

JOUR 523 – Principles of Public Relations Research Memo Assignment

Due at the beginning of class on Monday, Oct. 5

The purpose of this assignment is three-fold. The first is to engage students in public relations research. Research is the first step in the public relations process; it is also a critical step because all strategic decisions should be based on intelligence. The second is to have students work in a team and collaborate as they would in the real working world. The ability to collaborate with others during a problem-solving process is a desired trait among public relations professionals. Third, this assignment is the first step of a group project that will culminate in the creation of a public relations plan for the assigned client.

The Client: The Lawrence Arts Center

According to its Web site (www.lawrenceartscenter.com), the mission of the Lawrence Arts Center is to “enrich individuals and the community by nurturing love of the arts through education, exploration and expression.” The Center has a rich history and continues to be an important part of the Lawrence community. LAC released the following statement about its organization: “The Lawrence Arts Center was founded 35 years ago by Lawrence community members who wanted to foster a love of the arts in Lawrence and surrounding communities. Over the years, the Lawrence Arts Center has grown to serve 200,000 people annually in five areas: Visual Arts Education, Dance, Drama, Gallery Exhibition and an Arts-based preschool.”

To meet the needs of our client, student teams will be classified in this manner:

Red Teams – These teams will be asked to develop a public relations plan designed to increase awareness about the participation of LAC classes among adults in the Lawrence community. The current misconception is that the LAC is a glorified daycare and has little to offer adults; in fact, 60% of LAC’s art student population is adults. Another task of this group will be to educate the public about the funding stream for the Center. Currently there is a misconception that it is fully funded by the City of Lawrence.

Blue Teams – These teams will be asked to develop a public relations plan designed to increase awareness of the inclusive nature of the LAC. The misconception now is that the Center is elitist and caters to the wealthy. In addition, these teams will work on a plan to publicize the affordable pricing of classes and programs offered by the center.

Your primary contact for this project is Mr. Rick Yarnell, acting executive director for the Lawrence Arts Center. Ms. Rebecca Phipps and Ms. Jenny Dejmal are secondary contacts who also will be involved with the project. All will be coming to our class on Monday, September 21 to discuss the organization, its needs and to answer your questions.

Adopted from Professor David Guth, Spring 2008

Research Memo Guidelines

This is an individual assignment. You are responsible for the preparation of your own memo. You have been placed in teams for purposes of coordination at this point. With a minimal amount of advanced planning, groups can avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. Remember to keep a copy of your memo: It will serve as a foundation for the second step in the class project.

Each memo should contain a minimum of five sources. Please keep in mind that doing the minimum and doing it well is considered good work, which, by definition, is a grade of B. Information in this memo should be relevant to the issues raised in the project scenario. The closer to the topic, the more weight it will be given in grading. This does not mean you are limited to just the activities of the Lawrence Arts Center. You are encouraged to research how other organizations with similar missions have addressed the central issues of this project: creating awareness about existing programs and dispelling misconceptions about the Center. However, keep in mind the purpose of your research: This is a communications challenge. It is more relevant for you to learn the communication strategies and tactics used in addressing these issues than merely gathering information on how companies have addressed these types of issues.

The memo should be written as a series of source summaries. By definition, a summary is a condensed compilation of the major points contained in the source. Each source should be summarized in one paragraph. No paragraph may be more than 10 lines of type (see attached format). Summarize each source individually and under a separate heading. Do not combine several sources within the same paragraph. You are submitting one memorandum with multiple sources – do not submit a separate memo for each source. (See attached format).

All sources of information must be clearly identified within a citation at the end of each entry (see attached format). When citing a Web site, include its URL. The quality and variety of sources will be considered in the grading process. Links or pages within a Web site are considered parts of a single source. Different sections or chapters within a book are considered parts of a single source. Different articles within the same edition of a newspaper or magazine may be considered as separate sources.

Personal interviews with relevant individuals may be used as sources. Please include the name, relevant title, and the date of the interview in the source citation. Please do not attempt to conduct survey research or focus group research in connection with this assignment. Each is labor intensive and an inefficient use of your limited time and resources.

As in all assignments in this class, each memo will be graded for spelling, grammar, and clarity of thought. Handwritten corrections on copy are not acceptable. Please use double spacing in your document.

Grading

Adopted from Professor David Guth, Spring 2008

This assignment is worth approximately 10 percent of each student's final grade in this course and will be graded on a 100-point scale:

Relevance of research to the project	20 points
Detail and substance of summaries	40 points
Quality and variety of sources	10 points
Adherence to guidelines	10 points
Spelling/grammar/clarity	20 points

Deadline

Each student's research memorandum is due at the start of class on **Monday, Oct. 5.**