

***Communicating the Bottom Line:  
Persuasion Strategies for Finance Professionals***  
MCOM-GB.2103.10 1.5 Credit Elective Course Offering

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***Advanced Topics in Management Communication: Strategies in Persuasion for Business Professionals***

No longer can business professionals rely on strong technical and analytical skills alone. Leaders must also be able to effectively communicate financial models, analytic results, strategic plans, and business forecasts. This course, designed for students who are both experienced communicators and seasoned professionals, will blend theoretical models for effective persuasion with practical application of course material in a simulated business environment. Students working in any number of fields will find both challenge and value in this course.

**I. General Course Description and Simulation Design**

Exercises will focus on communicating to potential audiences of internal and external colleagues including employees, senior management, clients, and potential business partners. Written and spoken communication assignments will range from informative to persuasive in a variety of simulated settings. Situations will engage hypothetical audiences that range from receptive to difficult. Students will benefit from individual feedback on all written work as well as individual and team coaching based on recorded reviews of each presentation.

This course may be unlike anything you've encountered thus far at Stern (At least we hope so). It will be a simulation of the communication tasks and challenges you will likely face along the life cycle of your career. You will be placed into the department of a simulated firm, where you will function as an individual, on a team, and as part of the firm itself. The simulation will be based on a growing firm entering new markets, developing new products, and dealing with the challenges of growth and expansion. Students will be challenged to operate outside their comfort zone as they establish relationships and partnerships with other departments in the firm, senior management, and outside firms and joint-venture partners. The simulation allows participants to develop and practice the communication and persuasion skills critical to the success of teams and individual professionals facing numerous challenges within a firm.

Course Concept "The Career and Communication Life Cycle"

This course is built on the concept of a "career life cycle". The life cycle encompasses a number of individual and group situations that an employee will face during the course of their career. One concept that we stress is while many of us look at a given situation at a given point of time, it is vitally important for individuals to realize that their "career life cycle" plays out in many different phases over a longer term. Imbedded in the life cycle will always be a number of personal, business, workplace, corporate and environmental events that must be considered when trying to establish a successful communication strategy; key to foster an overall balanced and progressive career and personal goal oriented path. As a result of taking a longer term view, students are able to embrace that learning and developing stronger professional, technical and communicative skills is a life long process (and not merely to be rushed because there is an upcoming business situation that needs addressing) which ultimately is key to their success in any business or industry. A benefit of the classroom teaching and role playing is that the strategies and lessons can be put into action immediately in a students "real" business and personal environment.

## II. Course Components and Grading

This course is highly participatory and will involve numerous in-class presentations and activities related to the simulated firm, SIM Partners. Final grades will be based on both class participation and your completion of assignments. Below is a likely weighting of class assignments:

Description	Class	Weight
Informative Presentation	1	10%
Formal vs. Informal Presentation	2	10%
Persuasive Internal Presentation	3	10%
Persuasive External Presentation	4	10%
Persuasive External Presentation	5	10%
Persuasive Internal Presentation	6	10%
Participation (includes: attendance, discussion in class, and contribution to others' learning experience)	Throughout course	40%

At NYU Stern we seek to teach challenging courses that allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the subject matter. In general, students in undergraduate core courses can expect a grading distribution where:

25-35% of students can expect to receive A's for excellent work

50-70% of students can expect to receive B's for good or very good work

5-15% of students can expect to receive C's or less for adequate or below work

Note that while the School uses these ranges as a guide, the actual distribution for this course and your own grade will depend upon how well you actually perform in this course.

Attendance at all six sessions is mandatory to be eligible for an A in this course.

## III. Recommended Materials and Texts:

Due to the highly participative nature of this course there is not a required text. Much of the in-class and between-class work will be a simulation of the work and expectations during a business professional's first year on the job after completing an MBA.

Material will be distributed on a weekly basis as the simulation progresses.

The following books are recommended, (particularly for Full-Time students who have not taken any prior Management Communication courses at Stern) but not required:

- A. Heath, Chip and Dan, **Made to Stick**. Random House, 2007
- B. Munter, Mary and Lynn Russell, **Guide to Presentations**. Prentice Hall; 4<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2013.
- C. Thomas, Jane P., **Guide to Managerial Persuasion and Influence**. Prentice Hall; 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2003.
- D. Munter, Mary, **Guide to Managerial Communication: Effective Business Writing and Speaking**. Prentice Hall; 10<sup>th</sup> edition, 2013

- E. Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler, **Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High**. McGraw-Hill Education; 2 edition

Although no text is required, you are strongly urged to purchase a copy of Made to Stick, Why some Ideas Survive and Others Die. Based on research by Chip and Dan Heath, this text will help you to structure communication in a way that is both memorable and meaningful.

#### IV. Course Outline

To preserve the simulation nature of the class the specifics of each assignment will be revealed in the class before it is due. What follows is simply a broad overview of the topics and assignments and are subject to change.

Session Date	Topic or Focus	Assignments Due
One	- Orientation - Presenting on the Fly	Deliver 2 min. Self Introduction Deliver 5 min. Team Informal Presentation
Two	- Informative Presentation - Time Management	Deliver 10 min. Team Formal Presentation
Three	- Negotiation Tactics	Debate in Conference Room Setting
Four	- Presenting Graphs and Numbers	Dry run of team Persuasive Presentation
Five	- Individual and Team Credibility	Deliver 15 - 20 min. Team Persuasive Presentation
Six	- Influencing Internal Parties	Deliver 3 min. Persuasive Pitch

Each session runs from 6:00 to 9:00 pm with a break somewhere near the middle. You may wish to schedule time immediately following class (or at another standing time each week) for your group to work on assignments together.

#### V. Instructor Bios and Student Comments

**Steve Mellas** has 30 years of management experience in some of the most prestigious firms on Wall Street. He currently serves as a Principal at AQR Capital Management, an independently owned investment firm where he oversees firm-wide operations, client administration and project management. Prior to joining AQR, Steve was a Managing Director at Goldman Sachs & Co., where he was responsible for the Investment Management Division's asset management operations worldwide. Before that, he managed fixed-income trading operations at Morgan Stanley.

Steve was a founding member of the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association's Asset Managers Forum and most recently served on DTCC's advisory board for asset managers. An active industry leader, he has been a featured speaker at industry forums including Global Custody's Annual Conference, Institutional Investor Forum, Annual SIBOS conference, the Asset Managers Forum and ISITC.

Steve's relationship to Stern began 12 years ago where he served as a mentor, guest lecturer, and keynote speaker for a number of different programs and organizations. In the Fall of 2005 he joined the faculty as an adjunct helping to co-create and launch this course, *Advanced Topics in Management Communication: Persuasive Strategies and*

*Tactics throughout Your Career.* In addition to his class time, Steve constructed and has hosted numerous career and communication workshops for EMBA students focusing on developing the skills needed to be an effective manager and business professional. Steve earned an M.B.A. from Pace University and a B.A. in economics from Villanova University.

**Jim Donofrio** is currently a Managing Director and Fixed Income Portfolio Manager with Deutsche Bank Asset and Wealth Management. Prior to his current position, Jim was Head of Private Wealth Management Fixed Income Sales and Trading at Deutsche Bank. Jim has over 25 years of financial service industry experience, spending 16 of those years in the Capital Markets Department at Citigroup as a Director within Citigroup's Fixed Income Structured Products Department. His responsibilities included development and delivery of Interest Rate, Commodity, and Currency linked structured products through Smith Barney, and Citigroup Private and Consumer Banks.

Jim has been a guest speaker at Hofstra University's International Financial Services and Markets Conference in 2004-2005, and has participated as a guest classroom panelist from 2005 through 2007 at the NYU Stern School of Business. Jim was a frequent speaker at Citigroup's sales training facility, and, on a regular basis, provided Fixed Income Markets training at Domestic and International Smith Barney branches.

Jim holds a Bachelors degree in Economics from Villanova University and a MBA in Finance from the Lubin School of Business at Pace University.

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Since its inaugural run in the fall of 2005, MBA students rated this course very highly in both its relevance to their career and its quality in comparison to other courses at Stern. Below are just a few of the comments from students in their evaluation of the course:

- *"I am very happy to have taken this course and think the strong focus on presenting has been very valuable practice for me. Both professors' engagement in the simulation has contributed extensively to the learning experience for all."*
- *"It is an excellent class and definitely would be a class that I will remember Stern by!"*
- *"Thank you both for an excellent course, for the knowledge and experience you passed on to the class. I can safely say that it just may have changed my life."*

Should you have any questions about this course please feel free to contact Professor Mellas at [smellas@stern.nyu.edu](mailto:smellas@stern.nyu.edu)