Welcome to today's webinar, Dynamic Professional Communication Strategies.

I have two esteemed presenters from the College of Undergraduate Studies with us today.

Dr. Laurel Walsh and Dr. Diana
Tucker.

And, so, the reason that we’re offering this webinar is that employers always rate communication skills at the top of the list of soft skills that they seek in employees.

Our communication experts from CUGS will offer you strategies to strengthen your written and your oral communication skills, which are key parts of your professional reputation or brand.

So, with that, let’s move on to the next slide.

So I want to just briefly introduce our career services center team.

On the left bottom is career advisor NICOLLE Skalski, who is our technical expert today, who is going to be pushing our slides and helping us with a poll.

And then we have senior career services, DINA Bergren and senior director -- career advisor Andrea and Denise prankE.

We teach you to fish so you can fish for a lifetime.
So next slide.

So, before we get started, we’d like you to exhibit your written communication skills and please type in the questions box, what brought you here today?

What topics do you want to learn more about?

What prompted you to come to this webinar?

So I’ll give you a minute or so to do that.

And, remember, we’re going to be talking about written communication strategies, such as, you know, how to write a really strong pithy e-mail, as well as oral communication strategies.

So what’s your most interesting topic between those?

>> Okay.

It looks like we have coming in some communications.

Okay.

To gain better communication skills.

Interviewing internally.

So that’s an interesting one.
Lisa: Interviewing internally, that's an interesting one.

>> I'm starting a new job tomorrow.

Congratulations.

And want to brush up on my skills.

Lisa.

Wow, that's being proactive.

I'm sure your future employer will really appreciate that, yeah.

>> I wanted to hear more about oral communication strategies.

That's from Yvette.

And Lisa says, effective communication is a weakness of mine.

Going for an interview tomorrow.

Wow.

Lisa: Excellent.

>> a lot of good job outcomes on this one.

To gain better e-mail communication skills.

Increase communication within the work environment.

What brought me here today?
People are not listening to me enough.

Oh, that's an interesting point of view.

Okay.

Interviewing for my position that is moving to Tampa.

Lisa: Excellent.

Nicolle: Great.
Lisa: A lot of interviewing skills.

I'm going to add something quickly, especially for the person who mentioned she has an interview tomorrow.

We have an optimal interview system and you can basically record yourself with your video camera on your computer, answering interview questions and play them back.

So I just want to mention, if you want to check out optimal resume and do some practice questions to see how you're coming off.

And I'm sure you'll be employing some great strategies from Laurel and Diana as a result of the webinar.

But that's just one other tool that you can use as well.
a few more interviewing interest as well.

Lisa: We have some interviewing resources on our website so be sure to check those out as well.

Okay, great.

All right.
Terrific.

So, we'll move forward with our topic.

So, basically, two main topics today, so, Diana's going to be discussing verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to make a positive first impression in the workplace.

Specifically, probably for that individual who is starting a new job tomorrow.

And then providing e-communications best practices to facilitate clarity and understanding, and Laurel will be covering that.

So, with that, I'm going to introduce Dr. Diana Tucker.

Dr. Diana Tucker is an academic
coordinator and core faculty in the
college of undergraduate studies where
she teaches undergraduate
communications.

And something happened to the screen.

So can we get that back?

Okay.

Go to the previous slide.
Sorry about that.

Isn't the arrow showing on the screen
that you can go back?

Sorry about that.

Where she teaches undergraduate general
education communication courses and
helps to coordinate the field experience
and student -- excuse me -- study abroad
courses for undergrads.

Her main research area is in sport
communication and public relations and
currently she is working on a sport
communication textbook for Kendall hunt
publishing.

And she resides in a city very near and
dear to my heart, which is, Columbus,
Ohio, where I went to school, so it was
nice to connect with Dr. Tucker.

With that, I'm going to hand the floor to you.

Thank you.

>> Diana: Thanks, Lisa.

So I'm going to talk today about face-to-face communication and making that first impression in the workplace. But this is not just about interviewing, although I know that's very important to many of you.

And while the interview is usually the most important first impression we make in the work world, it is how you present yourself in the interview that tells your potential employer how you will be in other first impression situations.

See, your resume could demonstrate that you have all the skills needed and then some, but if your demeanor in an interview makes the employer think that they can't put you in front of a client, then you won't get the job.

So it isn't just first impressions with
potential employers we're talking about here.

It could be potential clients or you could have been at a job for a long time and it's about a new boss coming in to your company so you want to make a good first impression there or maybe even just a new co-worker is starting in your department. So you never know what connection someone has.

So you always want to make sure that you make that first good -- good first impression.

So things that we're going to consider. I'm going to go over two areas in terms of making that first good impression. Nonverbal communication, which we're going to go over the list of things here.

That if you click -- yeah.

We're going to go over some of the things listed here.

And then we're going to talk about verbal communication.
And I've split that into two different components.
You could click -- yeah.

Audience analysis and message construction.

So that's just a little preview of the things that I'm going to go over.

So, if we move to the next slide.

We're going to start by addressing what men should do in terms of dress and hair, et cetera.

First, we put up the picture here, the first picture, we want to have neatly trimmed hair, be clean-shaven, of course, for men, no makeup, and then we want to have business attire.

A tie certainly and a long-sleeved button-down shirt is better than a short-sleeve shirt.

So having that long sleeve, button-down and tie is important.

Having nice slacks or khakis.

If you do have a suit jacket or a Blazer, that is good to have, but, you
know, if you don't have that in your wardrobe, it's not a deal breaker.

Having that long-sleeve button-down shirt, that's nice, making sure that the edges aren't frayed, edges of the collar or the cuffs are not frayed.

Along with a nice tie can be perfectly fine.

But if you do have a jacket, a suit jacket or Blazer, that is a good thing to add to the outfit.

You want to stay with neutral and dark colors and the only -- for men, the only stand-out color you want to have can be in the tie, but you don't want your suits to have other kind of bright colors in it.

You want to make sure that your tie is not -- doesn't have too many geographical patterns on it and such.

So, do kind of err on the side of being conservative.

Now, if we go to the other picture here, of course, we want to make sure that we don't have tennis shoes, jeans or
T-shirts, but as you see here, this is the picture of the same man, I happen to know because he’s my brother.

He is certainly dressed nicely in the picture on the right, but he’s got more of a scruffy look.

While he does have a suit jacket on, this is more of a look that you might have for a night out on the town.

So having jeans on, you know, he does have the button-down shirt on but it's unbuttoned in the front, you don't want to have that.

So he's not clean-shaven.

So, definitely err on the side of the picture on the left for the men.

I do want to note, you can't really read at the bottom there, but it says that all of these conventions that I'm discussing today are American convention says.

So, it is important for you to remember that if you're going into another culture or interviewing in another
country, you may need to do some research to find out what the conventions are there. However, my personal belief is that you can never go wrong with business attire. So now let's look at what women should be doing.

In terms of makeup, hair, et cetera. Wearing a suit or a suit dress is always good, but I realize not all of us have that in our wardrobe, so keeping things more neutral, more conservative. You want to make sure that your colors are in the more dark colors, neutral colors. However, women can get away with a little bit more color than men. But as I've been saying, it is always good to err on the side of being conservative for that first impression. And then once you see, you know, how others are dressed in your -- in the workplace, you can start dressing more like them if you want. You do want to avoid any overly trendy
hairstyles, keep your hairstyle simple
and same with the makeup.
You don't want to put too much makeup
on.
You want your makeup to be -- and hair
to be as natural as possible.
Finally, something a lot of people don't
realize is jewelry.
You want to make sure that you're not
wearing too much jewelry.
Two to four pieces of jewelry is more
than enough.
And you don't want to have multiple
necklaces or multiple bracelets, things
like that.
So keep it simple and nothing too big or
too flashy either.
So if we move to the other picture here.
The picture here, she certainly looks
nice, but her skirt is way too short.
You want to make sure that your skirt is
at least at the kneecap.
So not going above the knee is important
here.
She also has her shoulders revealed and you want to avoid having that or certainly -- she doesn't have low cleavage but you don't want to have a blouse or anything on that's showing a lot of cleavage for that first impression.

Now, in terms of being tidy for both men and women, when I say tidiness, I'm talking about the same kind of thing for both men and women.

You want to have clean, trimmed nails, make sure that your clothes are ironed, and then any bags or notebooks or anything that you're holding or carrying in with you, make sure that they're professional looking, they're clean, they don't -- they aren't overly worn and messy.

For instance, you wouldn't want to bring a backpack in to an interview because a backpack kind of says, I'm a student and, you know, we want to make sure that we're showing that we are more professional than just a college
student.

So, as we go on to the next slide, I'd like to address some other nonverbal, in terms of the form of body language. So, we talked about attire and how we should look.

But let's talk about how our body language should be.

We're talking about front stage and back stage in terms of this comes from the scholar Irving Gothman and he studied the way that people will put on a performance of sorts when in front of other people.

But then when at home, and not necessarily when you're alone, but when we're with people we know really well or friends and our family, we tend to have more of a back stage demeanor.

So we want to remember to always keep it front stage at work.

And this cartoon here is showing a man who puts a smile on at work but leaves his angry face for at home.
So some of these front stage nonverbals include, especially in that first impression, making direct eye contact.

And these, again, are American conventions, so it's not always going to be the same for other cultures and countries.

But in America, we definitely want to see direct eye contact because we see that as showing trustworthiness.

But we don't want to be challenging.

That's why we want to add a smile with that direct eye contact. So when we have both the direct eye contact and the smile, this is saying that we're being welcoming and it demonstrates more interpersonal collegiality.

We also want to give a very firm handshake.

In terms of your posture, you want to make sure whether you're sitting or standing that you’re standing or sitting straight with your shoulders back because this demonstrates poise and
confidence.

You also want to make sure that you have
open body positions.

Now, what does this mean?

Don't cross your arms or, like, hunch
your shoulders.

You can certainly cross your legs.

That's not a problem.

But if you cross your arms or hunch your
shoulders, that's kind of saying to the
interviewer that you don't have, you
know, you're not interested in what
they're saying, you're not welcoming
what they're saying.

I've lost the screen.

I can't see.

Okay, there it is.

Thanks.

Now, in terms of gesturing, you do want
to gesture, but you want to avoid really
large, sweeping gestures.

A lack of gesturing demonstrates
nervousness and rigidity.

It can make someone think that you're
not flexible.

People tend to be more relaxed around others who do gesture naturally and more frequently, but if your gestures are wild and too big, this can come off as if you’re not poised, not coordinated, that you’re not organized.

And it also is seen as a sign of nervousness.

So you do want to gesture, just kind of keep them closer to your body.

Now, I know that first encounters can be really nerve racking and we’re going to have some slipups, we’re going to say UM and AH as I tend to do a lot.

But if you remember that these nonverbal things, such as smiling, having a correct posture, keeping that eye contact, and the person's going to remember those kinds of things and think of them as you being confident rather than remembering those little slip-ups that you might have due to some nervousness.

So it’s okay, you know, we’re going to
go in, we're going to be nervous, that's okay.

If you can remember these other things, they're going to sort of take the place of those little bits of nervousness that you might show.

So now we're done talking about nonverbals.

Let's talk a little bit more about verbal communication, that actual, you know, message, the words that we're going to say.

I'd like for you to think of effective verbal communication as if you're building something.

So I have a little picture here.

You want to click for the next -- there we go.

So, I want you to think of it as if you're building something.

In order for your bricks to stay together, you know, you need to build a strong foundation.

You need mortar to keep all of those
bricks together.

So, whenever you're going to communicate with someone and you want communication to mean something, you really need to do what I'm calling audience analysis.

And we're going to consider this to be the bricks of our building effective communication.

If you want to click the next -- there we go.

So, the things that we're going to go over here in the next slide is remembering to think about what you know about this person with whom you're communicating and thinking about how some topics, phrasing, et cetera, might affect him or her.

And the better you get to know your co-workers and how they work, the better you will be able to construct more effective messages to them.

If you click again, we're going to talk about message construction.

And I'm considering this our mortar as we're building this better verbal
communication.

In order to keep all that communication flowing, to continue to get to know people and be on their good side, you will need that mortar to more effectively keep it all together.

So if we go on to the next slide, let's talk a little bit more about audience analysis.

The first thing is we want to be interpersonal.

Such as doing simple things like asking how their day is going.

So, as you're going in and you're making direct eye contact, using that smile, and using little small talk kinds of questions, how is your day going, you know, how is that project going, if you've been there for a little bit of time, and making those little connections.

The second thing is showing -- if you want to click through -- yeah, asking how their day is going.
The second thing is showing an interest in them.

You can ask lightly about their family.

The first time you meet someone, of course, you're not going to know a lot about them.

And that's why it is important for you, especially for an interview, to research the company, research the clients that the company might have, so you do have something to talk about that will allow you to start getting to know the person as they answer those questions and then you can get into more interpersonal questions as well.

Then, of course, listening well, as we have listed there.

If you are in your first conversation with a person, if you can remember something that they've told you earlier in that conversation and bring it up again, it just shows that you are listening, but if you're in a second or third conversation with someone, if you can bring up something that they told
you in a conversation from days before, that really shows that you have been listening to them and thinking about things that they said. So that can be impressive, depending on what it is that you bring back up. Finally, you want to remember everyone is a unique individual. So, not everyone's going to work the same or communicate the same. You may be very interpersonal but the other person might not be. You can't force them to reveal any information about themselves, so we don't want to push too hard, of course. We also want to avoid stereotyping. If you're talking to someone from a company and, like, that company has a certain stereotype about the people who work there, remember that this person is an individual and probably wouldn't like to be stereotyped. I'm sure you wouldn't like to be stereotyped.
So I like to think of the golden rule here.

Treat others as you would want to be treated.

So, remember, everyone's an individual. We're all different.

And just because you've heard of things from -- about people from this company doesn't mean it's necessarily true.

So treat everyone differently.

The second thing in audience analysis is to be thinking about that person and determining, okay, from what I know about this person, is more direct communication or indirect communication better?

So, for instance, should you get straight to the point or allow for small talk?

You know, different work interactions will ask for different actions.

Learn when you should get to the point and when you should be more interpersonal.

Then confront problems or should you let
things go?

If the other person is a more "let it go" type, then you should also let things go.

The third thing, use more verbal communication or nonverbal communication.

Now, I want to distinguish between the two because sometimes people get confused.

Verbal communication is any use of words, whether written or spoken.

And nonverbal communication is the use of any body language or other visuals.

So, if we're using verbal communication, it's using our words and then sometimes we're going to find that nonverbal communication, our body language, will reveal a message, you know, that we want to reveal to other people and we don't even need to use words.

Other times we need to use more words to explain ourselves and, so, we don't want to use as much nonverbal communication,
we want to rely more on our words.

So we'll learn with different people how we can use our verbal and nonverbal communication to the best.

Finally, should we use written or spoken communication?

This is something that I know Dr. Walsh is going to be talking a lot more about, but in terms of your message, is it better to write it in an e-mail or make it more official by writing a memo or is it something that you can just stroll into someone's office and ask them about?

And these are things that you need to figure out before constructing your message and deciding, you know, which venue you're going to use to communicate that message.

And different workplaces are going to have different rules about that as well.

They'll actually have rules written out about when you should e-mail something, when you should write a memo, when you can just talk about something with
someone.

But other organizations are not going to have those kinds of rules, so you need to sort of figure that out on your own, and it’s certainly fine to ask a supervisor something, you know, is it okay to do this kind of work by going and talking to someone or does it all need to be written out so people better understand what exactly is expected of them.

And they’ll be able to answer those kinds of questions for you.

So now we’re done with audience analysis.

Let’s talk a little bit about message construction.

Now, I can’t tell you specific words to use in the work situation because every workplace and situation is going to be different.

But I can talk about how to create a certain climate with your words.

So, in creating a supportive climate,
this does not have anything to do with weather as the picture shows here.

But like weather, the climate of a communication event can change easily and quickly.

And when I say you should create a supportive climate, I'm talking about the mood or tone of the communication event, so you want to create a supportive mood or tone while you're relaying your message.

Thus, in your wording, you should always stay positive.

An example I have here, let's say an interviewer asks you, how are you doing today?

No matter how untrue it might be, answer with something like, I'm doing wonderfully and I'm so excited to be here.

So you see, I have put that positive tone in my voice and I've shown that I'm really excited and I've said that I'm really excited.

So you want to make sure that all of
those bits of positivity are there, even if you've had the most horrible day up to that point, you're never going to let them know that.

It's kind of like, never let them see you sweat.

Another example that I have, a very popular question in interviews, for an interviewer to ask, so all of you going for interviews you said tomorrow, you're very likely to be asked something along the lines of, what is a weakness of yours that might sometimes affect your work?

So, instead of coming up with something that's an actual weakness, you've probably heard that you want to try and find something that, you know, you could say is a weakness, but it actually turns out to be a strength.

Here's an example that I have.

So, if somebody were to ask me that, I might say something like, well, I get really enthusiastic about a new project,
but I know not everyone's going to be as enthusiastic as I am about change, so I need to remember to allow for another person's point of view and make sure I'm open to hearing those who might have a problem with a new project. That way no one feels left out or that their voice is not being heard. And I really know that it's important to make sure everyone feels equally valued in any new endeavor or success will be really hard to achieve. You see how I turned that weakness, oh, I'm really enthusiastic, well, who can argue with enthusiasm? And then I was also able to highlight that I think it's important that everyone's voice is heard, that -- and that is also another strength. So I've started off saying, well, here's my weakness, but, oh, really, it's a strength. So I've ended with more than one strength in answering the question about my weakness.
The final thing in terms of positivity is remembering to be gracious.

Even if you know an interview or first meeting with a client or someone didn't go real well, thank that person for the meeting as if you have just signed a deal.

Okay?

So make sure that they know that you're still really excited to be there.

The next thing we're going to talk about is "I" messages, versus having "you" messages.

And this is going to be really important in case you encounter potential conflict.

To use an "I" message means that you're describing your own feeling, not the other person's actions.

So if you're using the other person's actions or describing their actions, you're using "you" messages, and we want to stick with "I" messages.

So, for example, let's say that you
don't know what your boss wants for you to do on a project, and he or she has not given you any good directions on this.

So instead of saying something like, you never give me enough information and don't seem to care what happens, that's an example of "you" messages. You would say something like that, you know, I feel out of control and I get very anxious when I do not know exactly what is expected of me. It makes it really hard for me to do my job well.

Can we determine a way to make sure that I have all the information I need to do my job well? So that way you've turned it into describing how you feel and how you really want to do your job well and you're not saying they are the reason for that. You're sort of implying it, but you're not actually saying it. When you use that "you" language and
you're kind of pointing the blame at them, it's likely to put that person on the defensive and then the real issue, the fact that you're not getting the information and the direction that you need, that real issue is going to get lost in the shuffle.

The final thing about creating a supportive climate is that we want to create confirming messages, not disconfirming messages.

And, actually, everything I've talked about here in creating a supportive climate are examples of being confirming in your messages, but there's a few other things that I want to talk about.

The first, maintain the belief that there are many ways to do things.

So don't be judgmental of others in the way that they might do things.

You need to be open-minded, willing to compromise, and this shows that you're being confirming toward that other person.
And the more confirming you are, the more likely they're going to be confirming toward you and your ideas.

Another thing is, be honest in your requests for people to help you. Sometimes people might try to manipulate others into doing what they want. Just be honest about what you want or what you need. If they figure out that you've been manipulated, you've been doing that manipulation, they will feel very disconfirmed and it's likely to escalate to a real problem, a real conflict.

And then, finally, just showing concern for other people's feelings. Being empathetic, putting yourself in their shoes. You know, even if the other person is acting in an unsupportive and disconfirming way toward you or toward others, if you show empathy rather than disconfirming them, you're more likely to sort of bring them up to your level.
and get them working back in that proper behavior themselves.

The next thing is using visuals.

In addition to creating a supportive climate, you want to use visuals because, did you know that over 65% of all people in the world are what we call visual learners?

Now, this doesn’t mean that they can just read directions and learn things.

To be a visual learner does not mean that you see words and then you can just do whatever those words say.

You know, if they tell you what to do.

To be a visual learner, it means that you need to see a process work or you need to have a chart or something that helps you understand an issue.

So, whenever you have any sort of issue to discuss that might have any complexity to it, try to think of ways to make it visual. Using a chart or picture of some kind or demonstrating a process to someone.
And sometimes this will mean that you're not actually using real pictures.

It could mean that you're providing examples and analogies to help the person just picture the whole idea or issue or process in their own mind.

And, finally, I like to always say, with your messages, and I think Dr. Walsh is going to also talk about this, is keep it simple silly.

So, she's going to talk about that in terms of your e-communication and it's really the same for your face-to-face communication.

Especially with presentation.

You want to keep it simple and make sure that your messages in any sort of presentation is going to be on the shorter side and as simple as possible.

The more interpersonal you get, the more talking and message construction you can allow for.

Finally, I want to talk about in terms of this idea of message construction, I want to talk about creating moments that
matter.

As you develop your face-to-face communication, you always want to remember this.

And the first thing let's talk about is being interpersonal, not impersonal. We've all probably experienced what this picture is showing here. Where we're hanging with friends and everyone stares at their cell phone more than at each other.

And while we may tend to be a little more impersonal at work, we can still create moments that matter and focus our attention on communicating with the other person in front of us, not the person at the other end of a cell phone.

So I'm not saying that we need to share everything with everyone because, you know, we don't want to share everything at work and I'm going to talk about that next.

But we do want to remember that everyone is human and doesn't like to be ignored.
So, check your phone, conversation is definitely impersonal.

In an interview or anything, you want to make sure that phone is off and you are not checking it during any sort of first impression, interview situation.

The next thing we want to talk about is practicing self-disclosure.

Creating a moment that matters, creating a supportive climate and everything, well, that can easily go downhill if you self-disclose too much.

So, basically the basic rules include, you should not self-disclose much about your life outside of work to those at work.

The basics are okay, things like number of kids, their ages, hobbies that you like to do, but you want to try to keep your disclosure to appropriate work-related items.

Then the second kind of rule is, only disclose if the other person is reciprocating in that disclosure. So if you disclose something and they do
not disclose back, that's a sign to you
that you shouldn't continue to disclose
anything.

That, you know, either they're not
comfortable or maybe you've gone too
far.

So, if you stop there, it's a good sign
that they are not reciprocating.

The third one is, you want to move to
deeper levels of disclosure gradually.

Once again, you don't want to go too
deep.

But if you are going to disclose a
little bit more, you don't want to do it
all in one, you know, setting.

You want to do a little bit at a time as
you're getting to know a little bit more
about the other person as well.

And, finally, in terms of
self-disclosure, don't gossip about
other people's self-disclosure.

That's definitely a no-no.

You don't want to be seen as a gossip at
the workplace.
That could come back to haunt you. Another issue in terms of creating moments that matter is being a know it all versus just showing that you are competent. We don't want to be a know it all. And I've already talked a little bit about, you know, allowing for other points of view. So you can show that you're competent in something, certainly, but you don't want to go in and say, you know, I know the best way, it's my way or the highway, because then you'll be seen as inflexible. And, actually, next to being a good communicator, one of the high things that employers are looking for in new employees is someone who is flexible in, you know, their ability to adapt to change and such. So, if you're going in and saying that you're a know it all, that's going to say to them that you're not flexible.
And, finally, the last thing that I want to talk about is being diplomatic.

We always want to be as diplomatic as possible.

This demonstrates that you're confident enough in your work to not call others out.

If something happened and someone else is to be blame, if it's not an earth-shattering issue, it's not really going to affect your reputation, just accept any criticism and move on.

Playing the blame game can come back to haunt you.

So save it only for those moments that really really matter.

So basically know when to let it go and save those moments for when it really matters because you don't want to be known as someone who's constantly complaining, constantly blaming other people.

So, I want to thank all of you for listening to my part, and now I know we're going to turn to Dr. Walsh,
who's going to discuss strategies for your written electronic communication.

Lisa: Great, thanks so much,

Dr. Tucker.

So let me introduce Dr. Laurel Walsh.

In her current role, Laurel is the general education coordinator for the college of undergraduate studies.

After obtaining her M.F.A. in writing, she taught developmental composition at the community college level where she sought to instill in struggling students a love of words.

As a professional communication consultant, she's had the opportunity to work with adults on workplace communication best practices in numerous settings, including our own office right here in the Minneapolis area.

She presented some of this material to staff a couple weeks ago, and we found it very helpful and entertaining and that's why we -- one of the reasons again that we decided to offer this
webinar.

Laurel has published articles on e-communication and cyber courtesy issues.

So, with that, I'm going to hand it off to Dr. Walsh.

>> Laurel: Thank you, Lisa and thank you, Diana.

This is a thrill to be able to work with all of you today.

I think we've all been on the receiving end of a communication that was upsetting or hurtful or confusing, and we know that for most of us, in our jobs, that we are looking through e-mail on a daily basis, we're sending e-mails, we're, you know, producing tweets or other forms of written communication, and, you know, we're also, as students here at Walden, communicating with each other in discussion boards and other academic interactions in writing.

And, so, one of the things I wanted to kind of start with is, we have a set amount of time and we're all very busy.
And we are all always looking at competing obligations during any time that we've set aside. And we want to make the most of every single written message that we read and respond to. And, so, we need to know, what makes a message effective? When you get an e-mail and you think immediately, I want to reply, I know exactly what I need to do here, that's a very gratifying exchange. So, what makes a message effective? And when you're thinking in a communication environment, in any work setting, you're looking at the intersection between your audience being very aware of who this message is going to, the purpose, what is my intention, and tone. When we can't hold eye contact, some of the things that Dr. Tucker was explaining about reading body language, when that's absent, we read tone into
So we're going to talk about how to make sure that your communication has the appropriate professional tone.

And I'm going to say that excellence starts at the sentence level and that every word counts, especially in a short message like an e-mail.

So you want to make every single word vital, important and interesting.

And, so, that keeping it simple, not only are you keeping it simple, but you're making every word matter.

And, so, it has a job, it has a reason for being included.

We don't want to waste anybody's time with our communication.

In writing.

And I put the top of this slide, busy is not the new happy.

I find I talk to a lot of my students,

I'll be saying to my students, how is everything, oh, I'm just so busy.

I hear it from my friends, my pals who you say, hey, you want to do something,
I'm just so busy, I can't.

They're somehow along the line, being busy, being super super busy has come to be seen as a value, it's a positive thing.

And I think we really have to stop glorifying the idea of this bustling, busy, constantly busy.

It's not that I'm saying you aren't busy or I'm not busy because I certainly feel very busy but not to glorify that, not to glorify that, I'm so busy, I'm so busy, I'm so busy, that being a real quality thing.

In a work environment, busy is not the same as productive.

When I was a waitress, and I waited tables, the first lesson a seasoned waitress taught me was, when you get to the table, slow down. Do not appear to be in a rush. It doesn't matter if the kitchen's on fire.

All the food is being assembly line
thrown on the -- you need to act at that
table as if you have all the time in the
world.

And I'm going to argue that for really
good communications, those e-mails that
really matter and you know they're
important, do not think your busy
bustling normal, get this off my plate
self, slow down, take the time, and be
very mindful.

The trick to professional writing,
really, is that there's a lot of
unwritten rules.

And nobody gives -- you know, you get
your first day, you get your H.R. pack,
you get all of the information you need
to sign up for direct deposit, but
nobody says, hey, by the way, in our
work culture, we have some really clear
delineations on how we like to
communicate in e-mail.

I've never had that happen in any job.

So, because they're not on a wall,
they're not an display, they're not in a
list, you're not going to be given them,
we want to be very mindful that these
unwritten rules have an impact on how we
communicate.

I'm going to share some of these with
you.

As an online college professor in adult
education, I interact with other adults
from the moment I get up until I go to
bed, in discussion boards in my
classroom and in my professional life.
And one of the things that's really
important to remember is that especially
when we're communicating with other
students and other faculty, learning is
emotional.

We have emotional reactions to the
things that we are discovering.
We have emotional reactions when we're
having our work assessed and we're
getting feedback.
So just making sure that you understand
that when you write your thoughts down,
you're kind of all of a sudden
vulnerable in a way when you just tuck
them in your head, nobody can touch
them.

So even if it's just an e-mail, when you
write something, you put your ideas into
writing, it can be misconstrued and seen
in a way that you didn't intend.

Again, tone is inferred.

I can read a sentence that says, good
job, and I might hear it in that lovely
voice, good job.

But somebody else, who maybe didn't feel
they did a great performance on this
would see good job and maybe they'd read
it like good job --

[ negative tone of voice ]

So tone is inferred and some of it's in
our own mind but also be mindful that
without eye contact, there are
opportunities for civility to erode.

So, of course, this is my unicorn bullet
point at the bottom here, because I know
it's so hard to do, it's almost as rare
as an actual unicorn, but attempt to
believe and attempt to assume good and
constructive intentions on the behalf of
others.

So when you're looking for tone or you feel like there's tone in something, if you can withhold judgment and read the words for what they are, you will be able to decrease those emotional reactions that some of us get to communication that we feel doesn't have the right tone.

So just try to assume the best and if you hear yourself putting tone on to something in your mind, make sure you kind of pull back and think about that fact.

Is there tone or am I inferring it?

And there's a big difference.

So, in an e-mail, we have about a paragraph to persuade our recipient to act on our behalf.

And, so, I want you to think of all your words as like little coins.

Spend your word bank very wisely because once you send an e-mail, it's forever.

Everything's changed in the world of
e-communication and the world of work in the past 20 years.

Back in the day there were memos, you'd have hard copies, and those are the things that would be collected.

In today's environment, anything that you send in an e-mail is going to leave an electronic trail.

So each e-mail you send, be really comfortable if you are ever to have to read it out loud to somebody because it's going to nowhere.

It's here forever.

It leaves a snail trail across your hard drive and it's easily extracted later.

So make sure you spell check your e-mail before you send it.

If you're worried about your own tone, if you've had emotional reaction and you're trying to compose an e-mail and you're a little concerned, make sure that you read it out loud.

And then just start to develop some really good e-mail habits.

Some of us, in my office, we joke, if
we're gone from work a couple days, you'll have an e-mail avalanche, and, so, how do we deal with this barrage of information and be mindful every single time, it's a real trick, but if you have some of the good e-mail habits, you'll find that those help.

Make a meal of it.

This is a blueprint for a fabulous e-mail each and every time.

You send one.

And, so, I'm going to say this, you know, we'll have this -- the slides will be sent out later.

But basically the meal plan, it's how we encourage students to organize paragraphs, but for e-mails, it's really a handy way to compartmentalize your main point.

What's the main point I'm sending the e-mail, it should appear in the subject line.

I should not have to go through my e-mail and search for forward RE RE RE
something because your main point, your subject line should be the direct arrow to what you want me to do.

Now, you have something you'd like me to do, the next part is, give me some evidence for why this is a good idea.

If I'm asking somebody to join a committee or I'm asking someone to write a letter of recommendation, remind this person of the, you know, you know, using a quote or using some statistics or using any form of evidence that says, hey, this is what I need you to do, here's some evidence about why this would be a good thing to do.

Use analysis to sort of persuade, in the analysis portion, you'll say this issue is affecting X number of our students, or this issue has affected 14 different people in our work group, and say, you know, this needs to be done, we need something done here, and then your very final words should give exact next steps to the reader and that's really important.
I think I probably receive almost 30% of my -- the e-mails that come to me and they lack that next step.

Why did you send this note to me?
Why am I receiving this e-mail?
What can I do?

You need to be able to let your reader know, this is what I need from you, and it should be very vivid.

And if you follow this blueprint, you'll always have all the necessary ingredients to make a really solid e-mail.

Caps locks.

I teach the first-term course, so some of my students are very -- not allergic to technology, but nervous around technology.

They know there's some rules, they're not sure what they are.

I just want to very strongly encourage you not to use caps locks.

Sometimes people think, oh, it's easier to read.
I've had students post in discussion boards all in caps.

In e-communication that's perceived as yelling.

Even if you just caps locks one word, the reader is going to hear it in almost a louder tone.

So just be very mindful, don't use caps locks even for visibility reasons, it really does -- it seems like there's some yelling.

So, caps locks is not our friend.

We are not great at e-mail as a society.

So do not feel bad if you think, oh, man, I often forget to use a good subject line.

Geez, I often say, hey, there, in my subject, I'm just trying to be friendly.

Don't feel bad if bits of this e-communication are surprising to you because it's not automatic.

We don't all come in to understanding the little unwritten rules right away.

But it's something you can practice.

Using that organizational frame, making
sure to use the active voice, cutting out any fluffy extra words that are not essential to your message, making sure your statements are positive, affirming, Dr. Tucker was speaking about, you know, making sure that you don't put -- you know, really, avoid a lot of the negative issues that you could say, avoid saying things like don't, putting things in a positive form allows your reader to know, this is what they need from me, this is how I can help.

Being definite.

Being specific.

Being concrete.

Sometimes we want to put some flufferry in there and some added material to kind of soften things and that's fine.

Occasionally you do want to make the message a little bit lighter and a little bit more gentle.

But making sure you're as explicit as possible is always going to be wonderful.
And then pause before you post.

This goes back to the glorification of busy.

Just pause.

Before you post your discussion board, just give yourself a second.

If I have a really important e-mail,

I'll even walk away from my computer,

I'll go get something in another room, just to make myself physically leave that space, because just giving yourself a teeny break from it, when you come back, you'll have fresh eyes.

It is one of the most important and least-used part of our e-mail is the drafts.

You should encourage yourself to use and save documents or save drafts of an e-mail before you send one, especially if it's not an urgent issue and especially if it's important.

Write it out, write all your thoughts out, get it out there and then save it and return to it when you're having a really happy, you know, excited moment
that you think, this is the time I can make this perfect.

Having a rough draft is really and actually a very good best practice.

So this brings us to the end of our presentation.

And I would love to invite, I mean, Dr. Tucker, I know you're still on here, Lisa, would you like to let us know if there's been some coming in? I don't know, probably might even have some questions already.

Lisa: Actually, I'm going to pose one.

I'm going to go to Dr. Tucker with this.

Here's my question.

I found it really interesting what you said about proper self-disclosure in the workplace, and you were stating that, you know, it's okay to find out, you know, if someone has a family, how many kids they have and things like that. But how do you really, I guess, delve into that and when is it appropriate to
do so and when is it not appropriate?
I'll just say, you know, I go in to our lunchroom and I put my lunch in the fridge, you know, I'm pleasant, I smile, I say hi to people, but unless I have a reason that I'm working with them on a project, I don't know if I'd ever really get to the point of knowing how many kids they have and their ages and all that.
So, I'm just -- I'm not sure if that goes to personality type or I just was wondering if you could explore that a little bit further with us.

>> Diana: Sure, yes, certainly it would go to personality type.
And that's something else you need to read in people's nonverbals, if they're not interested in sharing that kind of thing.
And certainly you're not going to necessarily ask just out of the blue, hey, how many kids do you have?
Lisa: Exactly, right.
If it doesn't come up, you never get
there.

>> Diana: Right, right.

But if it's something like if you're
sitting around in a meeting room and a
meeting hasn't started but there are
some people in there who, you know, you
know, and it just kind of feels weird
just sitting there and not talking, you
might just say something, like, hey, how
was your weekend, and then if they say
something like, oh, you know, we took
our kids to the zoo, you say, oh, how
many kids do you have.
You know, so you allow for that kind of
small talk to happen before you go
straight and go, how many kids do you
have?
Lisa: Right, right, right.

>> Diana: and they may not have kids or
that could be a sore subject if they've
been trying so you do want to be aware
of just asking people about kids or
family or if they're married or anything
like that.
Lisa: Right.

>> Diana: But you can allow for that kind of small talk to occur if it goes there naturally.

It's perfectly fine to ask those kinds of questions as long as the conversation is going there.

Lisa: Got it.

Okay.

Here's a tough one.

How do you communicate with a micromanager effectively?

>> Diana: Well, I think -- I mean, it's going to be different for an e-mail versus face-to-face communication and you might find that micromanagers work better with e-mail because if they're a micromanager, they might be someone who, you know, is just constantly in your business and such, so for you to be able to kind of step back, create that e-mail, and make sure, following everything that Laurel has said in terms of, you know, making sure you're not being too emotional, things like that.
I would say, I mean, if you were trying
to get someone to back off in terms of
the micromanaging, I would say that
showing your competence in something is
going to be essential there.
So figuring out how you can communicate
and demonstrate your own competence in
any sort of project or any -- anything
that needs to be performed will
hopefully communicate to them that you
know what you're doing.
I also think that micromanagers enjoy
being asked about things and, so, if you
start to ask them questions or go to
them for something, you know, that you
don't really need help with and, you
know, just allowing them to be a part of
something and then they start to get to
know you better and then they start to
see that you are competent at things and
if you stop asking, they'll figure it's
because they know you well enough,
they'll figure, oh, well, they know
because they're not asking me anymore.
So those are just a few things, but it's going to be different with every person and every person has a different personality, as I was saying, so you just have to really get to know how that person works, what they're going to respond to the best.

Lisa: Great.

>> Laurel, I'll throw this one to you.

This question is, it's standard that you should use or only write, like with a pen in blue or black ink, but in an e-mail is it okay to use a colorful font?

>> Laurel: I would say unless it's part of -- you know, I just got an e-mail yesterday from a woman who works in the creative -- an agency that is about creative marketing.

And her font was -- almost looked like cursive and it was a creamy blue and because she works in a creative agency, it kind of showed her artistic flair.

I would argue in your day-to-day professional, like at Walden, I would
not encourage, you know, I have very few colleagues who use anything besides the normal standard font in blue or black. The environment kind of dictates those sort of unwritten rules.

If you get a note from your boss and it has balloons floating in the background and, you know, all this, then that's the kind of environment where people are being encouraged to have a signature look to their e-mails.

For the most part, I find anything besides just the standard boring template a little bit distracting.

But that's just me.

So, that's more of a personal preference.

But I would look to the clues of the e-mails you receive from others you work with.

In your own personal e-mail, have fun, do what you want, again, thinking about audience, if this is a note to your cousin, who cares, awesome, balloons
floating or fun fonts are wonderful.

If it’s an e-mail for a perspective client, you’re going to want to tailor that and make it as clean and neat and not distracting visually in any way.

So, again, audience, purpose, tone is going to dictate some of those, but office culture is a huge predictor as well.

Lisa: Okay.

I think that’s it for the questions so I think we’re ready to wrap up.

So thank you, Dr. Tucker and Dr. Walsh.

That was fantastic.

>> Thank you for having us.

>> Thank you all.

>> Yeah, thanks for joining us today.

Lisa: Excellent, great strategies today, great tips.

Just a reminder, if you want to connect with career services, you can schedule an appointment with us through our website.

We encourage you to join our career
services center linkedin group, follow
us on twitter, we have a new Facebook
community, we're up to 140 likes now, so
we're real excited about that, and we
continue to share student success
stories on our blog, so if you have a
success story to share, please reach out
to us and everything's accessible
through our website, including the
optimal resume system where I mentioned
earlier you can record yourself doing
practice interview questions.

So, with that, I'm going to leave you
with a final thought that Dr. Tucker found that I really liked, the choice of
what words we may use determines what
dreams we are able to express.
Gloria Steinem.

So thank you so much for participating.
And have a great rest of the day.

>> and a special thank you for all of
those of you expecting the certificate
of completion.
I did see a few questions come in for
that, and we will be sending that out
via your Walden university e-mail
address.
So expect that e-mail within the next 24
hours.
And this will -- is being recorded for
those of you asking for the slides and
it will be on our website within the
next week along with the powerpoint so
thank you very much.