

How a
Communication
degree makes you
more attractive
to employers



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A degree in communication represents to an employer that you are a professional communicator. So you operate at a completely different level when it comes to skills valued highly in all sorts of organizations.

Becoming a professional communicator takes effort. But when you interview for employment, your unique skillset can take you to the top of the list of candidates. And when you have a degree in Communication, you leave college and enter the workforce with the most valuable currency you could possess.



Becoming a Professional Communicator

If you want to be seen as a professional communicator, you need to become proficient in three key areas – Process, Tools, and Application.

Process

Effective communication is not random; it requires research. The better researcher you are, the better communicator you will be. In addition to research, Process demands you learn how to prepare. Whether you are preparing for a contract negotiation, a training meeting, or a sales pitch, the professional communicator develops an understanding of the audience, the motivators, the goal outcome, and doesn't leave the opportunity to chance. Then it's time for the presentation. And since this is what most people think of when they think of a Communication degree, you better be the best at delivering the presentation.

Tools

A professional communicator has a lot of skills in his/her toolbox. Three are especially important.

First, you need a solid "fund of knowledge." Gain as much basic knowledge about as many topics as you can. Translation – even your Colonnade courses are useful! When you can relate to someone on a topic they care about, you are well on the way to establishing a relationship; and professionally, that matters.

The second tool you need is a mastery of the language. It's not okay to say, "I'm not good at grammar." From the origins and meanings of colloquialisms to correct pronunciations of words, being a master of the language is vital.

Finally, you need the tool of effective writing. Learn in college how to write as well as you can. Get all the advice and practice you can. Leave college knowing that you'll continue to sharpen this tool for the rest of your professional life.

Application

Take all of your research and preparation, all the tools in your toolbox, and put the package in action. This is where the "attractive to employers" concept really comes together. As a professional communicator, you have:

- the ability to understand challenging concepts;
- the ability to relate to all kinds of people;
- the ability to communicate in multiple formats through a variety of channels;
- the ability to persuade.

How can you not be attractive to employers?

Topping the list

When an HR manager is interviewing job candidates out of college, she's going to ask, "What can you bring to our Corporation that sets you apart?" She expects answers like, "I'm very organized. I like people. I'm a fast learner."

But as a graduate with a degree in Communication, you're going to look the HR manager in the eye and say, "I'm a professional communicator. I can write technical content, ad copy and employee communication all in the same day; I can communicate complex ideas clearly to a broad range of audiences; I can negotiate and persuade effectively. When you launch your Corporation's new product line in a few months, you'll need someone to craft the messaging for your sales team. I can be that person. When you roll out your new employee benefits plan later in the year, you'll need someone who can explain the changes clearly and help write the technical documentation. I can do that, too. Oh, and I'm also a people person!"

The most valuable currency in the job market

The most valuable currency you can have upon leaving college is OPTIONS. With a degree in Communication and a commitment to becoming a professional you will be giving yourself options. Unlike many career choices, a professional communicator is necessary in every industry, every size company, and every geographic location. When you develop your craft as a professional communicator, you can take that wherever you want to go.

About this brochure...

Bob Layne first delivered this material as a presentation on the WKU campus on September 28, 2016. This brochure is a condensed version of that presentation, edited and distributed with his permission.

Mr. Layne is currently President/CEO of The Visibility Company, a global marketing, communications, and technology-development company headquartered in Brentwood, Tennessee. Prior to his current position, he served more than 10 years as an officer of Dollar General Corporation.

Bob Layne is a member of the Department of Communication Advisory Council.



Bob Layne

BA, Corporate & Organizational Communication,
Western Kentucky University, 1987
JD, Temple University, 1992
MBA, Northwestern University, 2003

According to Bob Layne, with a degree in Communication, you are a “professional communicator.”

Layne challenges his audience: “Are you passionate about the fitness industry? Go there! Passionate about green energy? Go there! Passionate about international finance? Go there! When you develop your craft as a professional communicator, you can take that wherever you want to go.”

