

COMM 386R Public Relations

Reputation Audit

October 2017

This assignment is intended to serve as a summative exercise for the major Reputation and Issues Management components (i.e. the second one-third) of the course. It builds on your understanding of Stakeholder Engagement and Responsibility/Ethics components from the first part of the course.

The purpose of this assignment is to give you practice in applying the concepts, tools, and frameworks of reputation and issues management to a real-world scenario and to enhance your understanding of the complexity and importance of this type of audit.

There are two main parts to the assignment.

1. **Part 1: Audit Plan** involves mapping out a plan for gathering the data needed for the reputation audit. This is where you demonstrate your thorough and creative thinking about ways the organization could collect timely and relevant insights about its reputation with key audiences.
2. **Part 2: Reputation Audit** involves implementing the data collection plan from Part 1 to audit the organization's reputation. This is where you demonstrate your ability to identify and prioritize important reputational strengths/resources, weaknesses/gaps, and related key reputational risks and opportunities – and to outline some steps the organization can take to bolster its reputation in a meaningful way.

This assignment is worth 20% of your course mark. You may choose to complete this assignment either individually or in a self-selected pair.

This assignment is due in PDF format to the assignment dropbox on Connect by 6 pm on Sunday, November 12. One submission per pair.

Instructions

1. Before class on Monday, October 30, decide whether you will complete this assignment individually or in a pair. Register your choice via [the link](#) in the Assignments folder on Connect. (If you wish to be assigned randomly to a pair, please note this when you register. If another person indicates the same wish, I will assign the pair; however, if no partner is available, you will need to complete the assignment individually.)
2. Choose an established organization in a category with at least one other competitor. Here are some tips for choosing a category and an organization:
 - Choose a different organization than you chose for the Stakeholder Engagement Analysis. If you *really* wish to use the same organization, please consult with me first.
 - Organizations with at least some presence on the internet and on social media are easier to study for this assignment.
 - You are welcome to choose an organization with which you are familiar or in which you are involved in some way, as long as you can supplement your experience with adequate secondary research to round out your perspectives.

- Avoid start-ups (especially pre-revenue start-ups) about which secondary research may be difficult to gather. Existing organizations will make for easier research. If you still wish to use a start-up, please consult with me for guidance.
 - Either for-profit or non-profit organizations are acceptable.
 - Either B2C (business-to-consumer) or B2B (business-to-business) organizations are acceptable.
3. Identify the key audiences whose attitudes about and views of the organization are most important to its success, either because they are direct audiences or because they amplify information to direct audiences. Remember to think about both supporters and detractors. This information will be included in your **Introduction** section (see “Submission Requirements” for a proposed structure).
4. Complete **Part 1: Audit Plan**
 The first half of the assignment involves mapping out a plan for the reputation audit for your chosen organization. This is essentially a research plan that should outline specific sources to identify and study the following:
- **Specific data sources to gauge the organization’s reputation** with each/all of the key audiences. These could include (but are not limited to) traditional media coverage, forums, blogs, user groups, associations’ publications, rankings, Google searches, various social media mentions, and competitors’ media. Make sure you identify sources that will give a balanced understanding of various audience’s attitudes and views.
 - **The organization’s reputation-influencing activities and channels**, including recent and current PR campaigns, if any. These should include the organization’s owned, paid, and earned media.
- For each of the sources you identify, explain how that source should provide useful insights into the organization’s reputation.
5. Complete **Part 2: Reputation Audit**
 The second half of the assignment involves implementing your audit plan to conduct an audit of your chosen organization’s reputation.
- Tap into all of the specific data sources you outlined in Part 1 to determine the organization’s current reputation with its key audiences (remember to cite ideas, quotes, and other corporate information).
 - Summarize your findings, and then based on these make a determination about whether the organization’s reputation is Poor, Weak, Average, Strong, or Exemplary.
 - Outline some recommendations to help the organization repair, improve, or reinforce its reputation with its key audiences.
6. Briefly discuss your insights and takeaways from having planned and implemented the reputation audit. This information will be included in your **Conclusion** section (see “Submission Requirements” for a proposed structure).

Submission Requirements

Your Reputation Audit submission should meet the following requirements:

- Max 5-6 pages, single-spaced, excluding cover page and appendices (see Written Assignment Standards, below)
- Recommended sections (feel free to supplement and/or rename them, if that improves the clarity of your submission):
 - **Introduction:** Set the context for the audit
 - Highlights about the organization
 - Statement about why reputation is so important for this organization
 - Relevant history (e.g. involvement in any scandals?)
 - Identification of key audiences
 - **Part 1: Audit Plan**
 - Balanced data sources to gauge the organization's reputation with each key audience
 - Sources to identify the organization's reputation-influencing activities
 - **Part 2: Reputation Audit**
 - Summary and highlights from implementing the plan
 - Reputation evaluation: Poor, Weak, Average, Strong, or Exemplary
 - Recommendations
 - **Conclusion:** your insights from having planned and implemented the audit
 - **Appendices (optional)**
 - **References List (APA style)**

Written Assignment Standards

- **Readability:** Everything you deliver in this course is to be written in clear, grammatically correct English. Proofreading is absolutely required. Penalties will apply for consistent errors, and steep penalties will apply for consistent errors that interfere with comprehension. Use headers as signposts to guide your reader through your assignment. A well-organized assignment should make it easy for your reader to follow your logic.
- **Cover Page:** Must include course and section numbers, student names, student numbers, assignment title, and date. Assignment page limits do not include the cover page.
- **Margins:** Minimum 1"; Maximum 1.25"
- **Line Spacing:** Single – but make good use of headings/subheadings and white space for maximum readability!
- **Font Size:** 11 pt.
- **Referencing (In-text Citations/Footnotes):** All secondary sources must be cited using APA format, both as in-text citations or footnotes within your writing and in a separate References list. Penalties will apply for missing citations and inconsistent style.
- **Page Limits:** The stated page limit does not include the cover page and (optional) appendices. Respect the page limit. Marks will be deducted for surpassing the page limit, and work that extends beyond the page limit will not be graded.

- **File Naming Convention:** Assignment documents must be saved using the following file naming convention: FirstName-LastName-AssignmentName.pdf (e.g. Joe-Smith-Reputation-Audit.pdf).
- **Electronic Submission:** Written assignments will be submitted electronically in PDF format on the course Connect site through the assignment dropboxes. You must submit in PDF format. If your computer does not have a PDF file format, download one free from the internet. If you choose to work in a pair, only one copy of the assignment is required per pair.
- **Plagiarism Prevention:** Assignments may be submitted to TurnItIn, UBC's plagiarism prevention system. For information on plagiarism and plagiarism prevention, review the Academic Integrity Resource Guide: <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/resource-guides/avoiding-plagiarism/>.