

MC CONSULTING

Effective Communication Consultants

Product Pitch

“How to Build Effective Small Group Communication”

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I. Effective Communication Amongst College Personnel

Our clients for our program – “How to Create Effective Small Group Communication” are **Student Affairs offices of colleges and universities** and the trainees for our program will be the **Head Residents and Resident Assistants** that our client hires. These Head Residents and Resident Assistants work together on college campuses to provide a safe and healthy living environment for all residents on their campus. In order for Head Residents and Resident Assistants to work together as a whole, it is vital that they have strong group communication skills. Therefore, our training program will revolve around these group communication skills that they will need. Since part of **MC Consulting’s philosophy is teamwork and synergy**, we believe that we will apply this idea to our training program as well. To do this, our training program will consist of a variety of things that are vital to group communication, including group cohesiveness, listening techniques, and different roles and leadership styles.

Specifically, we have structured our training program to follow the inverted pyramid design. This will be based upon the idea that we believe each segment of our training program is necessary to know and understand before moving onto the next segment (**group cohesiveness → listening → group roles and leadership styles**) – group cohesiveness is necessary for Resident Assistants to be willing to listen to each other, and listening abilities and techniques will lead to adaptability regarding group roles and leadership styles.

In the group cohesiveness segment of our program, we will strive to build group cohesiveness amongst each Residential staff. We will discuss reasons that people join a group (for inclusion, affection, and control, etc. based upon **William Schutz’s** research). We will also discuss goal setting because when a group is unified to reach a goal, that unification brings about a sense loyalty, and both loyalty and unification make a group more tightly knit. Next, we will

conduct a listening segment. This listening segment will include barriers of listening (and **how to overcome these communication barriers**), such as prejudging the communicator and rehearsing responses. It will also describe different listening styles (such as people-oriented, action-oriented, content-oriented, and time-oriented) and how to adapt oneself to listen with different orientations based upon the need of the situation. Additionally, it will explain how to listen actively and provide effective feedback to the communicator. Group cohesiveness and listening abilities are key to groups and how they work together. They allow group members to contribute differently and uniquely to the group.

Based upon this, our final session of our training program will revolve around leadership styles and different roles that group members can take on. This session will describe different roles that members play in a group, both **task roles and maintenance roles**. It will also include a **personality quiz** that will allow Residential Assistants with whom we are working to determine which type of role they would most likely play, and we will include information on how to **adapt to take on a different role** if necessary. In the same sense, we will describe different leadership styles (such as authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire) and when each style is appropriate under certain circumstances. The very last session will be a collaboration of all previous sessions. It will be a review, asking the Residential staff members what they took away from the training program and giving them the opportunity to get in groups and discuss how they will implement what they have learned.

Throughout all sessions, there will be ways to practice the skills discussed, as well as other hands-on activities that will encourage communication amongst group members. The extensiveness of our program will be ordered in such a way that each session will build up to the next session, and at the end, the Residential Assistants with whom we work should have a better

understanding of ways they can apply communication skills that members of a group need to be successful.

II. TO WHOM and HOW can we sell our program?

A. Small Group Clientele

The client for our program is Student Affairs offices and staff members on college campuses. Almost every campus has residential life staff members, so our training program has the potential to be used by plenty of college campuses. Specifically, in the United States, there are **over 9,000 residential life staff members** on college campuses. Additionally, there are **over 10,000 residential life staff members in other areas** such as mental health and substance abuse facilities or vocational rehabilitation centers. While our program is designated for college life residential staff members, in the future, it could **easily be adapted to train other residential life members** in these other areas. Because of this, there is clearly a **wide range of diverse clientele** that could certainly benefit from our training program. Ultimately, “employers seek employees with good group communication skills” (**Froemling, Grice, & Skinner**, 2011, p. 182), and our program will provide employees with these essential small group communication skills. As a result, our training program has the potential to reach many people across the United States which will not only benefit the trainees of the program, but will also greatly **benefit MC Consulting in the long run.**

To specifically market this program to colleges, we will rely on **social media**. Because so many college students (and therefore many college personnel) use social media every day, we will advertise and market through means such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. For example, Effective Communication Consultants in which we would show pictures and videos of recent presentations. College personnel could ask us questions on this page quickly and receive

responses quickly, and we could also demonstrate recent progressions our program has made or recent research we have conducted. Personal testimonies could be given on our Facebook page as well from people who “like” our page. Twitter could generally be used for the same thing. Using YouTube could help market to colleges because we could record certain aspects of our program as examples for potential clientele to look at. Other social media could be implemented as technology progresses and different media become more popular. We believe that these would be effective ways to market to colleges because there **would no cost to MC Consulting and communication would be quick and easy between ECC and our clientele.**

B. Why is our program important?

There are a number of reasons as to why our training program is needed amongst college residential life staff members today. One reason is that clients (Student Affairs) do not only hire residential life staff members – they have a lot on their plates. They may become so busy that training their Head Residents and Residential Assistants can fall to the wayside. They also may become so engrossed in their own manner of training (perhaps a training program they have used for years), that they lose sight of other opportunities for training from outside resources that may have methods more applicable for Head Residents and Residential Assistants of today’s college students.

Another reason that our training program is needed is that constant training for staff adaptation is required and necessary. It is vital that **staff members adjust as their staff changes** or as policies change. Adaptation and the communication skills to enhance this adaptation are vital for providing a safe living environment for college students. This is partially why our program addresses group cohesiveness and listening. People involved in the area of Residence Life see that the “ability to be flexible in scheduling and in hearing each other’s needs out are a

vital part of the job. If these areas could improve amongst RAs, our jobs would be significantly easier and we could use our time bettering other aspects of Res Life” (Interview with Ryan Kerr, September 10, 2012).

Yet another reason efficient communication skills, and thus our training program, are necessary in colleges today is the idea that **poor communication can result in financial losses for colleges**. Poor communication can result in improper disciplinary actions. These actions can be the result of inconsistent communication skills amongst staff members. For example, when a fight between residents breaks out, there are certain communication measures that an RA needs to take. If a fight breaks out and the chain of communication is unclear, the college can suffer financially (for example, if the police are called by the RA as opposed to just security).

Additionally, this can result in higher insurance costs. For example, an RA who does care about parties held in residential halls could cost the school money because if a party is not shut down at the right time, vandalism and damage to the building could incur. If the culprit is not caught, the school could have to pay for the damages, but if less vandalism occurs, insurance for the school can remain at a low price. All colleges want to draw students in, and if the college can keep costs down, more students will be drawn to that school. Therefore, our training program to build better communication skills amongst HRs and RAs is essential for colleges saving money.

While there were a variety of issues that we could have covered in our training program, we chose **group cohesiveness, listening, and group roles/leadership styles because we believe them to be most important based upon the research we conducted**. Effective communication is based off of group cohesion. One RA we interviewed while researching our training program stated, “If group members like each other, or at least are open-minded, they can bond and get things done. Through staff bonding, many issues are avoided” (Interview with Anders Nelson,

September 12, 2012). Another RA stated that problems occur when “there is a breakdown in how well [the staff] works together” (Interview with Allison Fantetti, September 10, 2012). If group members cannot communicate and be cohesive together, they cannot “negotiate group roles, establish goals, reveal similarities and differences, resolve conflict, and express affection” (Beebe & Masterson, 2009, p. 110). All of these are vital for group effectiveness; therefore, we believe it is essential to build group cohesion, and our training program will be designed to do this.

We also believe that it is necessary for Residential Assistants to have effective listening skills and recognize listening barriers, as well as ways to overcome these barriers. When speaking with RAs, we noticed that “listening is crucial. If an RA doesn’t listen to what another RA is saying, conflict ensues and chaos follows. Good group communication starts with listening to each other” (Nelson). Since listening is such an important aspect of an RA’s job because so many things are a result of the ability to listen, it is evident that listening should be addressed in our training program. Finally, research also supports evidence that group roles need to be addressed in our training program. Group roles help keep a group going strong. **“If [group members] understand how group roles form and how various roles function, [they] will be better able to help a group achieve its purpose...** Task functions help the group get the job done, and maintenance functions help the group run smoothly” (Beebe & Masterson, 2009, p. 75). All roles in a group are important, and it is important that group members can recognize when a role needs to be taken on in order to accomplish something.

Our training program can also help build up residential life staff members. The more training RAs receive and experience, in regards to being able to communicate with their staff fellow staff members effectively, the higher their level of satisfaction will be. This higher level

of satisfaction will result in RAs being more motivated to succeed in their job and more enthusiastic towards their job. As a result of this, students across the campus will feel more at home while they are at school, and this can result in happier and more content students. If students are happier, **retention rates can increase**, and higher retention rates result in a better standing for the college. This chain of events all starts with effective communication amongst HRs and RAs, and therefore, our training program will be able to start this chain of events. As a result of our program, the colleges and universities with whom we work will be effective in ways that we believe will enable the organization to reap benefits that will allow them to **make their money back quickly and efficiently**. We truly believe that the benefits of our program will significantly outweigh the cost. Overall, our program will result in better means of communication amongst RAs and Residence Life as a whole which will prevent unnecessary costs to the college, and in turn, retention rates will continue to grow as a result of students' happiness, thus **bringing revenue to our clients, and ultimately bringing revenue to MC Consulting**.

C. What makes our program unique?

There are many things that set our training program apart from other training programs. When presenting our training program to clientele, it is important to note some of these things. One of the things that sets our training program apart is our **flexible approach to each and every school** with which we will be working. As opposed to other training programs which have basic information that all schools can use, our training program will adapt to the specific needs of the campus on which our training program will be presenting. Part of this entails communicating with the school before the presentation. **Preliminary research of the school and its specific needs** will be conducted before the presentation so that our program can best

apply to the Head Residents and Residential Assistants at that school specifically. Ultimately, unlike our competition, our program prides itself on the idea that it will be tailored specifically to the needs of each individual clientele with whom we work. While other programs have generic information that all of their clientele hear, our program is **intricately designed to make our clientele feel special** in that all of our training programs are unique in their adaptations to the assessed needs of each client. Our training program really cares about that **one-on-one attention with our clientele**, and our clientele will appreciate our outreaching hand in doing preliminary research when designing the program just for them.

Something else that is unique to our training program is the **personalized personality tests** that we will be able to hand out before the program. These tests will allow staff members to find out roles that they play in groups or their individual leadership styles. Then, when we present, they will be able to take that information and listen specifically for ways that they can communicate better as a group member playing a specific role. This individualized attention is vital to making our training program valued by individuals with whom we are working. Following this, our training program is designed for **staff members to work alongside their specific staff** so that communication can begin building right from our program. Our goal is that if we present on a weekend, “things will be better in the dorms by Monday.”

Another unique thing about our training program is that we are not finished when we leave the college campus. Our program is designed so that **follow-up websites** can be used by the schools to further train staff members. The website will consist of videos, tests, handouts, and activities that will enable staff members to continue building upon their communication skills.

Finally, something else that sets our training program apart from others is our **constant desire to improve**. Upon leaving the campus, we have feedback and evaluation handouts that

will be altered to the programs we used at the campus. After getting results from these evaluations, we will read them and alter our program to be better in the future. Overall, the uniqueness of our program, its ability to adapt, and our constant drive to improve by receiving feedback and working closely with clientele make our training program incredibly beneficial for any Residential Assistant to experience.

Specific ideas for marketing include putting sample videos on a website that clients can look at before purchasing our program. This way, they will have a basic understanding of what our mission statement is and how our program is carried out. We will also send personalized postcards to potential clients, stating our mission, and that we want to work with them individually to design a program that is best-suited for their specific needs. Additionally, a phone team could be another marketing strategy. Periodically, we will call potential clients to tell them about developments in our program and see if they would be interested in having us do a demonstration for them.

III. Who are our trainees? What will they learn from our program?

A. What are our trainees like?

College life Head Residents and Residential Assistants are above average students. They are **motivated to succeed**, and they are motivated to make their peers succeed as well. They are willing to learn how to do this, and because they are “doers,” they are willing to do what it takes to learn ways to help others succeed. They are dedicated and respectful students who know how to manage their time and who are very personable and approachable. They genuinely want to help people, and they are generally enthusiastic and optimistic. Because of our trainees’ motivation and willing attitude to the best job they can, our program will be very hands on and allow them to have great amounts of input.

B. What will our trainees learn from our program? What are our objectives?

Below, we have listed objectives for each aspect of our program – cohesiveness, listening, and leadership/group roles – in terms of knowledge, comprehension, application, and evaluation. These objectives are the specific things our program is designed to teach each and every one of our trainees, based upon our mission statement:

Through our program, we strive to build strong group cohesiveness through building listening skills and developing strong leaders who can take on different roles in a small group.

Cohesiveness:

1. At the end of this program, trainees will be able to identify the needs of each member (in terms of inclusion, affection, and control) in their small group. (Knowledge)
2. At the end of the program, trainees will be able to distinguish a cohesive group from one that is not cohesive. (Comprehension)
3. At the end of the program, trainees will be able to set, organize, and present specific goals that meet needs for the year to their residents and themselves. (Application)
4. At the end of the program, trainees will be able to express empathy with fellow staff members. (Application/Synthesis)
5. At the end of the program, trainees will be able to conduct effective meetings that will encourage staff bonding. (Evaluation)

Listening:

1. At the end of this program, trainees will be able to identify listening barriers of communication and use methods to overcome them.
2. At the end of this program, trainees will be able to interpret messages with an open mind because they will be able to actively listen to their fellow staff members through eye contact and nonverbal body language.
3. At the end of this program, trainees will be able to provide effective feedback and respond appropriately to those with whom they are communicating.

Leadership/Roles:

1. At the end of this program, trainees will be able to distinguish the differences between a task role and a maintenance role. (Knowledge)
2. At the end of this program, trainees will be able to portray different leadership roles and apply them to different circumstances in a group. (Comprehension)
3. At the end of this program, trainees will be able to reflect upon and recognize roles they have played in a small group. (Application)

4. At the end of the training program, trainees will be able to assess which roles need to be taken on in order to maintain effective communication and decision making within their staff. For example, gatekeeper-expediter, harmonizer, encourager, etc. (Evaluation)

IV. What will our program consist of?

1. *Cohesiveness* (8AM -10AM)
 - a. According to Beebe and Masterson, “Many groups fail to remain together because they never identify their common purpose” (p. 5)
 - b. Our program will talk about the needs of small group members, including inclusion, affection, and control (based upon Communication theorist William Schutz).
 - c. Group analysis scenarios and activities designed to allow trainees to see when needs of members need to be addressed.
2. *Listening* (10:30AM – 12PM)
 - a. According to RAs that we interviewed, many believed that “listening is crucial. If an RA doesn’t listen to what another RA is saying, conflict ensues and chaos follows. Good group communication starts with listening to each other” (Nelson).
 - b. Discuss listening barriers and how to overcome them.
 - c. Discuss active listening vs. passive listening.
 - d. Discuss how to provide effective feedback when listening to someone.
 - e. Different listening activity scenarios.
3. *Leadership & Group Roles* (1PM – 4PM)
 - a. “If [group members] understand how group roles form and how various roles function, [they] will be better able to help a group achieve its purpose.” (Beebe & Masterson, 2009, p. 75)
 - b. Discuss different types of leadership.
 - c. Discuss different roles
 - i. Task roles and maintenance roles
 - ii. Personality tests

Overall, based upon our expertise, needs analysis, and research, we believe that our program and its **basis in all aspects of MC Consulting’s philosophy** will enable MC Consulting to build long-term relationships with clientele who work with Residential Assistants not only in colleges and universities, but also in other areas of work as well. **Our unique program that is adaptable to each individual client will help build these long-term, close relationships, and in turn, bring in revenue for MC Consulting.**

V. Preliminary Bibliography

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