Long Assignment for
Strategic Communications Campaigns
Communications 452

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School of Communications

Introduction for Faculty Colleagues

About the Course
Strategic Communications Campaigns (COM 452) is a “capstone” course for majors intended to utilize previous course learning and skills to create a unified, multiplatform strategic communications plan for corporate, nonprofit, association and/or government clients.

This assignment is the final product of the course written for AND presented to a real client and represents 30% of the semester grade. It demonstrates the learning from the entire course (and major) by using all of the course’s smaller individual and team assignments as stepping-stones synthesized into this final product. All assignments explore the necessary elements to build a comprehensive communications plan including:

1) Communications problems/opportunities identification
2) Primary and secondary research of potential target audiences/publics and an organization’s DNA (mission, values, operations, and publics’ perceived value)
3) Audience segmentation strategies
4) Communications strategies
5) Media/Message creation and dissemination strategies
6) Audience processing and response analysis
7) Advertising and Public Relations tactical executions
8) Budget prioritization rationale
9) Analytical ROI measurement, predicting, tracking, and analysis

This assignment puts all of that learning, skill, and practice into a single, polished industry replicated format to provide evidence of and preparation for careers in strategic communications or graduate study.
The Assignment I Distribute to Students

COM 452 – Strategic Communications Campaigns
Final Project

Final Project Purpose
The course title is Strategic Communications Campaigns and throughout the semester we will work towards this end goal of developing a comprehensive campaign recommendation to a real client to solve real problems and maximize real opportunities. Our semester’s efforts will be encapsulated in THE FINAL PROJECT, which contains two parts: 1) A final client “Leave-behind” and 2) a final client “Presentation.”

The client will work with us along the way by first briefing us on the assignment in W2. Then fielding conference calls for a “status/ temperature check” in W6. Finally, the client will attend the last day of class where your team will offer your client the “Leave-behind” and present your final “Presentation.”

Preparing for the Final Project
You in essence, will be preparing for the Final Project and its deliverables through a series of steps completed throughout the semester. The YELLOW sections from the syllabus are the individual and team planning phases of the final project. They are specific tasks to prepare students for success, and the GREEN section is the final execution phase where the “Leave-behind” and the “Presentation” will be completed. While all course activities help prepare you for the Final Project, these sections place particular emphasis on the steps that lead to effective campaign planning.
The Final Project will:
1. Replicate the industry environment, processes, and best practices.
2. Enhance your portfolio with an industry standard campaign written Leave-behind increasing your chances of securing the internship, job, or graduate program admission of your dreams.
3. Obtain the skills and confidence to persuasively present and “sell” your knowledgeable and creative recommendations grounded in solid research to achieve ROI in any situation.

**Final Project Deliverable #1 – The Final Client Leave-behind** (a.k.a. the final written report)

- **Overall** – The final Leave-behind will contain the elements listed below in the slides and will be referenced and reinforced throughout the semester.
- **IMPORTANT** – while we will start linearly, your final project may rearrange these criteria substantially in order to craft your unique narrative to best sell the ideas you create for a client’s communication challenges and/or opportunities.
- Background work – each of these assignments will be completed prior to the start of the semester’s Final Project. They will provide the vast majority of the content and ease your transition in the Final Project. Detailed descriptions of the purpose, learning objectives, communications objectives, and evaluation criteria will be posted on Moodle and discussed regularly in class.

1. Individual Assignment #2 (20 pts. due XXX) = Individual Research Plan – To identify the research questions, explore hypotheses, identify business communications problems/opportunities and demonstrate the student’s mastery of one or two of the 7C’s (client, competition, culture, category, consumer, delivery channel, media convergence).


3. Team Assignment #1 (20 pts. due XXX) = Team Research Proposal – Research methods to address information needs and team synthesizing to create primary research objectives and activities.


5. Individual Assignment #4 (20 pts. due XXX) = Target Profile/Personal Media Network/Brand Manifesto/Creative Brief.

6. Team Assignment #3 (20 pts. due XXX) = Communications Mission, Objectives, Strategies and ROI plan.


8. Team Assignment #5 (20 pts. due XXX) = The Tactics.

9. Final Project DRAFT #1 (25 pts. due XXX)

10. Final Project DRAFT #2 (50 pts. due XXX)

**Leave-behind details**

1) The final client Leave-behind is worth 150 pts. and due XXX (the final day of class)

2) Print one copy for me and one for the client representative(s) in attendance on the final day of class.

3) You may use Word or PowerPoint. Please review the examples of successful Leave-behinds posted on Moodle to grasp the freedom your team has to use words and visuals that best represent your theme, personalities, and tonality of your creative recommendations.
4) There is no page requirement. Usually they range from 15-30 pages not including appendices.
5) A digital version of the final client Leave-behind is also due to the professor by email or jump drive within 24 hours upon completion of the Presentation and the turning in of the Leave-behind.

The challenges of the Leave-behind
1) Team consensus – How will you resolve differences and synthesize individual achievements, preferences, and expertise into a unified “agency” recommendation? How will you incorporate the disparate parts into unified theories and proposed courses of action?
2) Structure to tell your narrative – How will you follow, or not follow, the linear process we learned in class to best craft the unique story that “sells” your process that leads to predicatable communications success?
3) Visually be dynamic – How will you “bring research to life” and also display your unique creative tactical executions?
4) Logical flow and completeness of necessary information - What order and what specifics will you include and edit to offer sound, valid, and rational approaches to the business problem?
5) Connecting the strategies and tactics to real client preferences and their ability to implement.

How the Leave-behind will be assessed
Your Leave-behind will be assessed based on the following criteria and weighted towards the most important aspects that define the professional world of strategic communications. And, it will be viewed through the lens of what is expected from a superior intern or junior employee in a professional strategic communications firm.

Tier I (0-45 pts.):
1) Visual creativity and professionalism in the overall layout, design, language, and “presentation/packing” of the final product.
2) Logical flow, unique team narrative, persuasive, and inspiring for a client to read.
3) Team ownership/branding and evidence of “leaving your scent.”
4) Spelling and grammar correctness, and knowledgeable use of industry terms.

Tier II (0-30 pts.):
1) Robust/Creative research methods clearly defined, synthesized, specific connections within the 7Cs and with unique “a-ha” insights revealed.
2) Clear identification of the business marketing objectives, competitive landscape, situation analysis/SWOT with problems and opportunities defined and re-defined.
3) Identify and contextualize the target audience(s).
4) Brand Identity and connection to target demographics and business objectives.
5) Clear Communications Objectives and Strategies.
6) Clear differentiated Messaging versus Media Objectives and Strategies; hierarchies.

Tier III (0-15 pts.):
1) Quality (creative + “on-strategy”) tactics and in-depth exploration of their “legs.”
2) Integrated nature of tactics with calendar and budget prioritization.
3) Quantity of tactics.
4) Tracking and ROI plan.

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**Final Project Deliverable #2 – The Final Client Presentation**

**The purpose of the Presentation:**
Strategic Communications has and will always involve presenting your work and persuading others to believe and act upon your ideas. We have had two practice presentation assignments and now will bring those skills to bear to complete the essential task of educating, enlightening, and “selling” our recommendations to a client. All of this to best replicate the environment of and prepare you for successful futures in strategic communications. The presentation is to “walk us through your leave-behind” or “bring your Leave-behind to life.”

This is your time to show your client your passion, process, hard work, strategic thinking, and creative executional ability. And, this is often the deciding factor when a client decides to go/no-go with an agency’s recommendation of how to communicate with their audiences.

**Presentation details:**
1) The presentation is worth 125 pts. and due on XXX (the final day of class).
2) At least one representative client and two special guests, usually other strategic communications professionals and/or professors, will attend/evaluate it.
3) Each team will have 20 minutes to present (but please leave some time in that 20 mins. for client Q&A).
4) Not every team member has to speak (but every team member must contribute). Please review our discussions of advanced presentation skills from W9CX.
5) Any special A/V or “theater requests” should be emailed to the professor minimally 48 hours before the presentation. The sooner I know, the more likely I can make it happen.

**The challenges of the final client Presentation:**
1) What to present and what to omit in a condensed time period.
2) How to include all team members to participate while maximizing personal strengths and minimizing members’ areas to improve.
3) How to create visuals (on screen or other formats) to accent what you are saying and not distract your audience.
4) The logical flow of presentation of information to craft your team’s unique, inspiring, and persuasive recommendations.
5) Convincing the client to spend money on your recommendations rather than those of the other teams presenting.

How your Presentation will be assessed
Your presentation will be assessed based on the following criteria and weighted towards the most important aspects that define the professional world of strategic communications. And, it will be viewed through the lens of what is expected from a superior intern or junior employee in a professional strategic communications firm. (Also attached is sample of the guest judges’ scorecard for your reference).

Tier I (0-45 pts.)
1) Informative and persuasive, cohesive narrative with strong opening, body, and conclusion.
2) Enlightening use of research methods and “a-ha” insights revealed.
3) Clear contextualization of the target audience (demographics/psychographics/behaviors/usage).
4) Clear Problem/Opportunity identification and persuasive “sell” that it can be addressed by your team. Clear communications objectives and strategies.
5) Clear picture of success in terms of (think→feel→act) and from a business ROI perspective.
6) Error free slides (grammar, spelling, capitalization, sources).

Tier II (0-30 pts.)
1) Team chemistry, affability.
2) Use of advanced presentation techniques involving “theater” as discussed in class.
3) Inspiring presentation of quality and quantity of communications tactics.

Tier III (0-15 pts.)
1) X-factor feel. Like when you love a movie or book (drama, humor, mind expanding, emotional, etc.) That un-articulable moving factor.
2) Comprehensive coverage (even if minimal) of all of the elements of a campaign (such as media flowchart, budget allocation, brand manifesto, ROI tracking, etc. from the slides mentioned above).

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SAMPLE GUESTS JUDGES SCORECARD

2014 Campaigns Project

Team # / Team Name: ____________________________________________

Ratings should be completed on a 1 to 10 scale, with 10 being the best. Along with an overall team rating, there is an area for comments regarding the presentation skills of particular participants. Your comments and scores will help to provide constructive feedback to each team and team member. *This form will not be seen by the students.*

Research/Insight 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
(understanding the challenge, the target, the business)
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Communications Objectives + Strategy/Messaging Platform 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
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Creative/Big Idea 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
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Creative Application/Integrated Communications 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
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### Media Use (paid/earned/owned/user shared + generated)

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### X-Factor/Team and Presentation

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**Grand Total**

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### Constructive Feedback

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