

Getting started with communication in RSS

Lab briefings, technical communication, and team skills

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Purpose of lab briefings in RSS

- Keep team on track for success with robot knowledge for project
- Demonstrate understanding of lab work to the professors
- Opportunity to ask questions and get answers
- Professional practice
 - you will brief many times in your professional life

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Criteria for successful briefings

- Prepare
 - Engineers go to meetings or briefings with a purpose. They prepare to achieve that purpose.
- Focus
 - Briefings are usually focused on status of recent work.
- Summarize tasks accomplished.
 - Provide some evidence or analysis or data.
 - Use graphics intelligently to show information.

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Criteria for briefings con't. .

- Present problems to be solved or questions to be answered.
- Maintain a constructive attitude.
 - Be open. Don't be defensive.
 - Questions often are an important learning opportunity.
 - Questions or problems lead to "next steps" or "work to be done."

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The rubric for briefings

- Focused on relevant work?
- Organized?
- Appropriate level of detail to allow faculty to assess the work?
 - Appropriate graphics?
- Present problems to be solved and work to answer questions?
- Do all members of the team share in the briefing?

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Tips for even better briefings

- Put slide numbers on your slides. This helps us comment.
- Bring a PPT print out so that you have an idea of what your faculty is seeing.
- Use simple, informative graphics.
 - No humorous or decorative ones
 - Make font and font size easily readable.

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Questions about lab briefings?

- Contribution from faculty? TAs?

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Technical communication in general

- Criteria for successful briefings are criteria for technical communication
 - BTW, engineers spend 20% of their time writing and about 40% in oral presentation
- Technical communication is the language of your discipline and of your career, and that's why we have CI integrated into courses.

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Characteristics of technical communication

- Contains specific, substantive information
- Has a practical purpose
- Has more than one reader/listener
 - Concept of audience is important
- Uses formats or types of communication specific to your discipline or workplace
- Uses graphics and visual organization
- Often written or presented collaboratively
- Influenced by the context of the audience and of the writer or speaker
- Ethical

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Audience: your readers and listeners

- Your audience (readers and listeners) have a purpose. They may stop reading or listening if they don't see or hear what information they need.
 - Implications for focus and organization
- Readers and listeners develop understanding as they read or listen.
 - Implications for pace and sequence of information
- Readers and listeners are influenced by their context.

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How can you plan for that audience?

- Highlight the information your reader/listener wants to know.
- Put main points first, not last.
- Eliminate unnecessary information.
- Use a clear, concise style.
- Choose the appropriate informational graphics.
 - always label and explain the graphic.

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Questions about technical communication?

- Professors' comments?

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Relevant team skills

- Project management
- Decision-making
- Conflict management and resolution
- Interpersonal communication
- We are all familiar with these concepts, but it's knowing when and how to use them that is challenging.

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Project management skills

- Task identification
- Work division
 - Work convergence
- Time estimation, planning and scheduling
- Communication between teammates
 - Meetings
- Documentation

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Decision-making

- Decision-making styles
 - Consensus?
 - Forcing others to go along with your choice?
 - Based on evidence?
 - The majority rules?
 - Letting one person--the "expert"-- decide?
 - NOT making a decision?

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Conflict management

- Ignoring it and hoping it will go away?
- Becoming confrontational?
- Being passive-aggressive?
- Putting the success of the project first and working toward compromise?
- Seeking support from mentors and faculty?

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Interpersonal skills

- Listening actively.
- Learning something about your peers as people. Develop a relationship
- Being respectful of the ideas and work of others.
 - In speech, in behavior and whether they are present or not
- Being honest and responsible and reliable.

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