

Northwestern University
Master of Communication, Hybrid Leadership Program, 2020
Annotated Artifacts

Heyo! *Didn't expect to download a 19-page document with lots of research papers and explanations? Click [here](#) to see a gallery that includes the highlights: three favorite samples and three favorite reflections from the program. If you are in academia or just curious what I was doing in 2020 while everyone else was baking bread and making masks, continue below.*

Artifact 1: Research Paper: Using Social Media to Improve Employee Relationship Outcomes Through Two-Way Symmetrical Communication

What: Written for Michelle Shumate's Foundations of Strategic Communication class, this paper focused on evaluating the two-way symmetrical strategy Mount Sinai Beth Israel's Instagram strategy and understanding how that strategy may or may not change the employee-organizational relationship.

Who/When: I wrote this paper in October 2019.

Why: The final assignment for Foundations of Strategic Communication required us to combine the concepts from the class with our own work experience. I looked at the intersection of affordances in social media, Grunig's two-way symmetrical relationship model, and employee communication.

How: In doing this paper, I shifted my understanding of social media strategy from a tactical and content engagement approach to a relationship management approach. In reviewing several months of Mount Sinai Beth Israel data, I learned that our dialogue was not always symmetrical with employees and that we did not always close the loop when questions were asked or requests were made. In my research, there was a correlation between Instagram engagement and self-reported employee-organizational

relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the channel has value and we can continue to work on creating a long-term, two-way symmetrical dialogue.

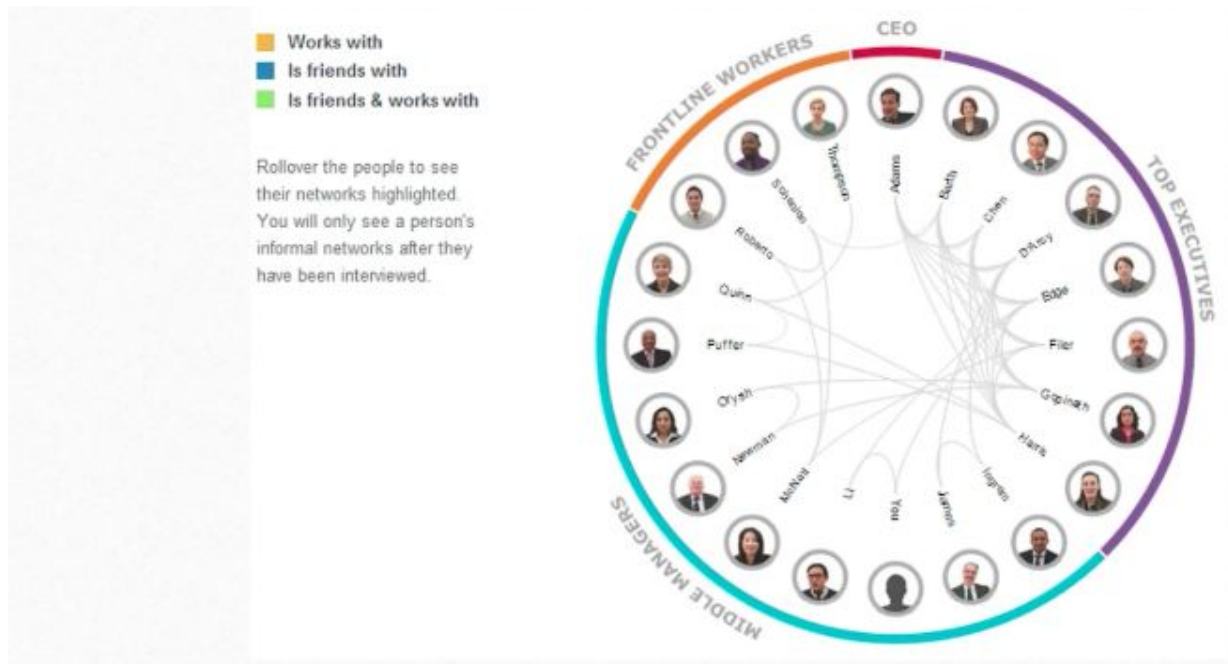
Learning Outcome 2: Demonstrate the ability to assess complex organizational environments and achieve communication goals.

Learning Outcome 4: Apply communication-centered scholarship to strengthen communication effectiveness.



[Artifact 1 Link](#)

Artifact 2: Harvard Business Review Change Management Simulation



What: This online change management simulation allowed users to take action to move the organization forward while assessing the team's change readiness. The simulation organization produced sunglasses and was forced by one of their largest buyers to make sustainability changes.

Who/When: I completed this simulation in September of 2019.

Why: This simulation was an assignment for Michelle Shumate's Foundations of Strategic Communications class. The goal of the exercises was to help us assess the complexity of an organization and consider how to take strategic action for change. We had to assess concepts like high urgency vs. low urgency change, credibility, proactive vs. reactive change, informal networks, and the movement from awareness to adoption.

How: The simulation was rocky for me in the beginning. After a few rounds of calculating the effect of my actions on the change in the simulated organization, I

pulled from my real-life experience and was able to produce the change ahead of schedule through a few main tactics: CEO involvement, one-on-one meetings, and restructuring training and rewards. Here are a few things I learned:

- Jumping to conclusions will undermine change efforts.
- Considering credibility before taking action is imperative. Work to build your credibility and the credibility of others who are change agents.
- Know your stakeholders and spend time with them. Consider informal networks.
- Changing the environment can change behavior.

Learning Objective 2: Demonstrate the ability to assess complex organizational environments and achieve communication goals.

Learning Outcome 3: Address complex challenges by collaboratively leading teams across disciplines.

Learning Disposition 4: Be equipped to influence change.

Artifact 3: Personal Data and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Project

What: Article “AI bias is real, and we created it,” exploring diversity in memes and the effect our bias has on artificial intelligence posted in personal blog and on LinkedIn.

Who/When: Stephanie Ramos, November 2019.

Why: While taking Alexis Lauricella’s class, Using Data to Make Informed Decisions, I started to practice using simple data analysis to answer many questions at work and in my life. At the same time, I was noticing my growing awareness about the inequity in representation of women and people of color at work and in the media. I created a small study combining these two interests and shared it with my professional network.

How: Through this exercise, I practiced data collection and analysis skills that can be used to answer simple and complex questions. I also explored how our behavior and bias both influence technology. I made a commitment and asked others to make the same commitment to look beyond the top layer of what’s presented by the media. To make a change, we’ll have to consciously dig deeper for relevant and diverse content by underrepresented people.

Learning Outcome 6: Create and deliver elegant messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context.

Learning Disposition 1: Iteratively develop interprofessional leadership competencies.

Learning Disposition 2: Utilize communication tools to embrace complexity and difference.



[Artifact 3 Link](#)

Artifact 4: Zephyr Crisis Simulation

What: Our team of communications professionals responded to an escalating crisis at hilarious, faux company, Zephyr Airlines, during a live simulation on campus at Northwestern University.

Who/When: The Green Crisis Team: Stephanie Ramos, Chris McClave, Miriam Mburu, Stephanie Ramos, Katy Rivera, Nathan Shetty

Why: The crisis simulation was a part of the second In-Residence for Northwestern's Master of Communication Hybrid Leadership Program and included interactions with the c-suite, real-time crisis updates, and qualitative and quantitative analysis.

How: The Zephyr crisis simulation gave me the opportunity to collaborate with other communications professionals in an increasingly complex situation. This experience was different from my professional crisis experience because of the complexity, length, and opportunity to work as a team to align messages while sharing them broadly for different stakeholders. A few things this simulation taught me:

- You have to dig deep for truthful information; if you communicate before you have that, you risk ruining your reputation.
- You cannot always rely on organizational leadership to manage a crisis or serve as the best and most credible sender of the message.
- The entrance and exit of a press conference is as important as the message, and the media can edit the video to tell the part of the story they want to tell.
- Previously nurtured relationships will be crucial in a crisis.
- Work to build stability even if it feels like there is none.

Little did I know that the most complex crisis of our lifetime would soon hit our Manhattan hospital. Luckily, we did have great leadership. Otherwise, the bullet points above hold true.



Click [here](#) for press conference video

Click [here](#) for sample messages

Learning Outcome 2: Demonstrate the ability to assess complex organizational environments and achieve communication goals.

Learning Outcome 3: Address complex challenges by collaboratively leading teams across disciplines, distances, and sectors.

Learning Outcome 6: Create and deliver elegant messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context.

Learning Disposition 1: Iteratively develop interprofessional leadership competencies.

Learning Disposition 3: Choose to communicate with ethical intention and evaluate the virtuous elements of any communication situation.

Artifact 5: Data Collection and Visualization

What: A flyer for managers and directors at MSBI that clearly relays data about communication preferences.

Who/When: I created this during the Making Data-Informed Decisions class in December 2019.

Why: This class was a broad overview of gathering, interpreting, and sharing data. The goal for this assignment was to share data in a digestible format that motivated the audience into action.

How: For this exercise, I wanted to measure the differences in communication preference among medicine nurses and transporters across shifts. I rounded with an iPad to collect the data in a five question survey. To create the flyer, I used Canva and focused on telling a positive story that offered a call-to-action.

Artifact 5 Link

Managers & Directors: You are doing great!

✔ **72%** of employees surveyed said they have all the info they need to do their job!

✘ However, **day shift** employees are **2X** more aware of organizational updates than **night shift** employees.

How can we help our night shift employees?

Do not rely on email.

✘ 3 in 5 night shift employees do not regularly check organizational email.

Say hello in person.

Night shift employees requested receiving communication from their managers more often than the daytime shift.

We recommend scheduling 1-2 nighttime huddles per month.

Mount Sinai Beth Israel

↻ flip for another tip

More tips to engage our night staff:

Get creative!

4 in 5 night shift employees prefer to receive organizational updates through a departmental bulletin board.

Create a centralized bulletin board:

- Update it at least once a week
- Feature employees who go above and beyond
- Feature wellness (only 33% of employees surveyed knew MSBI has a gym on campus)
- Feature other organizational updates like progress on our new hospital or events
- Leave a white space for notes so that employees who do not see you regularly can leave questions and messages

What about the evening staff?

On average, the evening shift employees were less aware of updates than the day shift, but more aware than the night shift. They prefer email and manager interactions when receiving updates.

Learning Outcome 2: Demonstrate the ability to assess complex organizational environments and achieve communication goals.

Learning Outcome 4: Apply communication-centered scholarship to strengthen communication effectiveness.

Learning Outcome 6: Create and deliver elegant messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context.

Artifact 6: Dialogue with Professor Randall Iden

What: After studying several different theories of dialogue, we scheduled a 15-minute dialogue with our professor to practice.

Who/When: Stephanie Ramos spoke with Randall Iden in January 2020.

Why: Dialogue creates space for shared understanding and building relationships. In difficult situations, having a dialogical foundation and high trust can help groups proceed in a mutually-beneficial way.

How: For this dialogue, I challenged myself to pick a difficult topic so that I could practice having the kind of conversation that might actually change the world and move us forward as a community; these are goals of mine. I asked Professor Iden how he had chosen the movie scenes in our first week of classes because they were not inclusive and representative of our modern world. This surprised me, given the focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the program. Because we both understood the foundations of dialogue and had a similar goal of creating shared meaning, we were able to learn from each other. I gained insights about the ongoing challenges and uncertainties of being a professor of curricula that haven't typically been inclusive, and we both shared our ideas about how to promote diverse content, which we see as a responsibility. This practice was another small step on my journey in becoming an outspoken accomplice for those who need to be heard.

Learning Outcome 5: Critically analyze messages.

Learning Disposition 1: Iteratively develop leadership competencies.

Learning Disposition 3: Choose to communicate with ethical intention and evaluate the virtuous elements of any communication situation.

Learning Disposition 4: Be equipped to influence change.

Artifact 7: Promoting Employee Voices

What: This is a year-end/look ahead video my team produced for the staff at Mount Sinai Beth Israel.

Who/When: January 2020, Stephanie Ramos with executive team, staff at Mount Sinai Beth Israel, and videographer.

Why: We try to engage staff with videos regularly because the message is less likely to be misinterpreted; body language and tone are clearer than in emails or print. 2019 included a lot of staff engagement and we wanted to create a video that showed that engagement.

How: Our previous year-end videos were narrated by the President only with b-roll of staff. Because our primary ongoing strategy is to engage staff in problem-solving and process improvement, it seemed right to include them in the voice of the video. I had the help of a videographer for capturing the shots and some editing and our managers in identifying a diverse group of people who exhibit our culture proudly. People loved it so much, they asked for the "extended" cut so we could share every response that we filmed. We shared that version on IG TV:

https://www.instagram.com/tv/B8HYuWiBwQh/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet

Watching this video three months later feels different after thinking about how much our operations and priorities have had to shift during the pandemic. This video is a hopeful reminder that we will get back to normal someday.



[Artifact 8 Link](#)

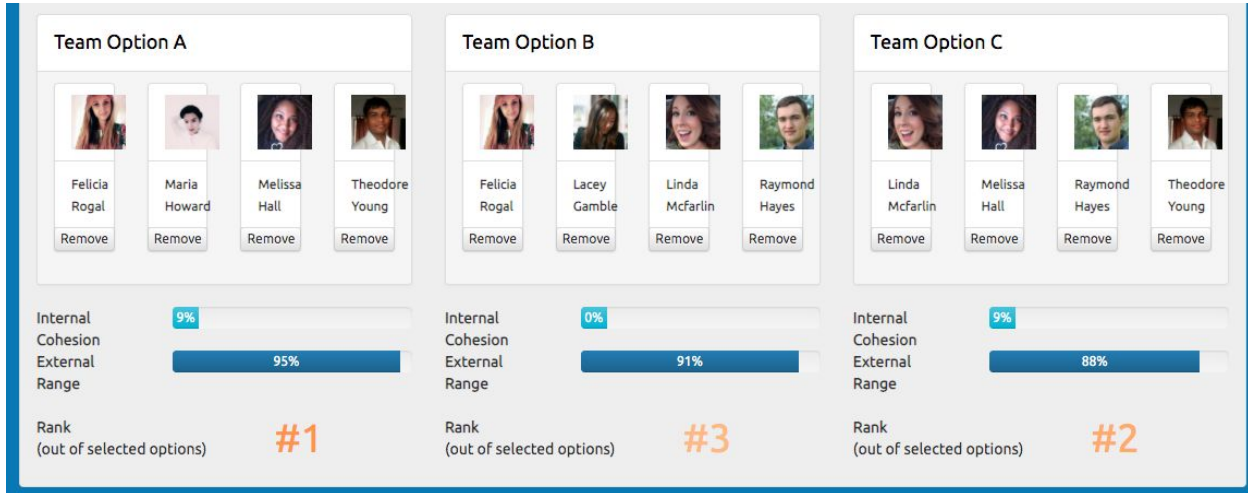
Learning Outcome 3: Address complex challenges by collaboratively leading teams across disciplines, distances, and sectors.

Learning Outcome 6: Create and deliver elegant messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context.

Learning Disposition 2: Utilize communication to embrace complexity and difference.

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Artifact 8: RAD Networking Exercise



What: In *Understanding and Leveraging Networks*, one of the last exercises was evaluating formal hierarchies and informal networks at an organization looking to build a team for efficient collaboration on a new innovative product while taking into account the internal cohesion of the group, the external range, the ability to implement change, and the attributes of employees. The software gave us many different metrics over time to evaluate the employees and their networks. After the exercise, I learned a lot from the group discussion.

Who/When: Stephanie Ramos spoke with Tina Rosen, Michael Leppert, and Dinah Torres-Quinones in May of 2020.

Why: Understanding informal networks in addition to more formal hierarchies is key to building teams for specific goals.

How: Achieving internal cohesion in this exercise proved to be almost impossible despite my best efforts. Internal cohesion is the extent to which the team members know each other, creating easier and more effective, efficient communication and bonding. I spent much of my time looking for connections between the various team member candidates, but did not succeed in getting a high internal cohesion score.

Two members of my group who got higher internal cohesion scores shared their process with me which reminded me that metrics, network maps, and hierarchies are not 100% of the information needed to create a successful team. I had spent my time on spreadsheets measuring each measurable attribute to create the best possible group. They had looked closely at each bio, taking into consideration the employee's tenure, focus at work, and general information on their reputation.

We all discussed how this exercise was nearly impossible because we do not know the people. Further, Dinah made a point that resonated with me about hierarchies and networks being a small part of the equation when you consider how the work gets done. She wanted to see the processes in place for creating, evaluating, and implementing new products. Even a clear understanding of informal networks may be incomplete data if the person analyzing it does not understand how the work gets done.

This is so true when I think about my own work in the hospital and all of the process improvement work we've embarked on. Patients pass through many different departments and units and understanding that journey intimately is the foundational information needed to complete the picture when analyzing networks, hierarchies, and other attributes in team analytics.

Learning Outcome 3: Address complex challenges by collaboratively leading teams across disciplines, distances, and sectors.

Learning Disposition 3: Choose to communicate with ethical intention and evaluate the virtuous elements of any communication situation.

Learning Disposition 4: Be equipped to influence change.

Artifact 9: Change Management Essay on Switching from Pagers to Secure Messaging in Hospitals

What: As a “warmup” for the MSC program, we were given the book, *Switch*, by Chip and Dan Heath and asked to write an essay applying their framework to a change management situation. I wrote about switching from paging to mobile secure messaging for caregiver communication inside of hospitals.

Who/When: Stephanie Ramos wrote this essay in August of 2019.

Why: Understanding and motivating change is a key skill for anyone looking to find success in the business world.

How: Heath and Heath (2010) argued in their book, *Switch*, that successful change happens by engaging both the emotional and rational sides of people while creating a clear path for new behaviors. They use the analogy of a rider, an elephant, and a path (p. 7-9). By engaging the rider and the rational side of people, motivating the elephant through emotion, and shaping the path, hospitals can more easily help their healthcare providers (in this case, inpatient nurses, doctors, social workers, and other patient-facing employees) transition to a secure messaging application (SMA). I used knowledge from this book and pulled from my experience in process improvement.

Heath, C. & Heath, D. (2010). *Switch: How to change things when change is hard.*

United States: Currency



[Artifact 9 Link](#)

Learning Outcome 2: Demonstrate the ability to assess complex organization environments and achieve communication goals.

Learning Outcome 3: Address complex challenges by collaboratively leading teams across disciplines, distances, and sectors.

Learning Outcome 5: Critically analyze messages.

Learning Disposition 1: Iteratively develop inter-professional leadership competencies.

Learning Disposition 4: Be equipped to influence change.

Artifact 10: Sugar Bowl Negotiation

What: After studying negotiation strategies and reading the background information for a negotiation exercise, I met on Zoom with a member of our cohort to role-play the negotiation.

Who/When: Stephanie Ramos with Chris McClave.

Why: MSC teaches negotiation as a win-win scenario where both parties can work together for mutual benefit. Negotiation is an important piece of business, communication, and cross-sectional partnerships that change the world.

How: I had two goals in this simulated negotiation: 1) develop a relationship and understand the interests of my counterpart, and 2) take risks. I have always felt anxious negotiating. Throughout the MSC courses, I learned that understanding the interests of your partner allows you to focus on something besides winning and allows you to be more creative in finding solutions. That was my first focus in this simulation. I asked the antique seller about his knowledge of the piece, how long he had it, and if other people were interested in it. I tried to build a rapport. However, Chris beat me to anchoring the price. Oddly enough, his anchor was just under my reserve price, so I could have walked away happy. But, I had told myself I would take a chance, so I re-anchored at a lower price. We went back and forth a few times, and settled on a price that just under 50% of what I had told myself I could pay. Chris had met his goals in the negotiation and we both walked away satisfied.



Learning Disposition 1: Iteratively develop inter-professional leadership competencies.

Learning Disposition 3: Choose to communicate with ethical intention and evaluate the virtuous elements of any communication situation.

Artifact 11: Freewriting/Private Writing Practice

What: In *Public Persuasion*, Jason DeSanto teaches students to journal in a specific way to deepen their understanding of their convictions. Conviction and connection are needed for persuasion. After reading *Accidental Genius* by Mark Levy, we practiced a freewriting technique that focused on fast, stream-of-conscious writing to allow yourself to think without editing your thoughts.

Who/When: Stephanie Ramos, July 2020.

Why: The goal of the exercise was to practice many of the techniques in the book as a brainstorming technique for problem solving, writing, innovation, and personal reflection.

How: I immediately took to this technique. It felt similar to writing morning pages from Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way*, but is more structured and has a clearer goal. During a week in the Connecticut country on a study retreat, I started freewriting about all sorts of challenges at work and at school. The most extensive session was when I started to brainstorm about how to explain to others what I have to offer as a communications professional. I wrote for 10 minutes, reviewed the writing and highlighted one or two ideas to focus on, then wrote again for 10 minutes. I did this several times, going deeper and deeper into my thoughts. Private writing/freewriting is not to be shared because it is messy and unformed, but I wrote a reflection paper that highlights some of the ideas I gained from this session. The freewriting contributed directly to my value proposition video which you can see on my "About Me" page on sjr.nyc.

