

Strategic Corporate Communications

COMM 502
Spring, 2008

Rebecca Weintraub, Ph.D.
Teaching Assistant, Jennifer Heckman

Course Syllabus

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the corporate communications function with corporate stakeholders.

Stakeholders are those individuals or groups who have an interest in the success or failure of the enterprise. This course will examine the strategic communication demands placed on the corporation by a variety of stakeholders: employees, customers, shareholders, the local community, and society at large represented by the media.

Managing relationships with these stakeholders presupposes that processes exist within a corporation to facilitate communications with these constituents on an ongoing basis. In a time of significant change, both technological and societal, it is more important that companies communicate more effectively than ever. As Frank M. Corrado put it, "managers have learned that in the new marketplace of ideas, it is incumbent upon them to develop a perspective, a way of thinking that provides them with a facility in dealing with constituencies, arguing proactively and aggressively the corporate vision expressed by the board." He concludes that effective communications strategy and tactics can make important contributions in:

- helping value the firm correctly in the marketplace so as to maximize shareholder value and lessen chances of unfriendly takeover;
- building employee morale and effectiveness in difficult economic times, thus increasing productivity and profitability;
- improving the marketing of products by lending credibility to their efficacy and value;
- managing crises;
- effectively communicating with the public via the media; and
- enabling a corporation to transform itself into more agile and flexible company to compete more effectively in a changing business environment.

LEARNING GOALS:

- To recognize and respond to the communication expectations of various corporate stakeholders
- To be able to create and implement a 1 strategic corporate communications plan

- To utilize a variety of communication tools and techniques

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- There are two required texts, *Communicating Change: How To Win Employee Support for New Business Directions* by TJ and Sandar Larkin and *Reframing Organization: Artistry, Choice, And Leadership* by Bolman and Deal. Additionally, a reading packet is available for purchase at the USC bookstore. Other literature is recommended throughout the course and is on reserve in the Annenberg Resource Center. These resources are accessible online.
- The reader contains the required readings. Required readings will be the subject of discussions and the final exam. Reading the optional readings is highly recommended as they round off the required readings and aid in the understanding of the broader context.
- Active participation in class is expected and will be a factor in the grades on discussion and case studies.

GRADING:

There are five components to the final grade: discussion board participation and email assignments (25%); seven case study assignments (25%); one midterm paper—an individual literature review for your group project-- (20%); and a group project (30%).

LITERATURE:

Author: TJ and Sandar Larkin

Title: *Communicating Change : How to Win Employee Support for New Business Directions*

Publication info: New York: McGraw-Hill, c1994

Physical xiii, 252 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

USC Bookstore: Course Reader Comm 502

Author: Bolman, Lee G.; Deal, Terrence E.

Title: *Reframing Organization: Artistry, Choice, And Leadership*

Publication info: San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

Physical xxvi, 492 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Recommended

Author: D'Aprix, Roger M.

Title: *Communicating For Change: Connecting The Workplace With The Marketplace*

Edition: 1st ed.

Publication info: San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, c1996.

Physical xviii, 158 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Schedule:

Note: Each module is two weeks long except module one which covers three weeks. Each module begins on a Wednesday at midnight and ends two weeks later on Tuesday at 11:59 AM, when the next module begins. The only exception is Module 1 which is three weeks long.

The case group work is always due by midnight on the last Sunday of the Module. Comments on the cases are due no later than the following Tuesday at midnight. Peer reviews, email assignments and discussion starters are due by midnight on the same Tuesday. You are encouraged not to wait until the last minute for the discussion starters or the email assignments. However, you will not be penalized for any material turned in by the due date and time. Late submissions will be docked one point per day. **Late peer reviews will not be accepted. If peer reviews are not turned in by the deadline, you will receive no credit for the peer reviews your colleagues give you—this means 0 points for that part of the assignment.**

Module 1 -- Organizational Communication – January 16, 23, 30

Required Readings:

Corrado, Frank M., *Getting the Word out*, Chapt. 3 (pp. 26-38)
Rogers/Roethlisberger, *Barriers and Gateways to Communication*, pp. 44-50

Eisenberg, Eric, *Ambiguity as Strategy in Organizational Communication*,
Communication Monographs 51 (1984), pp. 227-239.

Thompson, Arthur A. Jr./Strickland, A.J., III, *Crafting and Implementing Strategy: What every manager should know*, Chapt.1 (pp. 9-24 and 2 (pp.25-59)
Conger, Jay A./Kanungo, Rabindra N., *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations*, Chapt. 5 (pp. 153-187).

Bolman/Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, Book (Literature List)

Note: You will read this book for Modules 1 and 2.

Recommended

Spicer, *Organizational Public Relations*, Chapt. 3 (pp. 53-76) and 5 (pp. 103-125)

D'Aprix, Roger M., *Communicating for change: connecting the workplace with the marketplace*, Book (Literature List)

Module 2 -- Communication and Strategy – February 6 and 13

Required Readings:

Ferguson, Sherry Devereaux, *Communication Planning*, Chapt. 3(pp. 21-

52) and 5 (pp. 67-90).

Corrado, Frank M., *Getting the Word Out*, pp. 11-25

Slater, Robert, *Saving Big Blue*, Chapt. 11 (pp.109-116), Chapt. 15 (pp.139-146).

Bolman/Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, Book (Literature List)

Module 3 – Employee Communications – February 20 and 27

Required Readings:

Larkin/Larkin, *Reaching and Changing Frontline Employees*, pp. 95-104

Larkin/Larkin, *Communicating Change: How To Win Employee Support For New Business Directions* (Literature List)

Module 4 -- Human Resources Communication –March 5 and 12

This module has only one topic because your **term paper is due electronically by midnight Friday, March 7.**

Papers that are late will lose 2 points per day (that means each day—weekend or otherwise). This applies to *any* papers received later than Friday March 7 at midnight.

Required Readings:

Corrado, Frank M., *Getting the Word out*, Chapt. 5 (pp. 64-81)

Bloedorn, John D./KPMG, in *Paying for Performance: A Guide To Compensation Management*, Chapt. 6 (pp. 124-147).

Wilson, Thomas B., *Innovative Reward Systems for the Changing Workplace*, Chapt. 4 (pp. 52-69 and Chapt. 7 (pp.154-173)).

Despres, Charles/Hiltrop, Jean-Marie, *Human Resource Management In The Knowledge Age: Current Practice And Perspectives On The Future*, Employee Relations 17 (1995), pp. 9-23

Optional Readings:

Cheney, George, *Democracy in the Workplace: Theory and Practice from the Perspective of Communication*, pp. 167-200

Shepherd, Jeryl L./Mathews, Brian P., *Employee Commitment: Academic Vs. Practitioner Perspectives*, Employee Relations, 22 (2000), pp. 555-571

Spring Break March 17 – 21

But your new module will not begin until March 26. Happy Spring Break!

Module 5 -- Investor Communications and Communication through Managers – March 26 and April 2

Required Readings:

Corrado, Frank M., *Media for Managers*, Chapt. 9 (pp. 168-177)

Jablin, Fredric M., *Superior-Subordinate Communication: The state of the art in Readings in Organizational Communication*, pp.285-302).

Graves, Joseph J., *Managing Investor Relations*, Chapt. 8 (pp. 165-188).

Roalman, Arthur R., *Investor Relations Handbook*, Chapt. 1 (pp. 3-19) and Chapt. 9 (pp. 126-142) and *Case History: Winnebago Industries*, (pp. 160-180)

Crombie, Winifred/ Samujh, Helen, *Negative Messages as Strategic Communication: A Case Study of a New Zealand Company's Annual Executive Letter*, *Journal of Business Communication* 36 (1999), pp. 229-244.

Optional Readings:

Graves, Joseph J., *Meetings*, pp. 281-310

Module 6 -- Media Relations and Brand and Reputation Management – April 9 and 16

Required Readings:

Crawford, Alan Pell, *When those nasty rumors start breeding on the web, you've got to move fast,* "Public Relations Quarterly, 4 (1999), pp. 43-45

Corrado, Frank M., *Media for Managers*, Chapt. 5 (pp. 73-97)

Brooks, David S., *The Media Supply Chain: How to increase media coverage for your product or service by understanding and meeting shared responsibilities with the Media*, *Public Relations Quarterly* 4 (1999), pp, 26-30

Spicer, Christopher, *Organizational Public Relations: A political perspective*, Chapt.10 (pp224-243

Gronstedt, Anders, *Integrating Marketing Communication and Public Relations: A Stakeholder Relations Model*, pp. 287-303

Duncan, Tom/Claywood, Clarke, *The Concept, Process, and Evolution of Integrated*

Moore, Jeri/Thorson, Esther, *Strategic Planning for Integrated Marketing*

Communications Programs: An Approach to Moving from Chaotic Toward Systematic, pp. 135-151

Martin, Dick, *Gilded and Gelded: Hard-won Lessons from the PR Wars*, *Harvard Business Review*, Volume 81 Number 10 (2003), pp.44-54.

Module 7 -- Mergers & Acquisition and Crisis Communication – April 23 and 30

Required Readings:

Haspeslagh, Philippe C./Jemison, David B., *Management of Acquisitions*, Chapt. 6

Nikandrou, Irene/Papalexandris, Nancy/Bourantas, Dimitris, *Gaining employee trust after an acquisition: Implications for managerial action*, *Employee Relations* 22 (2000), pp. 334-355.

Graves, Joseph J., *On the Offense in Troubled Times*, pp. 311-323

Lewis, Laurie K., *Communicating Change: Four Cases of Quality Programs*, pp. 128-154

Fearn-Banks, Kathleen, *Crisis Communications: A casebook approach*, Chapt. 2 (pp. 18-33) and Appendix A: Generic Crisis Communications Plan (pp. 255-275).

Ulmer, Robert R./Sellnow, Timothy L., *Consistent Questions of Ambiguity in*

Organizational Crisis Communication: Jack in the Box as a Case Study, pp. 143-153

Pines, Wayne L. *Myths of Crisis Management*, *Public Relations Quarterly* 45 (2000), pp. 15-17

Adams, William C., *Responding to the Media During a Crisis: It's what you say and when you say it*, *Public Relations Quarterly* 45 (2000), pp. 26-28

Dilenschneider, Robert L., *Getting your message across while under attack*, *Public Relations Quarterly* 45 (2000), pp. 9-11.

Optional Readings:

Spicer, Christopher, *Managing Ambiguity: Implications for External Communication Choices*, pp. 224-243

Module 8 – Final Group Project Presentations Due– Wednesday May 7
(Finals Week)

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to Professor Weintraub or her TA as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.