IT 520 Final Project Guidelines and Rubric

Overview

The final project for this course is the creation of a communication framework and training plan.

As businesses incorporate more and more technology into daily operations, information technology (IT) professionals are tasked with not only solving technology problems and providing excellent technical services, but communicating effectively to a wide variety of audiences. The purpose of communication is to perpetuate brilliant ideas, bring change, and solve problems in any discipline, but within the realm of IT, it takes on a particular twist. Your final project for this course concerns critiquing and adapting existing technical communications to ensure necessary information is successfully delivered to target audiences, while developing a framework from which IT professionals can approach technical communications to a variety of audiences.

Throughout the final project, you will be utilizing the case study (BOLDFlash: Cross-Functional Challenges in the Mobile Division) and the artifact documents (located in the Assignments folder) for all milestones related to the final project.

The project is divided into **three milestones**, which will be submitted at various points throughout the course to scaffold learning and ensure quality final submissions. These milestones will be submitted in **Modules Two, Four, and Seven. The final submission will occur in Module Nine.**

This assessment will assess your mastery with respect to the following course outcomes:

- IT-520-01:   Integrate effective collaboration and communication strategies into technical enterprise solutions and communications plans
- IT-520-02:   Establish conceptual frameworks for planning and specific guidelines for communicating technical information to multiple stakeholders
- IT-520-03:   Evaluate existing technical communications for the extent to which they effectively communicate necessary information to end users
- IT-520-04:   Adapt technical communications to successfully meet the needs of various target audiences

Scenario

When promoted to the new vice president of BOLDFlash's Mobile Division, specializing in high-tech storage components for electronic devices, Roger Cahill understood very clearly that his top priority was to get the struggling division back on track. As he started in on the job, he soon realized that problems with technical communications were a major cause of the division's other problems. Rapid sales growth, reorganization of the division itself, the vast number of products, and the fast pace of new product development had all increased the challenges of effective communication between division teams and with suppliers, partners, and customers.

As the just-hired director of technical communications for the Mobile Division, you must analyze the current state of technical communications within the company. In your first days on the job, you have learned that there are no formatting requirements or templates for internal product documentation or customer materials, that individual techs often develop such materials without any structure or guidance, and that the Technical Support team has received several hundred complaints about the complexity and, at times, inaccuracy of the instructions that accompany products.

What is more, various departments within the division have cited difficulties in understanding the products and services BOLDFlash's Mobile Division has to offer because of the extreme technical nature of the various products. As one example, a project was conducted earlier in the year to prepare a response to an RFP (Request for Proposal) from the U.S. Navy for secure disk drives. Such contract responses require clear communication of technical aspects in a business context, yet upper management has had difficulty navigating the design specification documents and technical blueprints that the R&D group has prepared.

Cahill has tasked you with developing training on technical communication for the division's management team and with creating a cohesive plan for developing technical documents and communications that will benefit the company in the long run.

Prompt

Based on the case study (BOLDFlash: Cross-Functional Challenges in the Mobile Division), the three artifact documents (internal business processes, product documentation, or technical service communication), and the above scenario, you must construct a plan of action for tackling the various areas of technical communications needs. You will also need to pick an area of focus (the internal business processes, product documentation, or technical service communication) to begin adapting the technical communications that already exist and are not meeting audience needs. To this end, you will produce a critique of an existing technical communication, including your methods for adapting the communication and your reasoning for the change. This will act as the basis for the technical communication training that you will develop for BOLDFlash's Mobile Division management team. The most important piece, perhaps, is the inclusion of a framework and guidelines for creating effective technical communication.

Specifically the following critical elements must be addressed:

I.   **Background and Area of Focus:** Analyze the communication environment that exists within BOLDFlash. What are the particular areas of concern, and which area do you feel should be your focus to start? Specifically, which area (internal business processes, product documentation, or technical service communication) do you feel is the most important to fix first? Why? Provide your reasoning. [IT-520-01]

II. **Framework for Planning and Communicating With Stakeholders**:
   a) **Key Stakeholders:** Discuss your area of focus. Who are the key stakeholders involved in this particular area, why are they involved, and to what extent will your framework for communication impact them? [IT-520-02]
   b) **Established Practices:** What established communication practices would benefit your approach to communicating among the stakeholders that you have identified? Provide evidence to support your conclusions. [IT-520-02]
   c) Construct a **framework for** continued **communication**, both technical and nontechnical, among the identified stakeholders. This framework will be the one to which the management team will refer for interdepartmental and external communication with customers. [IT-520-02]

III. **Training Plan:** How will you approach training the management team and communicating the new guidelines to existing employees?
   a) What **communication** strategies will you incorporate and why? How are these communication strategies appropriate for those individuals to whom your training is directed? Provide evidence to support your conclusions. [IT-520-01]

b) What **collaboration** strategies will you incorporate? Determine the collaborative structure and strategies that will help the managers and directors throughout and after their training experiences. Why are these appropriate? Who will be collaborating? Provide evidence to support your conclusions. [IT-520-01]

c) **Training Method(s)** (how you will share your training with trainees and other stakeholders): Your method must be appropriate for the audience to which you want to communicate. Justify your choice(s) of method with research. [IT-520-01]

IV. **Specified Guidelines From Your Focus Area:** Outline the specific guidelines for creating successful technical communications. Identify the key steps—for example, who are the various audiences that need the information? Remember that your guidelines need to be detailed for your colleagues to follow, clear for your colleagues to understand, and accurate to ensure that the resulting communications are successful. [IT-520-02]

V. **The Training:** Select the methods for communication and collaboration that best fit your area of focus, and implement them in a training. Your training can be a written deliverable or a video/audio recording. You will select a specific technical communication artifact from the ones provided that is related to your area of focus to use in the training, and you will apply your guidelines to the audience identification, critique, adaptation, and explanation.

a) Who is the **target audience** of the communication? From the case study and artifacts provided, what characteristics can you identify about your target audience, such as their perspectives, backgrounds, and organizational agenda? [IT-520-03]

b) What is the intended **message** that needs to be delivered? What pertinence does that message hold for the intended audience? In other words, why does the message matter for the target audience? [IT-520-03]

c) To what extent was the technical communication successful in delivering the intended message? Did the necessary information get through to the target audience? Why or why not? [IT-520-03]

VI. **Adaptation Example**

a) Adapt the technical communication **artifact** to more successfully meet the needs of the target audience that was identified. Be sure to apply the guidelines that you established. [IT-520-04]

b) **Explain** what you did to adapt the communication and the reasoning for your changes. This will serve as the explanation to the management team so that they understand the greater context of the adaptation. Be sure to explain how the guidelines you have established were applied. [IT-520-04]

c) Now consider an **alternative audience** that might receive the technical communication, and analyze their dispositions and needs for communication. Adapt the communication to this new audience and explain your steps to your team. How successful will this adaptation be in delivering the intended message to your new audience? [IT-520-04]

Milestones

Milestone One: *Area of Focus and Framework*
In **Module Two**, you will submit a written report that analyzes the communication environment that exists within BOLDFlash and discusses the particular areas of concern. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone One Rubric.**

Milestone Two: *Training Plan and Area of Focus Guidelines*
In **Module Four**, you will submit a written report in which you discuss how you will approach training the BOLDFlash management team and communicating the new guidelines to existing employees. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone Two Rubric.**

Milestone Three: *Training*
In **Module Seven**, you will submit a two-part document. In the first part, you will submit a written report in which you select the methods for communication and collaboration that best fit your area of focus and implement them as a training tool for the BOLDFlash management team. In the second part, you will submit either a written report or a training video (or both) in which you exemplify the training by taking an existing communication to your area of focus and adapting the technical communication artifact to more successfully meet the needs of the target audience that was identified. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone Three Rubric.**

Final Submission: *Communication Framework and Training Plan*
In **Module Nine**, you will submit a communication framework and training plan (which includes any optional training videos submitted in Milestone Three). Your final submission should be a complete, polished artifact containing all of the critical elements of the final product. It should reflect the incorporation of feedback gained throughout the course. **Your final submission will be graded using the Final Product Rubric.**

Deliverables

Milestone	Deliverables	Module Due	Grading
1	Area of Focus and Framework	Two	Graded separately; Milestone One Rubric
2	Training Plan and Area of Focus Guidelines	Four	Graded separately; Milestone Two Rubric
3	Training	Seven	Graded separately; Milestone Three Rubric
	Final Submission: Communication Framework and Training Plan	Nine	Graded separately; Final Product Rubric

Final Product Rubric

Guidelines for Submission: Written components of the project must follow these formatting guidelines: double spacing, 12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, and length of 15 to 20 pages.

Critical Elements	Exemplary (100%)	Proficient (90%)	Needs Improvement (70%)	Not Evident (0%)	Value
Background and Area of Focus [IT-520-01]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and reasoning is qualified with relevant and reputable sources	Analyzes the communication environment within the context of the scenario to identify and justify an area of focus with logical reasoning	Analyzes the communication environment to identify and justify an area of focus, but analysis lacks detail or the area of focus is not justified with logical reasoning	Does not analyze the communication environment scenario to identify and justify an area of focus	5.75
Key Stakeholders [IT-520-02]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and assessment is exceptionally detailed, but without superfluous detail that might detract from the determination of impact	Accurately assesses the extent to which key stakeholders in the area of focus will be impacted by the communication framework	Assesses the extent to which certain stakeholders will be impacted by the communication framework, but assessment is not accurate, or the stakeholders identified are not the key stakeholders	Does not assess the extent to which certain stakeholders will be impacted by the communication framework	5.75
Established Practices [IT-520-02]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and reasoning and support are exceptionally strong in terms of relevance, validity, and reputability	Accurately determines established communication strategies with reasoning and support as to why they are appropriate for those stakeholders identified in section II.a	Determines established communication strategies with reasoning and support as to why they may be helpful, but not as to why they are appropriate for those stakeholders identified in section II.a	Does not determine established communication strategies with reasoning and support as to why they may be helpful	5.75
Framework for Communication [IT-520-02]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and framework is particularly well crafted and possibly serviceable	Constructs a framework for continued communication for the area of focus that covers both technical and nontechnical communication strategies and that will logically perpetuate successful communication between the technology team and stakeholders	Constructs a framework for continued communication for the area of focus that covers both technical and nontechnical communication strategies, but the framework will not logically perpetuate successful communication between the technology team and stakeholders, or the framework does not cover both technical and nontechnical communication	Does not construct a framework for continued communication for the area of focus	5.75

Training Plan: Communication [IT-520-01]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and determinations are particularly well supported with reputable and reliable sources	Determines relevant and proven communication strategies for use in training the management team, supported with valid research	Determines communication strategies for use in training the management team, but they are not all relevant or not proven with valid research	Does not determine communication strategies for use in training the management team	5.75
Training Plan: Collaboration [IT-520-01]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and determinations are particularly well supported with reputable and reliable sources	Determines collaborative structure and strategies that will logically facilitate successful training and communication experiences for the management team	Determines collaborative structure and strategies for training and communication experiences for the management team, but not all of the strategies are likely to facilitate success, or the structure will not be beneficial given the context of the training	Does not determine collaborative structure and strategies for training, and/or communication experiences	5.75
Training Plan: Training Method(s) [IT-520-01]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and training method is exceptionally well catered to the audiences and has the potential for success because of the method(s) used, or the justification is exceptionally well supported with scholarly research and examples of proven success	Selects an appropriate training method(s) and justifies with relevant research	Selects a training method(s) and justifies with research; however, training method is not appropriate for the intended audiences or justification is not based in relevant research	Does not select and justify a training method	5.75
Specified Guidelines [IT-520-02]	Meets "Proficient" criteria and is replicable, realistic, and valuable for use in the professional world	Outlines detailed, clear, and accurate guidelines for creating successful technical communications within the focus area	Outlines guidelines for creating technical communications within the focus area, but guidelines are not detailed, clear, and/or accurate	Does not outline guidelines for technical communications within the focus area	5.75
The Training: Target Audience [IT-520-03]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and particular details articulated are highly relevant for the basis of altering the existing communication	Accurately analyzes the target audience of the selected communication with detail regarding perspectives, technical needs, and backgrounds of that audience	Analyzes the target audience of the selected communication, but lacks detail regarding perspectives, technical needs, or backgrounds of that audience, or there are gaps in accuracy	Does not analyze the target audience of the selected communication	7.67

Criteria					Score
The Training: Message [IT-520-03]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and determination of importance is specified as to what the key necessary information is	Accurately determines the importance of the intended message for the target audience and is complete with detail	Determines the importance of the intended message for the target audience, but lacks detail that may impact accuracy of determination	Does not determine the importance of the intended message for the target audience	7.67
The Training: Critique [IT-520-03]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and the reasoning provided is contextualized with examples and metaphors for improved clarity	Accurately assesses the extent to which existing communication was successful in delivering the intended message, with detailed explanation as to the reasoning	Assesses the extent to which existing communication was successful in delivering the intended message with explanation as to the reasoning, but assessment is not accurate or explanation lacks necessary detail	Does not assess the extent to which existing communication was successful in delivering the intended message or include an explanation	7.67
Adaptation Examples: New Communication Artifact [IT-520-04]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and adaptation is exceptionally well catered to the audience	Successfully adapts the communication artifact to meet the needs of the intended audience, and guidelines are clearly applied to the adaptation	Adapts the communication artifact to better meet the needs of the intended audience, but is not entirely successful or does not clearly apply the established guidelines	Does not adapt the communication artifact to better meet the needs of target audience	7.67
Adaptation Examples: Explanation [IT-520-04]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and articulation is serviceable as a real-life training exercise for technical writing	Accurately and clearly articulates the process behind the adaptation and how the guidelines were applied for training purposes	Articulates the process behind the adaptation and how the guidelines were applied, but with gaps in detail, clarity, or accuracy	Does not articulate the process behind the adaptation or how the guidelines were applied	7
Adaptation Examples: Alternative Adaptation [IT-520-04]	Meets "Proficient" criteria, and replication serves as a clear example for training purposes or how the guidelines can be used in different contexts	Replicates the adaptation exercise successfully by considering an alternative audience and applying the guidelines to create a communication that successfully communicates the message	Replicates the adaptation process by considering an alternative audience and applying the guidelines, but is not completely successful in process or guidelines are not applied appropriately	Does not replicate the adaptation process with an alternative audience	8.65
Articulation of Response	Submission is free of errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, and organization and is presented in a professional and easy-to-read format	Submission has no major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization	Submission has major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that negatively impact readability and articulation of main ideas	Submission has critical errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that prevent understanding of ideas	7.67
				Earned Total	**100%**