

COM 200 Peer Evaluation Directions

Evaluation is a fact of life. You will evaluate others and others will evaluate you. Occasionally you'll have to have crucial conversations about such issues. Learning how to do that well is part of the reason for this assignment. The other part is to require a conversation and point of reflection that will help your COM 200 group perform effectively.

Point Value: 10 points each time for a total of 30 points.

Goals:

- 1) Honest assessment of your effectiveness as a group and application of CBT and Forte to evaluation of each member.
- 2) Practice in having crucial conversations that address necessary issues the group is facing.

Key Core Skills: Civility and responsibility will be key core skills. Civility does not mean being polite at the expense of honesty and authenticity. Be honest AND civil.

Basic Steps:

- 1) Have an honest discussion about each member's contribution to the overall success of the group—or lack of it.
- 2) Refer to the concepts and processes offered in the CBT courses! You did not take those as busy work. They are to help you have difficult conversations about efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, etc. Can also incorporate Forte as well.
- 3) After having that forthright discussion, come to some consensus on the numerical rating for each person in the group up to this point on a scale of 1 to 10.
- 4) The group will then hand in **ONE** peer evaluation memo. Consider the following descriptors as you assign numbers:

10	exceptional
9	excellent
8	above average
7	average: meeting basic expectations
6	not quite achieving basic expectations
5	detracting from the group productivity
4	significantly detracting from group

In a memo with proper memo heading and formatting, put the complete (first and last) name of each group member in alphabetical order and offer a rating (whole numbers ONLY) and two or three sentences of explanation for that rating. Here's a model:

To: Dr. Olsen
From: Ain't got time for Facebook (group name)
Re: Peer Evaluation One
Date: Month, Day, Year

David Andersen, (8): David has been very good at carrying out secondary research for the group. He has also been personable, cooperative, and flexible. One place where he could improve is with a bit more initiative about offering ideas and opinions to help the group move forward. *Perhaps add 1 specific connections with CBT and/or FORTE insights here.*

Notice in that example we've got a reasonable score (not an unreflective 10) and we've got specific behaviors that David does that add to the group and also areas David can work on that help explain the 8. You must draw from core skills, other COM classes and the SkillPort vocabulary to help you get specific about your feedback. Your group should also make use of the insights derived from the FORTE survey information.



By the way, I understand the difficulty of engaging in peer evaluation. We do it every year as part of our annual evaluations as a department and it can be challenging to rate your “friends” and folks you are going to see again. However, you will make people in your group better people by providing honest, constructive feedback about their performance in your group. Focus on behaviors and not personalities and try to frame this as *development* not *punishment*. Be honest about the points. For one group member to have made significant contributions to get a 9 and someone who has made minimal contributions get an 8 really doesn't do anybody any good. Both group members can come away with the message “why bother?”

Let me conclude with some insights from a great book entitled Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes are High by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzer (2002):

“Every time we find ourselves arguing debating, running away, or otherwise acting in an ineffective way, it's because we don't know how to share meaning. Instead of engaging in healthy dialogue, we play silly and costly games.”

Every year I hear complaints about bad group members *after* the semester is over. Yet when I look at the peer evaluations there is nothing to indicate this person was a problem. This is not helpful to the group or to the problem member.

The authors basically offer the following steps/issues to effectively carrying out crucial conversations:

- 1) Start with YOU: what role am I playing and what do I really want out of this conversation. Don't just say “step up” but define what that would mean for you.
- 2) Make it safe for all parties to dialogue about the issues.
- 3) Be mindful of the larger life stories (backgrounds, etc.) that are informing everyone's expectations and behaviors. For example, some folks have learned helplessness “I can't help it” stories firmly in place that may need to be part of the conversation.
- 4) Present your needs persuasively not abrasively.
- 5) Listen openly to others.
- 6) Focus on agreeable ACTIONS and RESULTS: what behaviors and outcomes are to be expected moving forward. Be sure to offer a clear timetable.

Finally let me share this caution from the book: “The two riskiest times in crucial conversations tend to be at the beginning and at the end. The beginning is risky because you have to find a way to create safety or else things go awry. The end is dicey because if you aren't careful about how you clarify the conclusion and decisions . . .”