

JOUR 523 - Principles of Public Relations

Research Memo Assignment

The purposes of this assignment are 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, since all strategic decisions should be based on solid intelligence. The second is to have students work in a team. 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.

The Client: The Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics

According to its Web site, the mission of the Dole Institute of Politics is “to promote political and civic involvement, especially among young people, encourage civil discussion on important issues, emphasize that politics is an honorable profession, and provide opportunities for all to interact with political leaders, practitioners and writers.” To accomplish this mission, the bi-partisan DIOP provides a wide range of programming throughout the year. This includes the presentation of the prestigious Dole Leadership Prize in the fall - last fall’s recipient was former President George H. W. Bush - and the Dole Lecture in the spring, presented in 2008 to former NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw. Other programming includes the Presidential Lecture Series in February, Study Groups each semester conducted by leading political practitioners, and a monthly informal program for students known as Pizza and Politics.

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

Crimson Teams – These teams will be asked to develop public relations plans designed to increase faculty and student awareness and participation in DIOP programs. They will also be asked to develop publicity plans for the promotion of the Dole Leadership Prize and Lecture that occur every fall (budget \$2,500) and the Study Groups that occur every spring and fall semester (budget \$2,000).

Blue Teams – These teams will be asked to develop public relations plans designed to increase faculty and student awareness and participation in DIOP programs. They will also be asked to develop publicity plans for the promotion of the annual Dole Lecture that occurs every spring (budget \$2,500) and the Presidential Lecture Series that occurs every February (\$2,500).

Your contact for this project is Professor Jonathan Earle, a member of the KU history faculty and DIOP’s associate director for programming. Dr. Earle will be coming to our

class on Tuesday, February 10, to discuss his organization, its needs and to answer your questions.

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. 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 the 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 Dole Institute of Politics. To the contrary, you are encouraged to research how other organizations with similar missions have addressed the central issues of this project: creating awareness, increasing participation and generating publicity to promote programming. However, keep in mind the purpose of your research: This is a communications challenge. It is more relevant to you to learn the communication strategies and tactics used in addressing these issues than is to provide a critique on the state of politics in the United States.

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

This assignment is worth approximately 9 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 **Tuesday, February 24**.

Research Memo Format/Sample

MEMORANDUM

TO: Professors Lumpkins and Guth

FROM: Jack Bauer

DATE: February 24, 2009

SUBJECT: Research Memorandum

Format instructions: Brief Headline or Title

This is where each source is summarized. 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, including the source information, may be more than 10 lines of type. The text should be double-spaced. Summarize each source individually and under a separate heading. Do not combine several sources within the same paragraph. All sources 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 use of the Internet and on-line databases is acceptable. However, they should not be the exclusive source of information in your research memo. Memos that use only Internet and on-line sources will not receive as strong a grade as those use multiple information gathering methods. (Author. "Article title." *publication*. Date of publication, page)

Sample entry: Public Relations Hits the Road

A tanker truck spilled almost 7,000 gallons of animal fat onto Interstate 74 near Cincinnati in May 1997. For more than three days, a busy highway junction was closed while a variety of companies tried -- and failed -- to clean up the slimy mess. However, anyone who watches Proctor and Gamble's advertisements for its Dawn dish washing liquid knows that "Dawn cuts through grease." So P&G sent a truck loaded with 275 drums of Dawn to the scene from Kansas City, where the product is manufactured. The liquid was mixed with hot water, poured on the highway and scrubbed with a street sweeper. It may be an exaggeration to say that the highway was "spotless," but at least the slime was gone and the highway was reopened. P&G's heroics received national news coverage, as well as coverage in Canada and Great Britain. (Jeff Long. "The Dawn That Saved Cincinnati." *Public Relations Tactics*. July 1998. p 9)