

MPPR-730 01 – Corporate Communications
Fall 2009
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Office Hours: Scheduled by appointment each week

Introduction

Corporate communications is more than the carefully selected words that make it into memos, newsletters, speeches and official corporate outreach activities. It's how well communications priorities integrate with business objectives. It's what managers say – and neglect to say – to their employees. It's the way leaders address rumors and speculation. And, perhaps most important, it's the vehicle that drives the way the world regards an organization.

Course Objectives

In this class, students will:

- Explore the scope of corporate communications functions and their integrated application across organizations;
- Learn to recognize the relationship between successful corporate communications practices, the ability to build strong partnerships, and the need to gain influence at all levels of the organization;
- Develop the tools needed to build an organic corporate communications practice that adapts to changes in strategy and direction; and
- Be inspired to build and maintain the corporate political capital that drives optimal corporate communications results.

Course Description

This course is designed to provide communications professionals with a deep understanding of the interplay between the many corporate communications functions and best-practice approaches to their strategic integration. We will examine how successful communicators leverage the skills of influence, persuasion and organizational awareness to establish themselves as true business partners and, ultimately, maximize their contributions to and impact on the business.

In addition to completing the assigned readings, students will survey – and challenge – a broad range of best practices as we consider case studies compiled from organizations of all types and size. Every third class will serve as a lab practical to reinforce the concepts discussed during the prior two sessions, and to give students a chance to apply relevant theories, principles and experiences to real-life scenarios. Working in small groups, the students will devise original solutions to address their assigned issues. The solutions will be submitted for comment and analysis, and some work will be discussed and presented during class time.

Upon conclusion of the course, students will have a timely, finely-tuned perspective on how to sell themselves and their know-how to senior teams by partnering with a business and its leaders to build strategies that enable and support business goals.

Joint Expectations

Each week, I will lead an informed discussion to provoke thought, build knowledge, and help you maximize your communications contributions. In order to make each class meaningful to you, be sure to attend each class and arrive before 7:45, at which time we will promptly begin. Read the assigned materials and come prepared to participate. I will ask you to work in teams at times to examine certain concepts and to give each student the opportunity to lead and study various communications roles and aspects. If you must miss a class, please give prior notice and make arrangements to make up any missed assignments. Missing more than two classes will lower your final grade by one level. If you have special considerations, let's talk about it immediately. You may contact me and expect to receive a timely response – within one business day.

Required Reading*

Critical Corporate Communications: A Best Practice Blueprint, Naomi Langford-Wood and Brian Salter, March 2003, ISBN 0470 84763 8. The eBook version is most affordable. [Click here to purchase.](#)

Influence Without Authority, Allan R. Cohen and David L. Bradford, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Revised 2005, ISBN 0-471-46330-2.

Supplemental Text

Good in a Room: How to Sell Yourself (and Your Ideas) and Win Over Any Audience, Stephanie Palmer, 2008, ISBN 978-0-385-54043-0.

Students should also follow industry news at prweek.com, and general news via a variety of sources such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *The Daily Beast* and *The Huffington Post*. You should also monitor your broadcast news outlet of choice. I will supplement weekly readings as appropriate with articles and viewpoints of manageable length from key resources will be assigned at the instructor's discretion.

Overview of Assignments & Final Project

Homework Assignments. You will have two written homework assignments this semester. For the first, you will be asked to provide an integrated communications strategy to address an issue (outlined within the syllabus). Your strategy, to be created using MS PowerPoint, should include the following:

- Situation Analysis
- Stakeholder Analysis
- Strategic Approach (Caution: Do NOT list tactics...provide a concise overview of the strategic direction that you are proposing. Consider your rationale for proposing this solution and use that as your guide to completing this portion of your strategy.)
- Objectives
- Key Messages
- Critical Success Factors
- Resource Requirements
- Measures of Success

The second homework assignment considers communications measurement and will revisit the first lab practical. Though you will be using a prior team exercise for this work, each student will work individually to complete and submit this homework assignment. See below for submission guidelines.

Lab Practicals. There will be three practicals this semester. Working in teams, students will use class time to build communications solutions to real-world issues using tools and techniques discussed during the prior two weeks. Unless otherwise indicated, the entire class will be devoted to this work, and I will spend 25-30 minutes with each group to assist as necessary and to observe. Work will be submitted on or before the due date indicated below and according to the following guidelines:

Lab 1: Your solution should be presented in PowerPoint format and include the following slide headers:

- Mission/Vision of Communications Team
- Linking Mission to Business Strategy
- Relevant Objectives (include any information you deem relevant to help you justify comms' recent work and outcomes)
- Measures of success (use actual data points to demonstrate ... not just the measurement formulas used to gauge success)

This outline serves as a baseline for this assignment. Feel free to include other relevant information to help make your case.

Lab 2: Using MS Word, you will create a 2-3 pp, 1.5-spaced crisis communications approach to address the scenario outlined in the body of the syllabus below. Use 12-pt font and AP style. Your approach will cover the following:

- Summary of issue
- Relevant stakeholders
- Resource requirements & assignments
- Proposed remedies to manage issue (be clear about how the remedies will remediate the situation)
- Messaging (by audience)
- Timelines for implementation

This outline serves as a baseline for this assignment. Feel free to include other relevant information to help make your case.

Lab 3: Regard your submitted plan as an addendum to your department's existing strategic communications plan. Using the specific assumptions that I will provide at the beginning of this class, address the situational shift, being sure to answer the following questions:

- How is each key public affected by the change of events?
- To what extent is our overall communications program affected by the changes?
- How will we deliver communications that address and manage the changes?
- How are you going to reinforce the company's key messaging, brand proposition in order to maintain and/or regain loyalty and satisfaction among the key groups?
- How will you measure your success?

Your deliverable should include slide headers similar to those outlined above for your first homework assignment. As always, students may feel free to include other relevant information to help make your case.

Final Project. Your team will be asked to create an integrated communications plan to address one of several scenarios, to be presented during the first class meeting. Each team member will take a role in delivering the presentation to a panel of guest executives, who will follow each presentation with clarifying questions for the team. Successful plans will demonstrate strong

awareness and understanding of all corporate communications principles discussed throughout this course, including presentation tips, functional knowledge, fitness of the solution for the company, and strength of pitch. I will sit in on each presentation. The panel will provide me with their views and ratings for each pitch. I will then combine our joint assessments to derive each student's project grade. If the panel fails to come to agreement on any issues, my input will be the deciding factor.

Grading Rubric

You will have the opportunity to earn a total of **1,500 points** this semester. Your final grade will comprise the following elements:

- **Class Assignments & Participation.** Assignments will typically be done in groups and will relate to the scheduled class discussion. Though you will address the scenarios in class with members of your "communications team", you will be asked to include an analysis of the week's scenario with your group's final work product. I will also expect students to share their insights with the class on a regular basis. Teams will be selected each week to present and spark discussion of their work, so it is important that each team and its members come prepared to discuss their work with the class. We will review accepted delivery formats during the first class. **Grading:** Each assignment will be worth 150 points. Your class participation will earn you up to 75 points for the semester. **Total possible points: 375**
- **Lab Deliverables.** Every third class, students will work with their assigned war teams to provide solutions to a diverse set of scenarios with present-day relevance. This work will be iterative and will apply a full range of corporate communications functions. I will observe each group during each lab activity. **Grading:** Lab deliverables will be worth 200 points each. You will have three lab deliverables during the semester for a **total of 600 possible points.**
- **Final Project.** You will spend most of the semester working on your final project, which will be worth a possible total of **375 points** toward your final grade. We will discuss the final in detail on the first day of class.
- **Teamwork.** I will observe each workgroup at various points throughout the semester. Students who enable team progress, can both lead and follow, share ideas and exhibit other basic tenets of effective group dynamics can earn up to **150 points** toward their final grade.

I will grade each piece of work for:

Mechanics of the solution – your ideas will work both in theory and in practice and show consideration for corporate culture, customs and blind spots. ***This will be 50% of your grade on each assignment.***

Originality – students should utilize this classroom as an active laboratory to explore and validate unique thoughts and solutions for managing communications. The more customized your solution, the better your grade. ***Originality comprises 10% of your grade.***

Teamwork (if applicable) – at some point, your success in a communications role will depend on your ability to work up, down, and across organizations. We'll place heavy emphasis on how well we work together, playing various roles to simulate a real-world communications environment. I

will evaluate individuals working in their assigned groups three times during the semester. Your grade in this area will reflect your ability to put forward ideas; receive and manage critiques and challenges; lead and/or drive team performance; and deliver on deadline. ***This will be 20% of your grade where applicable.***

Strength of Pitch – can you sell your plan (or get it sold on your behalf?) ***This will be 20% of your grade where applicable.***

Grading Scale

Total points: 1,500 Homework assignments (2): 150 points each Lab practicals: 200 points each Teamwork: 150 points Class participation: 75 points Final project: 375 points	A	1,425-1,500
	A-	1,349-1,424
	B+	1,273-1,348
	B	1,197-1,272
	B-	1,121-1,196
	C	1,045-1,120
	F	1,044 and below

Assignment Submission

All work will be submitted in the proper format as indicated upon assignment. I will provide templates during the first class. Due dates will generally fall at 5 p.m. on Mondays, and work will be submitted via email. You are to bring a hard copy with you when the class next meets. Due dates for all assignments are outlined clearly within this syllabus. Late submissions will jeopardize your grade. Please refer to the School’s policy on late work submission. Important: If you know that you must be late in meeting an assigned date, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can discuss it and manage our expectations.

Course Ethics

As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor Pledge, and indeed as good scholars and citizens, you are expected to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of this course. You are expected to be familiar with the letter and spirit of the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System and on the Honor Council website. As faculty, I too am obligated to uphold the Honor System and report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty. For more information, please visit <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/hc/index.html>

Accessibility Statement

If you believe you have a disability, then 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 for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and University policies.

Georgetown University Honor Pledge

In the pursuit of 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 responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Course Outline
Corporate Communications

Date	Topic	Reading/ Assignments
Week 1: Sept 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction, course overview, syllabus review & expectations (yours and mine) • Icebreaker activity <p>Lecture: "What is corporate communications?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate communications defined • How corporations typically utilize the function • Overview of the components of corporate communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of final project 	<p>Next week's readings:</p> <p><i>Critical Corporate Communications</i>, Chapters 1,4,7 & 9</p> <p><i>Influence Without Authority</i>, Chapter 1</p>
Week 2: Sept 15	<p>Lecture: "We need a plan ..."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How communications serves as a business solution • The many roles of a corporate communicator • Communications Tools & Theories, e.g., communications audits, toolkits, message maps/cascades • The elements of a strong communications plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q&A time for final project 	<p>Next week's reading:</p> <p><i>Good in a Room</i>, Part 1, Chapters 5-8</p>
Week 3: Sept 22	<p>Lab Practical</p> <p>Topic #1: The new president of your unit/association/company wants a full accounting of each department to include mission, key functions and objectives achieved during the past 18 months. It is evident that staff cuts are a part of his efficiency plan. Using the audit tools provided last week, develop a communications audit that will help you quantify and position your role/corporate communications as a value to the business now and in the future. Also be sure to use the supplemental information provided to each group as part of your justification. Your justification should be submitted using the PowerPoint outline provided for this assignment (see above).</p>	<p>Topics for final projects are due at the beginning of this evening's class.</p> <p>Next week's readings:</p> <p><i>Critical Corporate Communications</i>, Chapters 3 & 8</p> <p><i>Influence Without Authority</i>, Chapters 2-7</p>

	<p>Due Date: Sept. 28</p>	
Week 4: Sept. 29	<p>Lecture: "What should we say to employees?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational communications best practices • Why internal communications is critical • Communications' role in corporate culture & change • Keeping the masses on message 	<p>Homework: Identify the top five challenges that your company would need to address if a layoff was planned. Following the strategy outline provided above, develop a communications strategy/gameplan for mitigating these issues. Your strategy is due at the beginning of class next week. Refer to above information for additional submission guidelines.</p> <p>Next week's reading: <i>Critical Corporate Communications</i>, Chapters 5-6</p>
Week 5: Oct. 6	<p>Lecture: "From the outside in"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How words shape perception • The real meaning of integrated communications • Media relations/PR Overview of crisis communication • Managing your message and vehicles effectively 	<p>Guest speaker TBD</p> <p>Next week's reading: <i>Influence Without Authority</i>, Chapters 8-11 (Chapter 9 is optional)</p>
Week 6: Oct. 13	<p>Lab Practical</p> <p>Topic #2: You've received a call from the <i>Washington Post</i> seeking comment about your company's planned layoff. These details have been handled with extremely close hold, but it is clear that the reporter has an inside source. Create a 2-3 pp., 1.5-spaced crisis communications approach for handling the situation? Use AP style and the outline provided above for your approach.</p> <p>Due date: Oct. 19</p>	<p>For next week: Watch CNBC's Squawk Box and/or Street Signs or Fox's Money for Breakfast and/or Happy Hour at least three times before next week & read article regarding current event related to finance (to be assigned this evening).</p>
Week 7: Oct. 20	<p>Lecture: "What about shareholders?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simpatico in B Flat Minor: working with the financial communications/investor relations staff • What shareholders mean to an organization • What you need to know to be a player in the process • What it means when a public company releases corporate earnings (and the role communications should play) • How – and why -- I learned to love my CFO • Top 10 reasons to train your inner stock broker 	<p>Homework: Review your team's approach to addressing your first lab scenario. Pull out the quantifying factors that you would use in defense of your company's existing communications programs and bring them to class next week. Use no more than 2 pp., 1.5-spaced to provide your answer. Assignments will be presented at the beginning of class next week.</p>
Week 8: Oct. 27	<p>Lecture: "The Numbers Don't Lie"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why and how to measure your work 	<p>Next week's reading:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What to measure (Hint: Some measures mean more than others.) • How and when to find an audience for your findings 	<i>Influence Without Authority</i> , Chapters 12-16
Week 9: Nov. 3	<p>Lab Practical</p> <p>Topic #3: Employee morale is declining. The quarterly earnings report is expected to exceed analysts' expectations. Even though the worst economic times seem to have passed, business remains slow and customers seem distracted from your message. Using the specific financial information, employee scenarios and customer sentiments provided to your group, what sorts of actions should/would you take to address these latest issues and augment your integrated communications plan? Provide your approach using PowerPoint. Be sure to justify your approach.</p> <p>Due Date: Nov. 2</p>	
Week 10: Nov. 10	<p>Lecture: "The Risk Stress Test"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management defined and the role communications may play • Some common signs communicators should look for and what to do • What (if anything) does this mean to you? To communications? • Knowing your role (and whether you have one) in risk management) <p>Group Discussion: Final Projects</p>	
Week 11: Nov. 17	<p>Lecture: "Brochures, campaigns and the quest for stuff"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goals of marketing communications • Corporate messaging v. the "must-have" brochure • Survey of common message delivery channels and when you should use them 	<p>Next week's reading:</p> <p><i>Good in a Room</i>, Part IV, Chapters 20-31</p>
Week 12: Nov. 24	<p>Lecture: "Giving Voice to Executive Matters"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of executive communications • Building the executive message platform • The basics of speechwriting 	<p>Panel discussion/Q&A: What Executives Want From Corporate Communicators</p> <p>Confirmed Participants:</p> <p>Daniel Gasparro, Executive Director, Howry LLP Mark O'Flynn, Comptroller, WGL Holdings, Inc.</p>

		<p>Mark Krusec, former VP, Outsourcing, Accenture Arden Phillips, Assistant Corporate Secretary, WGL Holdings, Inc. Derrick Burton, Director, Global IT Operations, Booz Allen Hamilton Marcellous Frye, VP, Support Services, Washington Gas</p> <p>Note: Final projects will be presented in two weeks. I am available to meet with teams if you'd like input or need assistance.</p>
Week 13: Dec. 1	<p>Lecture: "The Point of it All"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing as a corporate communicator: the art and the politics • Keys to the game: Flexibility, corporate awareness, flexibility • What it means to be an "organic" communicator • Learning to read the tea leaves: the communicators' secret weapon 	I will provide the schedule for final project presentations this evening.
Week 14: Dec. 8	Presentation of Final Projects	Guest panels will receive project presentations