

MPPR-730 01 – Corporate Communications
Spring 2010
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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 the many issues at their assigned case study companies. 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*

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

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 *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, 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. Both are detailed in the syllabus below.

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 by the due date indicated below and according to the following guidelines:

Lab 1: Each team member will submit a document discussing the issue posed, and the team will collaborate to develop a presentation as indicated. Your PowerPoint document should include the following topics:

- Mission/Vision of Communications Team
- Discussion of how that vision links 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: 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: Using the specific assumptions that I will provide at the beginning of this class, address the situational shift outlined in the syllabus, being sure to answer the following questions:

- How, if at all, 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?

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. In addition, each student will grade his/her team members in this area. 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. ***Student ratings will be averaged together with my score to produce a final grade in this area.*** The teamwork grade will be derived as follows: enables team progress—50 possible points; participates in and enhances discussions—50 possible points; displays support for the team and its members—50 possible points.

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	1,410-1,500
	A-	1,350-1,409
	B+	1,320-1,349
	B	1,260-1,319
	B-	1,200-1,259
	C	1,050-1,199
F	1,049 and below	

Assignment Submission

All work will be submitted by the due date indicated in the syllabus. You are to turn in a hard copy of the completed work 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: Jan. 19	<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>Influence Without Authority</i>, Chapter 1 <i>Good in a Room</i>, Part 1, Chapters 5-8</p>
Week 2: Jan. 26	<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 • The elements of a strong communications pitch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q&A time for final project 	
Week 3: Feb. 2	<p>Lab Practical</p> <p>Topic #1: The president of your company wants a full accounting of each department to include mission, key functions and objectives achieved during the past 18 months. Discuss how you could use a communications audit to identify planning priorities and quantify and position your role/corporate communications as a value to the business now and in the future. Each group will be provided with supplemental information for consideration during the exercise. Each team member will submit a justification, and the team will collaborate to create a pitch document to position your approach to your president.</p> <p>Due Date: Feb. 9</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>Influence Without Authority</i>, Chapters 2-7</p>

Week 4: Feb. 9	<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: What are the biggest communications challenges that your assigned company would need to address if a layoff became necessary? Your brief discussion of each challenge is due at the beginning of class next week.</p> <p>Next week's reading: <i>Influence Without Authority</i>, Chapters 8-11 (Chapter 9 is optional)</p>
Week 5: Feb. 16	<p>Lecture: "From the outside in"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How words shape perception • What integrated communications should mean to companies • Media relations/PR/Crisis communication • Managing your message and vehicles effectively • Guest discussion: What makes good news and what doesn't? 	<p>(Note to Denise and Jackie: Guest speakers TBD. Pursuing a member of media and someone in corporate communications.)</p>
Week 6: Feb. 23	<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 crisis communications approach for handling the situation. Due date: March 2</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: March 2	<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 	
March 9	<p>NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK</p>	
Week 8: March 16	<p>Lecture: "The Numbers Don't Lie," or "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why we need to measure our work • How to identify what's important and what's not so important 	<p>Homework: Review your team's approach to addressing your first lab scenario. Now, imagine that about 45 days have passed, and your leadership wants to know how well corporate communications is supporting the company's priorities. Put together a presentation to reflect your progress to date (that is, since implementing the communications programs, efforts, outreach, etc., that you</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and defining measures that make sense for your company What you can do on your own ... and when you may need a measurement expert When and how to find an audience for your measures 	proposed in your first lab assignment), showing areas of progress, areas for continued improvement and any other metrics that you believe are relevant and bring them to class next week.
Week 9: March 23	<p>Lab Practical</p> <p>Topic #3: Employees are working longer hours with fewer resources. The company's quarterly earnings report is expected to exceed analysts' expectations. Even though the worst economic times seem to have passed, business remains uncertain 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: March 23</p>	<p>Next week's reading:</p> <p><i>Influence Without Authority</i>, Chapters 12-16</p>
Week 10: March 30	<p>Lecture: "64 Flavors" (a discussion of other ways that corporate communications is applied across businesses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The goals of marketing communications Corporate messaging v. the "must-have" brochure B2B, B2C et al 	
Week 11: April 6	<p>Group Discussion: Final Projects</p> <p>Interactive Discussion: "The Life of Corporate Communicators: The Good, the Bad & the Reality" Part 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicators share their perspectives on the many facets of their work and responsibilities 	<p>(Denise/Jackie: Still working panel participants for this week and next ...)</p> <p>Next week's reading:</p> <p><i>Good in a Room</i>, Part IV, Chapters 20-31</p>
Week 12: April 13	<p>Interactive Discussion: "The Life of Corporate Communicators: What Executives Need Most" Part 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What executives want from corporate communicators v. what communicators often deliver 	<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: April 20	<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 	I will provide the schedule for final project presentations this evening.
Week 14: April 27	Presentation of Final Projects	Guest panels will receive project presentations