Assumption Exercise for a Business Communication Course

This lesson plan is designed for a 50-75 minute one-shot session.

Learning Objectives

During this workshop, participants will:

- Articulate the capabilities and constraints of information developed through various creation processes.
- Monitor gathered information and assess for gaps or weaknesses.
- Give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and citation.
- Draw reasonable conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of information.

Agenda

- (Introduction) Quick video
- Tell you about myself
- Explore Google
- Examine Library resources ($$)
- (Conclusion) Discuss advanced Google search techniques, and the value of professional associations for industry research.

Introduction & Monologue

Show video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynhyPA0B8ak&t=1s

Invite participants to respond: "This video expresses this better than I

can, but can someone tell me in their own words, what's an assumption?"

Define assumption: "An idea that is accepted as true based on logic or reason but without proof or verification. An unexamined belief."

Continue to instruct: "Assumptions aren't always bad. Our existence depends on a certain set of assumptions and we make them every day. Some research suggests we intuitively make hundreds of assumptions every day."

Provide assumption examples:

SAFE assumption – The ground will be there when I take a step. When I go to sleep at night, I will wake up the next day.

RISKY assumption – Other people think the same way I do. Current success or ability (as marked by a resume) is a good predictor of future success.

Continue to instruct: "If you're being honest, some assumptions require rethinking. In our daily lives, too many of us favor the comfort of conviction over the discomfort of doubt. We listen to opinions that make us feel good, instead of ideas that make us think hard."

Continue: "A critical thinker is a person who is attentive to their assumptions. They recognize when their assumptions may be misguided or incorrect."

Provide the following example: "When I say the word Library, I'm confident that the image of a book or a stack of books probably appears in your mind. Many of you probably assume that I'm talking about the quiet building on campus. I'm sure everyone in this room can give me at least one assumption about the demeanor of a Librarian…"

Consider offering any of the following: A librarian speaks softly, wears glasses, likes books, is female.

Continue: "You might have even made up your mind about the work

that a librarian does. I don't blame you; these ideas are perpetuated in popular culture. And, while it's true that the traditional function of a library has been dominated by books—library work has changed dramatically since the 80's and even more with every decade since."

Continue monologue: "I am a Librarian. I am the [   ] librarian and I can tell you that I don't sit at a desk and check books out. I don't yell at people to be quiet either."

Consider offering any of the following: "I don't fit the stereotype outside of work [Insert examples]. I don't do any knitting, but I do sometimes wear glasses. I also have a cool cat named [   ]."

Continue monologue: "My point is that times have changed, and so has my profession."

Continue: "My professional expertise is deeply rooted in [Insert examples]. I have a Master's Degree and a record of helping students, faculty, even consultants and entrepreneurs find data and information on companies, consumers, and much more. In business they sometimes call this work competitive intelligence research."

Consider offering up 3-5 examples of reference transactions: "I'm doing a market feasibility study of gluten-free foods in India, can you help me? What's the size of the U.S. Property Management Market?"

Continue: "This course is about effective communication in business. Your assignment involves conducting career conversations, sometimes referred to as informational interviewing. Today, I'm here to help you prepare for those conversations.

Part of the process of preparing for career conversations involves researching the profession and the industry. So we're going to do an activity. Don't worry, it's not graded."

Assumption Exercise

Separate the room into 4 groups: (1) Industry Outlook, (2) Jobs & skills, (3) Salaries, (4) Work Environment.

Instruct the groups: "Pick one profession as a group. Pick one that is interesting to the whole group."

Having prepared the Padlet link in advance, write the Padlet link on the board. (Note: Omit the Google and Library resource guide prompts until live instruction. Login to Padlet and type these prompts for groups in real time) Ex. https://scu.wiki/busn179

Instruct the groups: "Answer the first two questions on the Padlet. We'll spend just a few minutes on this."

Question 1 – "What profession/career did your group choose? Choose one that interests the group and type it next to "Add Comment.""

Question 2 for Industry Outlook – "Make assumption(s) about the job market/industry outlook. Type your assumptions in this box."

Question 2 for Jobs & Skills – "Make assumption(s) about the people who do this kind of work. What kinds of knowledge, skills, or abilities are required to be successful? Type your assumptions in this box."

Question 2 for Salaries – "Make assumption(s) about the yearly salary for someone working in this industry. Is it performance based? Are there other benefits? Type your assumptions in this box."

Question 2 for Work Environment – "Make assumption(s) about the work environment. What are the pros/cons of working in this industry? Type your assumptions in this box."

Allow 4-5 minutes to pass or until completion.

In real time, add a box to each column on the Padlet: "Using Google,
pick one assumption from your list to prove or disprove. Add
Google links to this box as comments."

Allow 4-5 minutes to pass or until completion.

*Regroup to explain the resource guide and its intent. Write a link to the
LibGuide/course guide or another important link on the board. Ex.*
https://scu.wiki/business

Explain: "Each group has a box on the course guide that is associated
with their group (Ex. Industry Outlook)."

In real time, add a box to each column on the Padlet: "Using the Library
resource guide, prove or disprove the same assumption. Add links
to this box as comments.

Allow 5-6 minutes to pass or until completion.

If time allows, consider adding a box to each column on the Padlet:
"Provide 2 citations in correct APA format for sources that proved
or disproved your assumption."

*If time allows, require the groups to present their findings. Consider
offering the following criteria:*

Introduction – Introduce all group members; Introduce the Industry

Body – Provide 1 hook or interesting fact; Present the group's
assumption; Present the facts: Was the group able to prove or
disprove the assumption?

Conclusion – Present a takeaway: Was this exercise helpful? How
did the Library resources compare to Google?

Conclusion & Discussion

Offer the following: "This exercise isn't perfect; for niche professions,

you'll often have to get very creative in your search strategies."

Continue: "The point of the exercise was two-fold: To demonstrate some valuable research strategies to help you prepare for your career conversations and to illustrate the importance of thinking carefully about your assumptions."

Invite participants to respond: "How many of you have heard the name Adam Grant before?"

Continue: "Adam Grant is an organizational psychologist and a professor in the Wharton School of Business. He's also the author of a book titled Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know. Adam and others like Marc Andreesen have argued that the most successful people maintain strong opinions that are loosely held. Their opinions that are firm, yet flexible."

Continue: "What does this mean in practice? It means developing an awareness of the importance of assessing all content with a skeptical stance and with a self-awareness of your own biases and assumptions."

Offer an assumption of your own: "Ex. Due to the Pandemic, one of the fastest growing professions in the next 10 years will be Social Work."

Conduct a Google search based on your assumption, modeling best practices: Ex. allintext:fast grow profession

Add site:gov (Limit by "Past Year")

Consider the following dialogue or any of your own: "How do I grant authority? Whose opinion matters? It's important to iterate search strategies so that we don't get caught in a filter bubble of our own worldviews and ideas. We can't get caught assuming that Google is the only tool we'll ever need."

Invite participants to respond: "How many of you know what a trade association is?"

Define trade association: "An organization of businesses that operate within a specific industry.

Show industry research guide or relevant trade publications links or pages. Ex. https://libguides.scu.edu/industryresearch/trades

Define trade publication: "An information source that is intended for a very specific audience. It has content that's tailored to that audience. Professionals, even whole companies often subscribe to trade publications in order to gather valuable information that will help them achieve something in their industry.

Search IBISWorld database, locate Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Manufacturing in US, scroll to "Additional Resources" and click on Hybrid Car News

Continue: "Autoguide provides the latest car comparisons and breaking auto industry news. Many of the large automotive OEMs subscribe to these resources (including Jalopnik, Motor Trend, JD Power) to understand consumer behavior. You can use trade publications in the industry you're investigating to better prepare for interviews and career conversations."

If time allows: Show Statista or another 'easy' industry research database, as well as the Book of Lists.