

Syllabus

Cause Consulting: Strategic Communications Planning MPPR-900

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Term: Fall 2009

Course Description

The Cause Consulting class is a signature program in the Masters of Professional Studies in Public Relations and Corporate Communications. This two semester course offers a cohort of students an applied learning experience working to develop and implement communications plans for nonprofit organizations and an opportunity to explore their leadership potential to create positive social and economic impact throughout their careers. The goal of the course is for the students to learn how to develop a strategic communications plan while also gaining the knowledge and skills that are necessary to work as an account manager and consultant for clients. Students who complete both semesters are recognized as Cause Consultants. The first semester is grounded in a curriculum that teaches students each step of developing a strategic communications plan. As students develop communications plans for their nonprofit clients, they also will focus on teamwork, analytical and strategic thinking skills and managing client relationships. The semester culminates in the delivery and presentation of strategic communications plans to each of the clients.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this class you should be able to:

- Successfully develop a strategic communications plan
- Understand the unique qualities of the nonprofit sector and how communications strategies can help create positive social change
- Think critically and analytically about communications challenges facing nonprofit organizations

You also should have developed the necessary skills to manage a client relationship by learning how to analyze a situation, to listen as well as lead, and to effectively and persuasively present your ideas.

Teaching Philosophy

This course is based on real time application of the curriculum through active participation by all members of the group. To achieve this goal, it is critical that you come to class prepared for this requirement. The curriculum supports the client projects you are working on. This means that beyond completing the readings you will be asked to apply and demonstrate what you have learned in all aspects of our work together

including class discussions, client relationships and teamwork.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. If circumstances preclude you from attending a class or making it to class before it begins, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor via phone or e-mail prior to the start of class. Missing two or more classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level. Special circumstances should be discussed with the instructor ahead of time.

Client Time Commitment

The MPS program specifies that classes are two hours in length. Outside of class time students are expected to spend six hours a week studying for class. Due to the applied nature of this class, we expect that you will spend those six hours dividing your time between the readings, other homework assignments, and client work.

You should discuss with your client early on how they want to be in touch with you. Some clients will be open to receiving regular calls/emails. Others may just want you to touch base with them during scheduled. We encourage you to discuss this with them during your first meeting. If you encounter any challenges working with your client please let your instructor know. She is here to help you work with your clients.

Teamwork

An important component of this class is to learn how to work within a team to deliver results to your client. Each student is expected to participate fully within his or her team by contributing ideas, writing, technical skills (e.g. PowerPoint, design) and by sharing leadership. It is important that early on you share contact information and schedules with your teammates. It is up to you to determine the best times to work together on the project outside of class. Students will be assessing team member participation and effort at the end of the semester. Your teammate's assessment of you can impact your grade. If there are any problems that arise within your team please see the instructor immediately.

Work Submitted and Presented

You are expected to submit high quality work on time. All typed text should be in 12-point font, double spaced, and referenced according to the APA Publication Manual's style rules and guidelines. Please include your name, the assignment title, the date, and page numbers on all written submissions. When using PowerPoint please make sure that the text on the slides is legible and easy to understand. Please bring a hard copy of your assignment to class the night it is due and also email a copy to the instructor prior to the start of class.

Honor System

Students are expected to abide by the Georgetown University Honor System. If you have not already done so, please familiarize yourself with the material and information posted on the Honor Council's website:

<http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/hc/index.html>

Georgetown University Honor Pledge

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: to be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct

myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Academic Resource Center

If you believe you have a disability, you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

The Writing Center

Clear, concise writing is essential to effective communications and to serving clients well. Students experiencing difficulty in their writing should visit the Georgetown University Writing Center (writingcenter.georgetown.edu), a free writing resource open to all Georgetown students. Graduate and undergraduate students trained in teaching writing are available to assist you at any stage of your writing process. The Writing Center offers assistance in topic development, general organization, guidance on paper revisions, and specific or recurring structural problems with writing. Consultants are not trained to proofread papers for grammar or spelling errors, but rather to help individuals improve their own critical thinking, revision, and editing skills.

Course Overview

The curriculum of this class has been developed to support you through the process of developing a strategic communications plan for the clients. Teams will be required to present findings on a regular basis as well as submit reports to the client and class. These reports allow clients to provide progressive guidance and feedback throughout the development of the strategic communications plans and allows you to share strategies, challenges, and successes with classmates working on other projects.

- **Weeks 1-3**

During the first weeks of the class, students will become immersed in the strategic communications planning process, the nonprofit sector, and the art of consulting. Guest speakers will help introduce you to the nonprofit sector in Washington DC and to learning how to be an effective consultant in this environment. You will be assigned a client, and your partner and you will start to become familiar with the organization and its communications challenges. At the same time you will start to learn how to begin building a communications plan based on specific steps described in Wilson and Ogden.

- **Weeks 4-8**

You will meet with your clients and obtain as much information as possible to fully understand the organization and the context in which it operates. You will prepare a report and give an informal presentation to the class detailing the background, situation analysis, core opportunity area, and recommended communications goals and objectives for your client. As part of your regular conversations with your client, you will confirm that your findings and recommendations for Steps 1-4 are appropriate. You begin to address Steps 5-6 in the communications matrix: identifying key publics and developing messages, strategies and tactics, and these will be incorporated into your strategic communications plans.

- **Weeks 9-14**

Students will complete their book reflections on *Charismatic Organizations* and participate in a discussion with one of the book's authors. Students will also learn the fundamentals and more advanced techniques for making effective presentations. Teams will submit draft and final written strategic communications plans and give a presentation of their plans to all clients and students.

Grading

Class discussion and participation: 20 points.

Class participation is expected. Every student will start the class with 20 points. Rather than gaining points for participating, students will lose points for not participating over the course of the semester. Points will not be calculated on a weekly basis but observations will be noted each week. Active participation should reflect a student's ability to listen to class discussion and proactively contribute to the class whether it's through a discussion point, tying in *Charismatic Organizations* and other readings, or by sharing a relevant article/website with the professor and class.

Wiki contributions: 10 points

Contributions to the Cause Consulting Wiki are expected. Every student will start the class with 10 points. Rather than gaining points for contributing to the Wiki, students will lose points for not contributing on a regular basis. Contributions will be judged on quality, not quantity or length, and the extent to which they will be useful to fellow cause consultants. Contributions could include a news article or case study that is relevant to what is being learned and discussed in class.

Book Reflection: 50 points

Students will explore the relationship between nonprofit organizations and strategic communications by reading and reflecting on *The Charismatic Organization: 8 Ways to grow a Nonprofit that Builds Buzz, Delights Donors and Energizes Employees* by Shirley Sagawa and Deborah Jospin. The students should read the book with an eye toward the similarities and differences between the Wilson and Ogden strategic communications planning model and the characteristics of charismatic organizations, as defined by the authors. The intent of the assignment is to reflect on what you are learning about strategic communications, nonprofit organizations and how communications can be closely linked to fulfilling the mission of nonprofits and therefore creating social change. Questions you might want to address in your paper (8 pages minimum, not including a cover page or references) include:

- How are strategic communications practices tied to building social networks/charismatic organizations?
- How does the book help make the argument that strategic communications is essential for building social networks and creating social change?
- How are or how might the authors' ideas be helpful to your clients, or are your clients already practicing some of the 8 ways to build charismatic organizations?

Steps 1-4 Report: 50 points

This report will present the result of your team's effort to carry out steps 1-4 in the communications planning matrix presented by Wilson and Ogden in the assigned textbook. The report should include the following

about your client: background, situation analysis, core problem/opportunity areas and your team's recommended communications goal and objectives. The report should be double-spaced, appropriately referenced, in 12 point font, with page numbers. Five pages minimum.

Step 5 Report: 30 points

This report will present your team's effort to carry out step 5 in the communications planning matrix. The report should include your team's description of your client's key publics and recommendations for core message and subset messages. The report should be double-spaced, appropriately referenced, in 12 point font with page numbers. Three pages minimum.

Steps 1-6 Presentation: 15 points for the team; 10 points for the individual

Your team will provide the class with a 10 minute PowerPoint presentation highlighting key findings and recommendations in your Step 1-4 and Step 5 reports, as well as your team's recommendations for Step 6 (strategies and tactics). The team will be graded on ability to make the subject matter compelling, the clarity and structure of the presentation, and effective use of visuals. Individuals will be graded on enthusiasm, interaction with the audience, and other skills associated with being an effective presenter.

Draft Communications Plan: 100 points

Final Communications Plan: 150 points

The draft and final communications plan should include all of the research, action planning and strategies and tactics you are suggesting for your client. You should also include a detailed implementation calendar and budget; however, those sections of the plan should be considered a proposed calendar and budget that will be refined during the second semester at the execution stage. The plans should also incorporate any feedback from the research and action planning stages which you received from your professor and client. The draft communications plan should be a complete plan with polished writing; it should be your best effort. Additionally you will be graded on the quality, effectiveness and creativity of the strategies and tactics suggested for your clients. The plans should be double-spaced, using a 12 point font and page numbers. 15 pages minimum.

Final Presentation: 10 points for the team; 15 points for the individual

You will also be required to present your final communications plan to the class and clients. The presentation should involve all members of the team, and include visuals. Teams should rehearse and time their presentations to make sure they are polished and within the permitted time frame, which will be determined closer to the end of the semester. Your presentation will be graded based on: ability to make the subject matter compelling, how clear and well-structured the presentation is, quality and effective use of visuals, enthusiasm, interaction with the audience, and other skills associated with being an effective presenter.

Team Evaluations: 10 points

You will be working in teams throughout the course of the semester. At the end of the semester you will be asked to evaluate yourself and each of your team members based on each team members overall effort.

Client performance review: 10 points

Your clients will conduct an evaluation of your team's performance during the course of the semester. Clients will evaluate teams based on their ability to effectively collaborate, communicate and respond to feedback

from the client.

Additional criteria for grading all reports and presentations will be:

Clarity/organization of material

Quality of examples, primary research and secondary research used to support plans

Creativity

Comprehensive

Application of readings and lectures to communications plans

Summary of Grades:

Team Grades

Steps 1-4 Report: 50

Step 5 Report: 30

Step 1-6 Presentation: 15

Draft Communications Plan: 100

Final Communications Plan: 150

Final Presentation: 10

Client performance review: 10

Individual Grades

Class discussion and participation: 20

Wiki Contributions: 10

Book Reflection: 50

Step 1-6 Presentation: 10

Final Presentation: 15

Team Evaluations: 10

Total points: 480

Required Textbooks:

Wilson, L., & Ogden, J.

Strategic Communications Planning

Kendall Hunt Publishing Company

2008, 5th Edition

ISBN: 978-0-7575-4887-1

Sagawa, S. and Jospin, D.

The Charismatic Organization: 8 Ways to grow a Nonprofit that Builds Buzz, Delights Donors and Energizes Employees

2008

ISBN-10: 0470195460

ISBN-13: 978-0470195468

Leet, Rebecca K.

Message Matters: Succeeding at the Crossroads of Mission and Market

2007

ISBN-13: 978-0-940069-63-3

Goodman, A.

Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes

2006

ISBN 0-9763027

Download at http://www.agoodmanonline.com/publications/how_bad_presentations_happen/index.htm

Bivins, T.

Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format

2007 (6th Edition)

McGraw Hill

Recommended textbook:

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association

ISBN-10: 1557987912

ISBN-13: 978-1557987914

Publisher: American Psychological Association (APA)

July 2001; Fifth Edition

Useful Resources:

Stanford Social Innovation Review: www.ssireview.org

Chronicle of Philanthropy: www.philanthropy.com

Social Marketing Institute: www.social-marketing.org

Changemakers: www.changemakers.org

The Cause Marketing Forum: www.causemarketingforum.com

Sharingwitness: www.sharingwitness.org

The NonProfit Times: www.nptimes.com

A great free tool to manage group work is Google Documents: <http://docs.google.com>

Proposed Schedule for the Semester:

Due to the nature of this course the schedule is subject to change.

It is critical that weekly reading be completed on time. Each week’s lesson will integrate the content from the reading; active participation in classroom discussion, including reference to the reading, is expected of every student.

Week	In Class	Readings & Assignments Due	Client Work Due
		Email resume and skills assessment to Joy no later than September 2	
Wednesday, Sept.9	Introduction to the Center for Social Impact Communication Overview of Strategic Communications Planning	Wilson & Ogden: Chapters 1-2	
Wednesday, Sept. 16	Planning Steps 1-3: Research DC Nonprofit Sector Guest speaker: Kathy Jankowski	Wilson & Ogden: Chapters 3-4 Sagawa & Jospin Chapters 1-3	Start researching your client, keeping the Matrix Steps 1-4 in mind and noting questions that arise.
Wednesday, Sept. 23	Consulting 101: Perspectives of Cause Consultants Planning Step 4: Goals and Objectives	Wilson & Ogden: Chapters 5 & 6 Sagawa & Jospin Chapters 4-6	Continue to research clients’ work, environment in which they operate Submit “first meeting” questions for client to Joy (not graded)

Wednesday, Sept. 30	Meet with clients	Sagawa & Jospin Chapter 7	Come prepared to present your qualifications to your client and to obtain as much information as possible, not only about the organization, but about the environment in which it operates and what appropriate communications goals and objectives might be.
Wednesday, Oct. 7	Planning Step 5: Key Publics and Messaging Team work on messages	Leet: Entire book	Draft Steps 1-4 Report due: Client background, situation analysis, core opportunity/problem, goals and objectives
Wednesday, Oct. 14	Informal presentations and discussions on Steps 1-4 progress and client management	Sagawa & Jospin Chapters 8-11	Conduct a follow-up meeting with your client in their office by October 14.
Wednesday, Oct. 21	Guest speaker on social media: Susan Sobel Finkelparl Tactics brainstorming	Wilson & Ogden: Chapter 7	Final Steps 1-4 Report Due + Draft Step 5 report
Wednesday, Oct. 28	Planning Matrix Step 6: Strategies and Tactics Team work on strategies and tactics	Goodman: Chapters 1-4	Book reflection due

Wednesday, Nov. 4	Discussion of <i>Charismatic Organizations</i> Guest speaker: Shirley Sagawa	Wilson & Ogden: Chapter 8-10	Final Steps 5 Report due; draft of Step 6 due
Wednesday, Nov. 11	Steps 1-6 Presentations	Goodman: Chapters 5-Appendices Wilson & Ogden: Chapter 11	Presentation of Steps 1-6 to class ; teams will seek client buy in of Steps 1-5 to client after this class and before November 18
Wednesday, Nov. 18	Presentation Training- Guest Speaker: Rohit Bhargava		You must have shared your recommendations (Steps 1-5, not Step 6) to your clients for feedback by now and forwarded the client's email of approval to Joy Draft communications plan due
Monday, Nov. 23	Team work on plans Presentation practice		Work on communications plan and presentation
Wednesday, Dec. 2	Presentation practice Class evaluation		Work on communications plan and presentation
Wednesday, Dec. 9	Final presentations to clients and class.		Final communications plan due. Final presentation to clients and class.