- Write down your version of a general statement of the author's message – that is, his or her main argument (not a restatement of the content)

### 4. Identify and discuss up to four major themes and subtopics

- Identify the themes or subtopics and summarise each - That is, describe and explain each theme
- This is NOT the place to give your view or analysis, just say what the reading is about

### 5. Identify aspects of interest to you and integrate with other knowledge

- Write down the meaning or usefulness that the material has for understanding other concepts
- In particular, identify four specific aspects of the reading – that is information, ideas, advice, learning, that you find particularly interesting and/or relevant to you or your project
- Describe and explain how/why each of these four aspects is relevant/and or of interest to you

### 6. Summarise the key outcomes of your review of the article

- Evaluate the author's presentation and your reactions to it

### 7. Write a review abstract in approximately 800 words using the material generated from carrying out the above

#### **Assessment criteria includes**

The extent to which and how well the following are carried out for each review abstract:

Introduction: (15%)

- Introduction clearly sets out the parameters of your approach

- Summarises the key aspects of the reading
- Summarises the author's key message and/or argument

#### Analysis and Discussion: (50%)

Identifies, describes and explains four main themes/subtopics from the reading

- Describes and explains how/why each of these four aspects is relevant/and or of interest
- Uses explicit reference to the reading to support statements, claims, assessments, descriptions, explanations
- Demonstrates clearly the meaning or usefulness that the material has for understanding other concepts.
- Evaluates the author's presentation

#### Conclusion: (15%)

- Identifies key features of the reading and relevance
- Conclusion are based on the analysis

#### Presentation and formatting (20%)

- The paper adheres to standards appropriate for university-level work such as organisation of paper, coherence, mechanics including paragraphing, grammar, punctuation and spelling
- APA style is followed for reference list and in-text citations
- The cover page presents the following information: Assignment title and due date, students name, course name and number, Convenor's name, Tutor's name, and word count
- Each review abstract is approximately 800 words (the total assignment is approximately 2500 words excluding reference list and cover page)
- Note on Word count: Any essay under or over 2500 words by more than 10% (i.e. 251 words) will lose up to 10 marks. Any essay failing to show the word count on the front cover will lose up to 10 marks. Word count excludes the reference list and cover page.

### ***3. Individual Interview Schedule 10%***

#### ***Due in tutorials no later than Week 6***

The Individual Interview is the data gathering method for the individual essay, and the organisational analysis. The Interview Schedule attempts to set the parameters and focus of the interview – it is the “designing” component mentioned below.

#### **Purpose of the interview assignment (schedule & interview itself)**

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with insights into the world of organisational communication through the experiences of interviewing people about their perceptions of the organisation, their work and roles, and the communication practices they observe.

- By designing, conducting, transcribing, and analysing interviews, you should have a better understanding of how persons interpret self, other and context.
- In other words, you should better understand how people view and make sense of their work experiences.

#### **The task**

You will draft a moderately structured interview schedule and (using this schedule) interview a person for a total of approximately 30-45 minutes in one interview period (1 hour is the absolute maximum time). Your interview schedule will include 4-6 main questions, with additional related follow up and probing questions.

Although you need to meet the needs of the organisational analysis assignment, you may also choose a person and topics that will help you explore your own interests. So, you may consider additional reasons why you might select this person. For instance:

- Are they in jobs similar to your career choice?
- Do they hold jobs that are unfamiliar, but of interest to you?
- Do they work in an organisation you might see yourself working in the future?

Within the context of language, metaphors and stories that people use to talk about their job and/or organisations, and communication practices, questions that interest you may include:

- How the person views his/her interactions with supervisors;
- How the person receives decision premises;
- What communication skills are important in the position;

- What perspective on organisational communication does the interviewee adopt;
- How managers manage communication with one another;
- What channels are most useful to the person;
- How the person and other employees are motivated;
- Attitudes toward bureaucracy;
- And many more options are available.

### **Practical Aspects**

- Skills for developing interview questions will be addressed in tutorials
- As this assignment contributes to your group assignment, make sure your interviewee and questions can relate to your group topic and/or organisation
- We highly recommend that you carry out your interview prior to Week 9
- You will need to audiotape your interview.
- You will need to transcribe the interview once you have conducted the interview. That is, you should translate the questions and answers, as tape recorded, onto paper.
- Tape recording equipment and transcribers are available from ITS –TTG in K Block. Pick up a blue card for Course Convenor to sign.
- Transcribing is a time-consuming process, so allow yourself enough time to accomplish the task. Typically it takes 5-8 hours to transcribe a one-hour interview, so allow 3-4 hours for a 30 minute interview.
- Make two copies of the transcript so that you can keep one and can hand one in with your essay
- If possible (not compulsory) bring your transcript to tutorial in Week 9 where you will learn how to analyse it

### **Assessment criteria includes**

The extent to which and how well the following are carried out:

Introduction: 25%

- Clearly states the purpose of your proposed interview and relevant how it is relevant to the course
- Identifies the proposed interviewee, their job and industry and/or organisation of employment
- Explains how his or her interests and work experiences are relevant to your purpose

**The Interview Schedule: 60%**

- States how you will introduce yourself, state the purpose of the interview to the interviewee, and how you will address issue of confidentiality and consent
- Lists the questions clearly
- Includes possible prompts and follow up questions
- Demonstrates how the questions follow a structure, and the structure is evident (you may need to explain your structure)
- Identifies questions into those priorities. Those that you: MUST ask; WANT to ask; and COULD ask time permitting
- Offers a concluding question and/or an invitation to the interviewee to ask questions of you

**Practical and Presentation Issues: 15%**

- The interview schedule meets the criteria of the project as used to seek Ethics Approval
- Shows that the interview has been timed to be no less than 30 mins, and trialled
- Provide copy of template or description of how you will take notes as a backup in cases of audio recording failure
- Presented and formatted to a university standard, and is free of grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors

#### ***4. Individual Interview Essay***                      **25%**

***Due in Week 11: 12 noon Fri 26 Sep at MSC***

The purpose of the interview assignment is to gather information so as to give you insights into the world of organisational communication through the experiences of interviewing people about their perceptions of the organisation, their work and roles, and the communication practices they observe.

#### **The Task**

You will write a 2000-2500 word essay analysing material from the interview. Your focus will be the ways in which your interviewee talks about her or his perceptions of the organisation, work and roles, and the communication practices he/she observes. Using the language, metaphor and stories that your interviewee uses, analyse and discuss possible outcomes for organisational communication. Your analysis will make specific references topics, concepts and theory from course material.

You may choose focus on specific aspects, themes or foci from the interview data; or you may choose to take a more global approach. The important thing is to demonstrate how the outcomes of your analysis are meaningful to you, and possibly useful.

#### **Assessment criteria includes**

The extent to which, and how well you carry out the following:

Introduction 15%:

- Introduction is clearly sets out the parameters of your approach
- Key areas of analysis are introduced
- Previews what you expect to show

Analysis and Discussion: 60%:

- Relevant theory and research is used to inform your analysis
- You make explicit reference to the interview material to illustrate and support your claims, assessments, descriptions, analysis
- You identify ways in which the interviewee's perspectives and use of language, metaphors and stories illustrate/influence organisational culture and practices, and relates to relevant theory
- You show what happens if you analyse the language, metaphors and stories in ways beyond "face value"

**Conclusion: 15%**

- Your conclusion identifies key features and outcomes of, and learning from, the interview
- Your conclusion is based on your analysis

**Presentation and Formatting: 10%**

- The paper adheres to standards appropriate for university-level work such as organisation of paper, coherence, mechanics, correct APA referencing, and presentation. Appendices (if attached) are clearly identified
- Deductions are made for errors in paragraphing, grammar, punctuation and spelling; incorrect citations and referencing style; and for not adhering to required standards (e.g. cover page, page numbers, etc)
- Note on Word count: Any essay under or over 2500 words by more than 10% (i.e. 251 words) will lose up to 10 marks. Any essay failing to show the word count on the front cover will lose up to 10 marks. Word count excludes the reference list and cover page.

## **5. Group Presentation 15%**

### ***Due in Weeks 12-14 in tutorials***

The Group Presentation is preparation for the final report. It is your opportunity as a group to present and get feedback on your initial analysis of the relevant interview material, and your ideas about how these perceptions, language, metaphors and stories presented in the interviews influence/impact on the organisation and its ability to achieve its stated goals.

#### **The Task**

Your group will present the initial findings of your group analysis of the interview material, and for a minimum of 25 minutes. You may go for as long as 40 minutes if you wish.

Don't be fooled by the word "presentation" – think how you can engage your class mates in interactive discussion and activities.

You will demonstrate how you compared, contrasted, and/or synthesised material from the interviews.

You will be clear about the extent to which your analysis involved using interview material that was not selected for the individual essays. That is, you may have examined the interview data differently, and/or incorporated the data and analysis used for the individual interview essays.

You are expected to synthesise topics, concepts and theory from course material, and interview material in your analysis. Your review abstracts material should provide a good base to work from, but you will find that additional topics, concepts and theory are needed (this is the nature of research and hence the need for casting a wide net).

#### **Assessment criteria includes**

The extent to which, and how well you carry out the following:

Structure: The shape of what was presented (20%)

- An overview/preview of presentation is given
  - Clearly delineated introduction, key points, and conclusion
- Clearly states the purpose of the project. Also clearly states what the group wants to get out of the presentation
- Brief description of the organisation being studied (business field, size, and number of employees). The real name and identifying location of the organisation are NOT mentioned

- Some detail about the number of participants and any other data gathering methods used e.g. internal documents, documents in the public domain
- Conclusion takes into account feedback/input from audience

Content: What is presented e.g., progress to date, analysis, & findings (60%)

- The ideas, issues, and content presented are clearly linked to purpose of the presentation
  - A range of material is presented from that available to date e.g., findings and/or themes/issues of note, and/or recommendations
- Analysis synthesizes, and makes clear and specific references to topics, concepts and theories covered in the course, and interview material
  - Demonstrates how you compared, contrasted, and/or synthesised material from the interviews.
  - Clarity about the extent to which the analysis involved using interview material that was not initially selected for the individual essays,
  - Clarity about the extent to which the analysis incorporates data and analysis used for, and from the individual interview essays.
- Claims are well supported and illustrated with specific reference to relevant interview material, topics, concepts and theories
  - Forms of evidence given are appropriate to presentation/report purpose and may include: statistics, analogies (comparisons), demonstrations, testimony, incidents (stories, anecdotes, examples), exhibits, research

Method: Activities, Styles, Environment & Equipment (20%)

- Discussion/activities are engaging, interactive, productive and creative
  - Presents material in way that seeks and gets input and feedback from audience.
  - Discussion/activities and tools (including audio visual aides) support achievement of presentation purpose
- Each presenter engages with the audience - e.g. talks to the front, makes eye contact, speaks "to" rather than "at" the audience. Audience can see and hear each presenter
- Group members support each other in the session (e.g. back up, tech support)
- The room is set up so as to help achieve your purpose e.g. seating, tables, music, posters
  - Audio visual aides clear, legible, and can be seen and heard from people at the back

## **6. Group Organisational Analysis Report 20%**

***Due in Week 17: 12 noon Mon 3 Nov at MSC***

The Group Report is your final written presentation of the project. It will include a detailed account of the investigation, and discussion of your analysis and outcomes. You will illustrate how organisational members' perceptions of their organisations and individual work and roles, and communication practices within the organisation, and the language, metaphors and stories, used to talk about these things, influence and impact on (beneficially or otherwise) the organisation. You may suggest alternatives that the organisational members could adopt.

### **The task**

Write a report of approximately 2500 word, detailing the process and outcomes of the organisational analysis as your group carried it out.

Clearly state your specific focus (as it began and/or as it emerged) and rationale.

Illustrate (with reference to your area of focus), how organisational members' perceptions of their organisations and individual work and roles, and communication practices within the organisation, and the language, metaphors and stories, used to talk about these things, influence and impact on (beneficially or otherwise) the organisation.

### **Practical Issues**

- Use the experience of the presentation to benefit your report
- Allow enough time between the presentation and the report writing for finalise your analysis. This may include further readings
- Be prepared to use ideas from other groups, and ideas concepts, and theories those last lectures and readings.
- Allow a good week for the final writing up and proofread. Compiling your appendix materials can be a headache in themselves.

### **Assessment criteria includes**

The extent to which the following are carried out:

#### **Scene Setting: Exec summary, introduction, background, and method (20%)**

- Executive summary provides an outline of whole report (no more than one page). If you have a list of recommendations this may follow your executive summary page.

Introduction: The extent to which you

State the purpose/goals of study (e.g. research questions or focus of exploration)

Give reason(s) why the study is important

Introduce the relevant aspects of the organisation and topic focus (e.g. organisation background, broad topic)

Introduce the key areas of analysis (e.g. areas of focus within topic)

Preview what you expect to show

Method: the extent to which you describe your data gathering and analysis methods (e.g. moderately scheduled interviews, cluster analysis, thematic analysis, etc)

Context: Lit review and findings (20%)

Relevant theory and research is used to inform your study (e.g. theory & research may be found in course material, review abstracts assignments, other organisational communication literature)

Specific evidence is used in the study (e.g. data collected from interviews, organisational documentation, public available information, etc.)

Choice of topics relevant to identified focus of the organisational analysis

Analysis: Discussion, conclusion and recommendations (50%)

The extent to which your analysis illustrates how organisational members' perceptions of their organisations and individual work and roles, and communication practices within the organisation, and the language, metaphors and stories, used to talk about these things, may influence and impact on (beneficially or otherwise) the organisation.

The extent to which your analysis explains how these communication strategies and practices are either working well / have problems

The extent to which you use research and theory to support your analysis (e.g. theory & research may be found in course texts, journal articles investigated for abstracts assignment, other organisational communication literature)

The extent to which you use specific quotes and/or material from the interviews and other relevant data.

The extent to which your conclusion identifies key learnings, outcomes or features of the organisational analysis

Presentation format (10%)

The paper adheres to standards appropriate for university-level work such as organisation of paper, coherence, mechanics, correct APA referencing, and presentation. Appendices (where attached) are clearly identified (e.g. organisational documentation, public available information, websites, additional interviews (not those done for interview assignment) etc

Deductions are made for errors in paragraphing, grammar, punctuation and spelling; incorrect citations and referencing style; and for not adhering to required standards (e.g. word count, page numbers, 1.5/double spacing, title page, etc). Notes on Word count: 2500 words means that 10% under or over (250 more or less) is acceptable. Anymore than 250 over or under, incurs a penalty of up to 10 marks. The title page, executive summary, reference list, and appendices are not to be included in your word count.