

Below is a sample description of each one of the top five communication concepts discussed by students in the 2015 CMST Capstone course. Each concept was written by a different student and is part of a larger paper each student writes discussing concepts that have made a difference in student's life.

#1

### Power Bases

Also in Matt Sanders' Communication Leadership class, we learned about principles of power, more specifically the seven sources from where a leader's power originates. These include: *position, coercive, expertise, reward, information, charisma, and referent* power.

Position power is the power you get by your legitimate position within an organization, and according to what we learned in class, is actually considered the least effective. Coercive

power comes from your ability to force people to do something, or to manipulate their behavior. As expected, coercive power is also one of the least effective sources. Expertise power comes from being deeply knowledgeable in a specific area. Furthermore, reward power is your ability to give people the things that they want or need, whether that is physical or emotional needs (including respect, love, recognition, or even your time). And also from our class notes, reward power is considered to be the second most effective. Information power is the power you have to control the flow of information, or in other words, who gets to receive that information, when, and how. Next is charisma. This involves the power you get by the way you communicate, the way you look or act, and the way you carry yourself as a person. Lastly, referent power is the power you get by your connections and relationships with other people. This source of power is by far the most effective; as it relies on trust and is based on relationships, having this source of power allows you access to the power of others as well.

This concept is highly valuable because it helps us recognize where true power in leadership comes from, and what kind of power is most effective if you are seeking to influence another person. I had the opportunity to teach this concept to my mom at a time when she and my brother were struggling with their relationship. My brother was hitting a typical "high school rebellion" phase, and was struggling with listening to my parents. As was expected, my mom was upset and was interested in how she could more effectively influence my brother. I taught her about these seven power bases, while paying particular attention to referent power since it is based on relationships, and is the most effective. I explained that simply exercising her authority based on her "position" as a parent, or by using "coercion" was not enough to truly get my brother to listen. I talked to her about seeking after other ways to build the relationship to a point where there could be mutual trust.

After our discussion, I noticed my mom making several small changes in the way she talked with my brother. Whenever he was upset, she made an effort to listen to him completely and only reply when he was finished. She responded patiently, and sought to show her genuine concern rather than immediately displaying her disapproval when he said or did something she didn't like. I watched their relationship transform, and saw how at times when my brother was upset my mom was one of the only people who could reach him. I recognized that this was due to the efforts she had made to build trust, and ultimately referent power. This experience alone helped me understand that this concept is not just something that was talked about in a college classroom, but is one that can be effectively applied to everyday situations in my life.

Go to next page  
for next concept ↓



I have personally seen the importance of understanding power in my own life. For several years, I was very intimidated by a certain friend. He was very opinionated and I was nervous to ever disagree with him for fear of being made fun of. Every time I posted something on social media or shared my opinion in a class, he was sarcastic toward me. For a long time, I allowed him to control my behavior and wouldn't forgive him for anything he did to me. I thought of what he would say every time I wanted to share something on social media, or anytime we were hanging out with a group of friends. His source of power in over me was that of referent power. Because I was he was one of my closest friends, I felt an obligation to maintain our relationship. It wasn't until recently that I was finally able to realize that I was the one who decided whether or not his opinion mattered. Once I realized this, I was able to forget about how nervous I was being around him. I no longer cared about his criticism and was free to share my opinion without worrying about what he thought. He no longer had power over me.

## Cultural Dimensions

Being able to communicate with those of different cultures is also extremely important. As world globalization increases, we are required to interact more and more with those of different cultures than our own. Understanding cultural dimensions, or in other words, worldviews, will help us be successful in communicating across cultures. The term 'cultural dimensions' refers to the "abstract notions about the way the world is" (Koybaeva, 2012). As was discussed previously, everyone sees the world through a different lens. This way of seeing the world is usually unconscious, and therefore, feels natural. One of the cultural dimensions is that of collectivism vs. individualism. Cultures with a collectivist world view tend to focus on relationships and pursue communal goals. On the other hand, individualist cultures pursue individual interests and focus on accomplishing distinct goals. While every society may have

both of these worldviews, the difference is in what is emphasized. Our values and what is fundamentally important to us are defined by our worldview (Koybaeva, 2012). Worldviews are observed in the norms of every society.

For example, collectivism is dominant in many cultures, such as in parts of South America, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and India. In these cultures, it is important to be a well-fit member of society. Identity is based on the social system and how well one 'fits in'. Extended families often live together and individuals receive their security from their family. Members of collectivism societies are often asked to which family they belong when meeting new people as a way to find a connection. Outsiders tend to always be considered a 'foreigner'.

However, cultures in which individualism is emphasized function very differently. The United States, Australia, and Western Europe are examples of this kind of culture. Identity is based on the individual, rather than where one is at in the social system. How you express yourself is what creates your identity. Individuals are required to 'make their own way' rather than depend on family members. Extended families typically do not live together. Foreigners find more freedom to enter individualist cultures.

I have had personal experience with learning to communicate with those of another culture. Recently, I lived in Argentina for a year and a half as a proselyting, church missionary. As such, I had to learn how to communicate with those of a collectivist culture. During my first months in Argentina, it was very difficult for me to be able to identify with people. I was primarily focused on accomplishing my personal goal of sharing my message with as many people as possible. However, many of the people that I was assigned to work with were also from collectivist cultures. I recognized quickly that they didn't seem to care as much about our

personal goal and the task at hand, but rather were more concerned at developing long-term relationships with the people we encountered. There were many times when we would spend extended time with Argentine families, merely getting to know them, rather than accomplishing our task. During this time, I struggled to gain the trust of the Argentine people.

At first, this was very frustrating for me because I felt that we weren't accomplishing what was most important. Luckily, I had already taken the Intercultural Communications course and eventually recalled the difference between individualist cultures and collectivist cultures. Once I realized that Argentina's culture emphasized relationships as more important than personal goals, I was able to understand them better. With time, I was able to gain their trust and develop these long-term relationships as well.

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### Sequential Persuasion

Persuasion is an important aspect of communication. While many tend to think that persuasion is deceitful, persuasion is often used for good as well. Sequential persuasion refers to the idea that certain actions are done in a certain order in order to persuade. Two of these sequential persuasion strategies refer to the Foot-In-The-Door strategy and the Door-In-The-Face strategy (Seiter, 2014). The Foot-In-The-Door strategy occurs when the persuader makes a small, insignificant request first, such as asking for the time or a pen. The larger request is then made, such as asking for a volunteer or a donation. The Door-In-The-Face strategy takes place when a large request is made initially, such as asking for many volunteer hours over a week's time. Since this request is so large, it is turned down. The persuader then follows up by a more reasonable request, such as helping out for a few hours.

strive to be throughout my life. Finally, this paper will discuss meaningful work as taken from Matt Sanders' Organization and Social Change class. Meaningful work is work that seeks to positively influence our world. Without further ado, let's delve into each of these concepts.

3

### Framing

You have probably heard the saying it's not what you say, but how you say it that matters. Well, I'm going to take this a step further by saying, it's not what you say or how you say it that matters the most. What matters the most is how it's interpreted and understood. When we understand communication to be a two part process in which both senders and receivers play a role, we can begin to notice other important components and the role they play in the communication process. This is where framing comes into play. Framing is how a person perceives and conceptualizes the world around them. In its simplest essence, framing is managing meaning. To help you understand the power of framing, consider the following.

After what feels like a lifetime of learning, I will graduate from USU this May. While it is an incredibly exciting time, it is also a time for rigorous planning. As I prepare to leave much of what I am familiar with behind, I cannot help but have an overwhelming amount of gratitude for the experience I have had these last three years at Utah State University. On the other hand, I would be lying if I said I did not have any apprehension for what is about to come next. This is exactly where framing comes in.

There are many ways to frame graduation and the future that awaits me. One possible frame is an opportunity, another is as a challenge. Seeing the opportunity frame invites much more excitement and positive outlook, I've chosen to frame my reality as just that. In the frame of a challenge, it feels like something that must be overcome. I have often made this mistake by

framing the GRE as a challenge instead of an opportunity, choosing to see it as a hurdle I must jump before I can attend graduate school. However, after talking to Briana Bowen, last year's valedictorian, I realized that taking the GRE is an opportunity. It's an opportunity to demonstrate what I've learned as well as an opportunity to refresh my knowledge in previously learned, but now forgotten core areas. In this sense, the GRE is just like many of the other tests I have taken during my time at USU and with it comes the opportunity to learn. It's an opportunity to demonstrate my ability to think and reason critically, or as Briana told me it's a puzzle to crack.

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### The Growth Mindset

It has been said, "A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor." Challenges, setbacks, and disappointment, occur throughout each of our lives, but as Dr. Steve Maraboli points out, "Every set-back bears with it the seeds of a come-back." Of course, not everyone will chose to view challenges or setbacks this way, but those that embrace the growth mindset will.

The growth mindset is an outlook that is based on the belief that you can cultivate your personal characteristics through your effort. The growth mindset recognizes that while people are inherently different from one another, each has the power within in them to change overtime and grow from their experiences. Albeit for such change to happen, one must not only exert effort, but accept risk. In contrast to this, the fixed mindset holds that such qualities are concrete. Both the fixed and growth mindsets demonstrate different framing constructs. In other words, these mindsets demonstrate how framing can be used. Recall from our previous discussion on framing that framing is an individual's perception and how they manage or create meaning in a given situation. People who have fixed mindsets understand perceive meaning in

negotiations with others, I do not worry about pleasing everyone and being successful in every way. I have really learned to not stress how I look in others eyes and I am honest and forthright, especially with my given situation of my health and physical disability.

4

### **Constitutive Model of Communication**

While in Dr. Matthew Sanders Organizational Communication class, I learned that in a constitutive model of communication, vocabulary defines key realities of situations and communication “does not merely express but also creates social realities” (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009). For us to take a constitutive view of communication, we acknowledge that our communication, or our interaction with others, is a way to create meaning and is a basic building block for our relationships and organizations. It is true that the things that we say and the things that we do really matter. How we communicate determines how the message will be interpreted.

Because I have multiple sclerosis, I try to stay very aware of the latest treatments and research being done for this disease. I feel that knowledge is power when fighting an unpredictable disease with no known cure. When I was diagnosed with MS, in November of 2000, I immediately became involved with organizations that helped me become educated about the disease. All non-profit organizations typically have a mission statement which declares their core purpose or existence. There is one particular MS organization that I was very involved with that changed their mission statement to, “MS stops people from moving. We exist to make sure it doesn't. Join the movement.” As someone living with MS, when this mission statement changed to this, I did not find it very hopeful. I felt that this statement implied physical disability. I expressed my feelings to those higher in command in this organization and shared how I thought that this was such a negative statement. In return, they explained that the referenced movement in this mission statement is the movement in life, such as pursuing careers,

or starting families. They said that they were not implying physical movement in this statement. Regardless of their explanation, this negative language constitutes a negative view about multiple sclerosis and the lives of those that have the disease. I felt that this was an example of the constitutive model of communication because this mission statement created a negative reality by my interpretation of their language and words.

While in Dr. Matthew Sanders Organizational Communication class, I learned that in a constitutive model of communication, vocabulary defines key realities of situations and communication “does not merely express but also creates social realities” (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009). By stating that MS stops people from moving, the reality of the possibility of future disability is given meaning. This statement produces negative thoughts and does not empower people to the movement that they were implying in this statement. People with MS take this literally and when I see the words, “MS stops people from moving,” I see it as saying that MS causes disability. Communication involves the interactive negotiation of meaning of statements and vocabulary through symbol use (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009). This organization currently has a new mission statement and I feel that it is very effective in constituting a positive meaning for individuals effected by multiple sclerosis. Their mission currently states, “We mobilize people and resources to drive research for a cure and to address the challenges of everyone affected by MS.” This is a better way to phrase their non-profit mission statement.

Through Dr. Sander’s class, I have learned that language and words have power in communication and this is a prime example of this. Since becoming familiar with the constitutive model of communication, when I am speaking to other people, I try to really

organize my thoughts and consider what I am saying. I would never want anything I say be misleading or insult anyone in anyway. I especially consider this model when I am preparing and presenting to an audience when I do a public speaking event. I also am very mindful of this model when I communicate to my family about my disease and wishes for my future. I would never want to scare my children about my MS. This disease is very manageable and I want to express this reality to them. In my studies, I have learned that my language and vocabulary constitutes certain realities and I want my audience to have a positive experience.

### Six Stage Model of Friendship

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Go to the next page  
for the next concept.

Throughout my life I have had many friendships and deep relationships with individuals. I have always been very sociable and outgoing in my interactions with my peers and colleagues. I feel very confident to say that I have also always been a sincere friend to others. In my studies within the field of communication, I have learned to recognize the different stages of my own friendships through the concepts shown in the Six Stage Model of Friendship.

When I learned this concept in my Interpersonal Communication class with Dr. Jennifer Peeples, I evaluated and analyzed a few of my most valuable friendships to see how this model related to my friendships. It was at that point that I could see how each friendship was currently at different stages but how each friendship began very similarly and ran the course of each stage in very similar ways.

One of my closest friends is named Jill. Jill and I met shortly after I turned twenty-one years old and after I joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This was such a significant time in my life and she entered my life at such an important moment. Our friendship began in the *first stage of role limited interactions*, where we both were very polite to each other but did not disclose much information because we relied on the standard social rules and were

5

**Credibility**

Credibility is a concept I learned about from John Seiter in his Persuasion course in Fall 2014. Credibility is comprised of three primary dimensions and four secondary dimensions. The primary dimensions include, competence, trustworthiness, and goodwill (Persuasion, Seiter, Fall 2014). The secondary dimensions include; charisma, dynamism, sociability, and composure (Persuasion, Seiter, Fall 2014). People like people who have these character traits. John would always say “Credibility is in the eye of the beholder” (Persuasion, Seiter, Fall 2014).

I think that credibility is a very important concept to know about and be aware of. Credibility can make or break a person in a career, relationship, authority position, etc. If people don't view you as competent, trustworthy, and compassionate—chances are you are going to have a hard time getting people to believe in you or be on your side.

In my life, I have a hard time believing salesmen. I go into a store and I feel that I am being tricked, lied to, or schmoozed into buying a product so that some slimy salesman can get his commission check off of my purchase (well, not all the time, but a majority of it). Some salesmen try *too* hard to be charismatic, dynamic and sociable, so hard that I am able to see right through it and their credibility goes out the window with no way they can gain it back in such with such low relational value to me. For example, I have a hard time with the new manager at Schubach Jewelers in the mall. He pushed himself on my husband and I. We felt like he was being fake and trying to pressure us into a purchase. His credibility in my eyes went out the window and we have yet to return to that jewelry store because we do not trust that manager.

In John's class we also talked about authenticity and genuinity and those concepts both play a huge part in credibility. If someone can be authentically charismatic and I can tell they are being 'real', they will most likely get my business. On the other hand, if I can tell someone is

## WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

9

being fake and isn't credible, I am going to make it known that I will not buy a product from them, just like what took place at Schubach.

Credibility is something that is important to have and it is relative in all aspects of life. If you have credibility chances are people are going to trust you, believe in you, and support you in your efforts. People will be more drawn to you if you exemplify the traits that are associated with credibility. Credibility is very relative to us as almost-college graduates who are going to be seeking jobs out in the field this very summer.

These five concepts have only begun to scrape the surface of the most important concepts that have learned about in my time as a Communication Studies major at Utah State.

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### ***The Sixth Concept***

The sixth concept I will present is Lizard Brain. This is a concept that I am fascinated with, mostly because of the name. It just cracks me up that someone would come up with a theory to describe a social phenomenon and name it something like Lizard Brain. This concept was presented in class by Whitney King.

I have many "lizard brains" in my life. I have fears. Some of them are as follows: I am afraid of taking the GRE. I am afraid of graduate school. I am afraid of the cost of graduate school. I am afraid of having children and the changes the body will have to go through in order to produce a child. I am afraid of trying new things out of my comfort zone, like swimming or dancing.

Whitney talked about *lack* and *attack*. I definitely have lack and attack: anxiety, inadequacy, or not enough of a lot of things that could be keeping me back from taking risks to