

# PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS

## A SAMPLE PROGRAM DESIGNED TO ENHANCE JOB COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTS

By Tom Reedy and Jan Davidson

### The Motivation

"The topics for today include: artificial insemination procedures, a disease control program for new born pigs, and the advantages of minimum tillage." Just a typical day in an agriculture class? The class is, in fact, Communications II at Lake Land College with the instructor assigned from the English Division. The topics are part of a student organized customer information project approved by an agriculture instructor. Project Communications places the emphasis on direct use of job language skills in the classroom. The projects are used to help the student gain confidence and efficiency in communicating in his own vocational-technical area. These projects emphasize job language analysis, speaking, and writing.

### The Program

The program for Agriculture Production/Management students has evolved through cooperative planning between personnel in the two departments. Agriculture instructors provide the specific field experience related to on job communications needs; the English instructor designs the class activities to meet those needs. The fact that two instructors, Mr. Reedy and Mrs. Davidson, share the same group of students facilitates correlating instruction.

Cooperative projects grow from agriculture field activities. When students attend a seminar or field experience, the English instructor may also attend to collect possible major report topics. After the topics have been assimilated by the English instructor, the agriculture instructor evaluates them for content validity. Another project involves the use of visual aids and equipment for oral presentations. Again, much of the material, such as slides, filmstrips, and transparencies, comes from the agriculture department; the speaking skills are taught and evaluated by the English instructor. Checks on content facts are only a telephone call away. However, project content improves because of the student's interest and background in his major field. This instructional method teaches communications skills while reinforcing the agriculture classroom work.

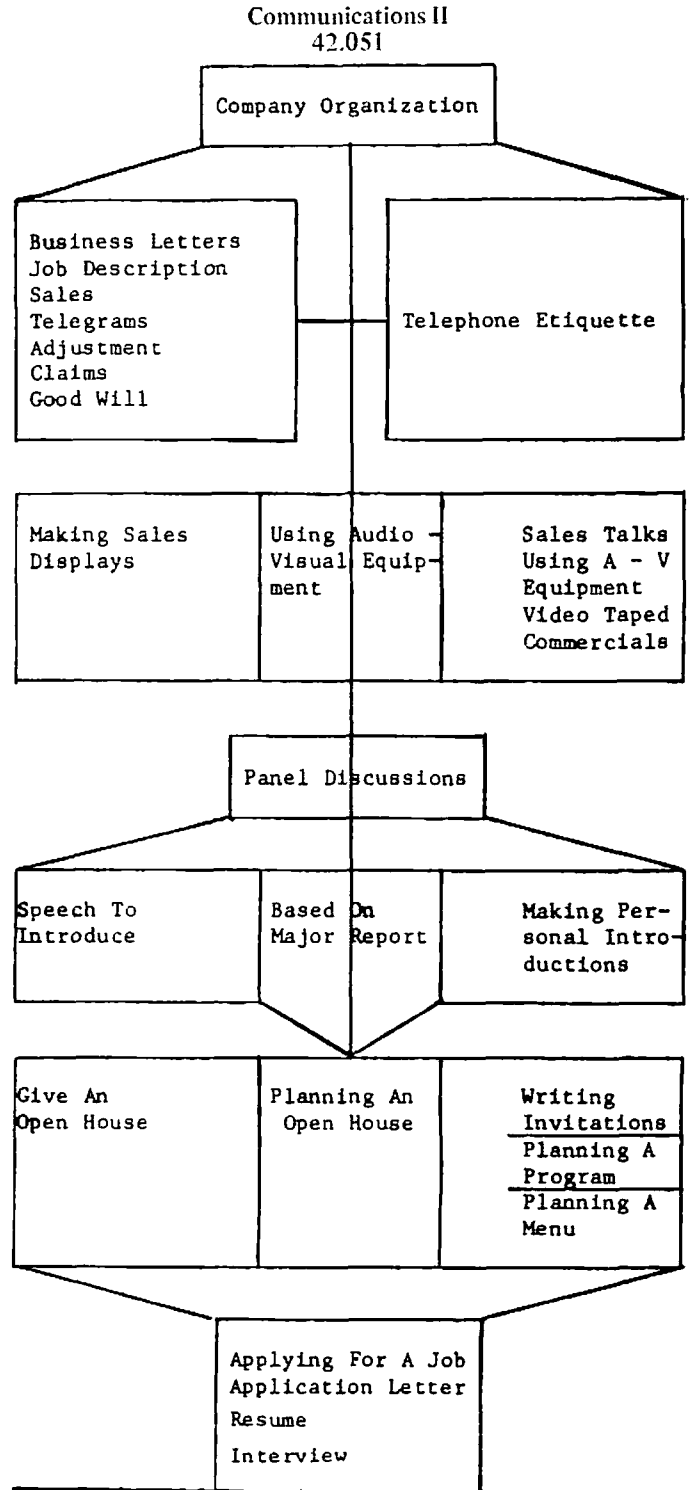
The English classroom activities go beyond merely reinforcing present learning to anticipating experiences which the student will find in subsequent agriculture classes and, most important of all, on the job.

Agriculture Business and Supply, a sophomore level class, concentrates on organizing and managing an agri-business. Students in the English class set up companies, although not to the depth of the agriculture class, in order to develop problem solving systems, write business letters and job descriptions, make sales presentations, tape television commercials, and produce customer information programs.

Since the student functions as part of a company, area business personnel are also included in cooperative instruction. Resource personnel include: Ruth Swingler - Illinois Consolidated Telephone Company - Topic: The Business You Save May Be Your Own; Good Telephone Usage; Jerry Buffenmeyer - Central Illinois Seed Company - Topic: Planning and Making Customer Sales Calls; Jim Kincaid - Schilling and Sloan John Deere - Topic: Planning A Customer Information Program; Bob Corley - Corley International of Sullivan - Topic: Open House - Field Visitation. Student company personnel have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss communications problems with professionals on the job. They begin to equate the classroom activities to the job situation.

The job situation is further reiterated by the final project which requires the student company to present a customer information program. The project demands high level communications skills and subject matter knowledge since it necessitates the

use of planning, writing, and speaking skills. Each company is responsible for invitations and advertising, content information



- I. Major Report
- II. Using The Library; Using Data Sources; Choosing The Topic; Narrowing The Topic; Taking Notes; Crediting Sources; Writing A Report.

and presentation, sales materials and displays, audio-visual aids, introductions, and menu. The student company experiences all the inherent problems by being directly responsible for a program. The concepts initially developed in communications are further reinforced in Retailing of Agricultural Supplies class.

The use of real experiences in job communications, based on subject matter for which the student recognizes a need, encourages students to achieve communications skills. He is often surprised by his own ability to do well in an English class. Much of the threat generated by previous experiences with English classes is removed. Since the student is secure in his agriculture subject matter, he is able to concentrate on his communications skills – and after all, that combination will earn his living.

#### Possible Projections

1. An institutional research project has been submitted which would send an English instructor to the job location with the agriculture supervisor during the student intern program. Communications skills could be taught, analyzed, and evaluated on the job during the period students most recognize their language skill needs; this method could also provide follow-up and evaluative possibilities for the present program.
2. The student job intern could make 8mm films related to job activities. These could be used in agriculture seminars for job

analysis discussions and in English classes for problem solving and writing job descriptions.

3. A workshop for small agri-business concerns could be jointly sponsored. Several business individuals have expressed an interest in the realistic approach the program takes to business communications.
4. Agriculture and English instructors could be assigned team teaching of at least one block of time to include both field content and communications activities.
5. All communications students could be assigned to English classes by vocational-technical blocks permitting more specific content planning.

#### Conclusion

Project Communications is an effort to develop a program which will serve the non-transfer vocational-technical student. Whether the field is agriculture or some other major field, the student has language skill needs. Each program can, through cooperative planning, provide the student with meaningful communications experiences.

#### Consultants

E. J. Dunphy, Agriculture Instructor; Bill Rich, Agriculture Division Chairman; W. C. Taylor, English Division Chairman.

## ECONOMY OF ABUNDANCE CALLS FOR NEW APPROACHES

Walter J. Wills

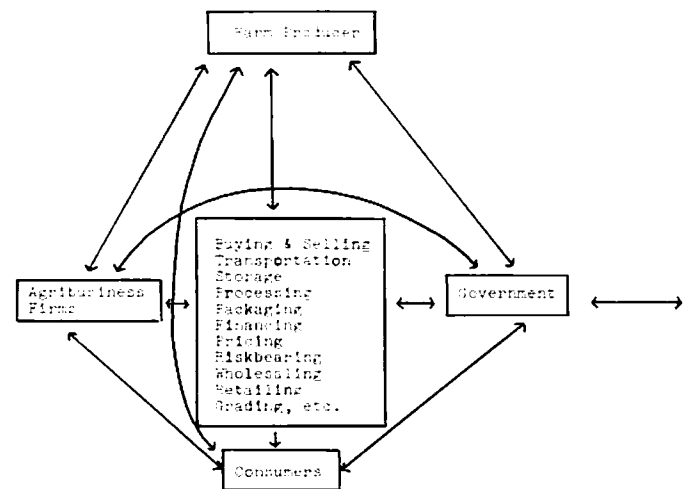
Many textbooks define economics in terms of allocating scarce resources. Smith, Malthus and Ricardo were writing at a time when food and fiber to feed and clothe the peoples of the then more developed countries of the world was limited. The present day marketing and pricing systems in the so-called free market more developed countries of the world were developed within the context of an economics of scarcity. In the more developed economies agriculture has been operating largely in an economy of abundance for the past few decades. In most of the less developed countries certain commodities are produced under an economy of abundance. The economy of abundance is probably defined as those portions of the agricultural sector of the economy in which various income transfer schemes through the federal treasury to agriculture are made while there is a rapid outmovement of people from that agricultural sector and in most cases there is at least an alleged attempt at government production controls.

The classical description of price determination and market performance does not portray what happens. The added contributions of Robinson and Chamberlin still provides an awkward explanation and a theoretical framework that at best is of minimal assistance in providing a better understanding of the market forces that have such a major bearing on agricultural income.

When income maximization may not be the controlling factor in decision making; when discretionary spending may represent a substantial portion of both individual and business budgets; when hazily defined and even more hazily understood objectives are constantly changing; and when the management function in government, industry and other sectors of the economy becomes separated from their constituencies, hence non responsive; then there is need for a re-evaluation of the framework within which the system functions.

There are four principal actors in this complex system: farmers, agri-business firms, government and consumers. The particular role each plays varies by regions, countries and over time. The interdependence of each actor and the relative roles played is shown schematically in figure 1.

Fig. 1. Schematic Interrelationships in Marketing



#### What are the Issues?

**Pricing.** Where there are large numbers of buyers and sellers, where both buyers and sellers have equal information, where there are few barriers to entry and exit, where there are no dominant firms on either side of the market a person could understand the pricing system. However, there may be serious doubt if there was ever a time when such conditions existed. Price determination was and is often only one of a number of transactions that become the final bundle of goods and services under consideration. In some cases both sides of the market are aware, either implicitly or explicitly, of these considerations, in other cases each side of the market may have different non price considerations that may or may not be known by the other side of the market. In other cases the non price considerations may be masked by a number of real or imagined subterfuges.