

**College of Professional Studies
Graduate School of Political Management
Strategic Public Relations Master's Degree Program**

Campus Course Syllabus

PSPR 205 – The Business & Budgeting of Public Relations
How PR Firms and Departments Operate for Profit & Success

Summer 2008

Meeting Dates: Thursday, May 22, 2008 through July 24, 2008

Class Hours: 7:10 p.m. – 9:40 p.m.

Location: Hall of Government (710 21 St. NW), Room 104

Instructor: Suzanne Holroyd, PhD, APR

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Suzanne Holroyd has more than 20 years of agency and non-profit experience in public relations, marketing, and research. Her work includes servicing clients with market research, brand development, media relations, crisis communications and strategic planning.

Course Overview

This course examines the management underpinnings of successful public relations firms and departments. Students analyze core financial strategies and practices affecting PR firm profitability and growth, and assess the PR budgeting process in corporate and not-for-profit organizations. In addition, they study critical human relations challenges, including hiring, firing, compensation and benefits, as well as the legal, marketing, branding, and succession issues impacting public relations and public affairs activities. Finally, they develop a detailed budget for a public relations program or public affairs project.

Guest Speakers

Periodically, we invite senior level guest speakers representing area agencies, corporations and not-for-profit associations. You will be expected to listen, participate and apply the lessons learned in the course.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, you should be able to develop a detailed plan for running a client or agency PR department. You will know how to identify and evaluate expansion opportunities and prepare responses. You will know the various approaches to agency/department profitability and tools for assessing how your staff is performing versus those approaches. Further, you will be exposed to the critical human relations challenges, including hiring, firing, compensation and benefits, as well as the legal, marketing, branding, and succession issues impacting public relations and public affairs activities.

Course Methods and Rules

Course Work

All work for this class should be typed, double-spaced, spell-checked, have 1” margins, and use 12-point Times-Roman font. Associated Press style should be used. Late work will be marked down one full grade for each class it is late. If you have extenuating circumstances or need special accommodations, please see the instructor before the due date. Work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Neatness, punctuation, and grammar count as part of your grade.

Class Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss a class it is your responsibility to notify the instructor and make sure any assignments due that week reach the instructor on time to receive full credit. It is also the student’s responsibility to get lecture notes from a classmate and complete the readings as assigned. Regardless of the reason for missing a class, you will not be able to make up missed class participation points.

Ethics Policy

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. Anyone breaching this policy is subject to expulsion from the master’s degree program.

Disability Statement

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services – 202-994-8250, dss@gwu.edu.

In Case of Emergency

If you suspect there may be a closing, please visit the University home page and look for an announcement or call the University emergency hotline (202-994-5050). If there is a closing or class cancellation for any reason – bad weather, my illness, power outage, etc. – I will attempt to send a class e-mail and post the closing or cancellation on our announcements page in Blackboard. Regardless of the circumstances, you should still submit all assignments that are due that day. You should also be prepared to make up the class via Blackboard.

Course Texts and Readings

Required Texts

- *Managing a Public Relations Firm for Growth and Profit* by A.C. Croft, Haworth Press, Inc., 2006 (ISBN soft cover: 978-0-7890-2865-5)
- *Essential of Public Relations Management* by Edward Jordan, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2003 (ISBN: 08304-15947)

Case Studies

Selected case studies will be reviewed in class, form the basis for short papers and/or be subject matter for quizzes

Course Handouts

In addition to your text, you will also be expected to read miscellaneous articles, essays and research studies that are given out in the class.

Course Assignments

In this course you will be given:

- 1) In-class presentation on major PR ethical (business-management related) case study
- 2) Project-related paper
- 3) Capstone project
- 4) Final exam

These assignments are designed to sharpen your business management, research and , writing skills, and to enable you to identify public policy or business trends in order to produce more effective media business plans and proposals for your company, organization or clients.

Individual Assignments

1. Working with instructor, identify a major PR ethical or legal (business management-related) case study to be presented to class. You will need to get your topic approved prior to researching and presenting. (Length: Up to 5 pages) Your paper will be due Week 5. Brief in-class presentations will be Weeks 5 and 6. *(15 points)*
2. Students will be paired up for two projects. First, students will design a PR firm from the ground up. Paper specifications will be provided to students, but in general terms, papers should hit on all the major themes discussed in the first half of the course, such as service focus, staffing, growth plans, partners, etc. Your paper is due Week 6 (Length: Up to 8 pages) Brief in-class presentations will be Week 6 and 7. *(20 points)*
3. Again working in pairs, students will find an RFP that might be appropriate for their newly designed agency. They must prepare a proposal response to that RFP (Length: Up to 10 pages). The paper will be turned in on Week 9. Presentations *as if given to real client* will be held on Week 9. *(25 points)*
4. During the final class, you will be given a final exam. *(20 points)*

Class Participation

In addition to grades on your assignments and projects, you will be awarded points for your participation in each class discussion and activity. Therefore, it is important that you critically read all assigned texts and handouts and prepare your assignments according to the course guidelines. To be considered as participation, your comments must add to or further the discussion and reflect the comments of your classmates. In other words, your participation must add value – not just another opinion or casual observation – to the discussion. *(20 points)*

NOTE: You cannot make up participation points if you are absent.

Points Summary

Total points available = 100

- Major PR ethical or legal case study (15)
- Design-An-Agency Project (20)
- Proposal Presentation (25)
- Final exam (20)
- In-class participation (20)

Course Evaluation

Letter Grades

- A 94-100
- A- 90-93
- B+ 87-89
- B 83-86
- B- 80-82
- C+ 77-79
- C 73-76
- C- 70-72 (lowest grade to pass)
- D+ 67-69
- D 63-66
- D- 60-62
- F 59 or below
- I Incomplete:

I will grant an “I” grade if you fail to complete a small, discrete amount of work due to circumstances I deem legitimate and sufficient, your prior performance has been satisfactory, and you have a plan for completing the work. The “I” will convert to an “F” if you do not submit the missing work by the agreed-upon submission deadline.

Grading Standards

- **A:** In a business environment this assignment would distinguish you as a top communications professional in your organization. It represents work that is outstanding in every way; e.g., strong research, smart thinking, appropriate style, syntax, and grammar and demonstrates the strategic use of media relations to achieve a communications objective.
- **B:** In a business environment this work would reflect well on you and your organization. You completed the assignment, fulfilled all requirements, and contributed additional ideas and/or insights but the likely results would be relatively ordinary and not meet your communications objectives. The assignment would be judged as adequate but undistinguished.
- **C:** You completed the assignment and fulfilled the requirements but the work would not achieve all of your media relations/communications objectives without major revisions in logic, target media selection or approach strategy.
- **D:** You fulfilled some of the requirements of the assignment, but not all. This work would need to be completely reworked before it would represent you or your company professionally and achieve any meaningful media relations objectives.
- **F:** You did not submit the assignment.

2008 Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

- Overview of course
- Assignments and readings
- Discuss case study of project to identify the various themes to be presented throughout the course...staffing, finances (budgeting and profit), contracts, etc

Inside the Firm (Weeks 2-5)

Week 2: Agency or Department Structure

Readings: Managing a PR Firm - Chap 1, 2

Topics

- Agency side vs. Non-agency perspective (Corporate and non-profit side)
- Account executive or corporate employee
- Publicly traded vs. single owner vs. multiple owner
- Agency vs. In-house corporate
- Developing “picture” of who you are: Mission-vision statement

Week 3: Ethics and Legal Issues

Readings, Essentials of PR Management – Chap 7, 8
PRSA Code of Ethics

Topics

- Ethical case studies in budgeting and business management
- Typical challenges (Over-servicing, over-staffing, double billing, time tracking, internal staffing pressures, etc)
- Instilling an “ethical” culture
- Sarbanes Oxley
- Potential legal issues (case studies)
- Letters of agreement
- Contracts
- Non-competes

Week 4: Finances and Budgeting (Internal)

Readings: Managing a PR Firm - Chap 13
Essentials of PR Management – Chap 5

Topics

- Ways to make money – Client service, markups, placements, etc.
- Ways to charge – By placement, project, hourly, retainer, etc
- Budgeting to run the agency or department

- Creating and managing a budget for proposal
- Role of senior leadership in client management (e.g. CFO and CEO) and in reviewing and approving agency proposals
- Costing out work – competition’s pricing
- Retained relationships vs. project work
- Minimum thresholds of profitability
- Spreadsheets, financial statements

Week 5: Client Management

Paper One due (Ethics or Legal Issue)

Readings: Essentials of PR Management - Chap 1
 Managing a PR Firm - Chap 9, 10, 11, 12

Topics

- How to keep the client happy?
- When to resign?
- Project staff structure
- Monthly reporting
- Anticipating and managing the “bumps” in program (Timeline shifts, costs exceed budget, client cuts funds, key staff resigns, etc)

Reaching Outside the Firm (Weeks 6-8)

Week 6: Marketing the Firm

Paper Two due (Design A Firm)

Readings: Managing a PR Firm - Chap 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Topics

- Marketing the firm
- Keeping the firm growing with new business development
- Planning for staff growth
- Pushing for new clients vs. more business with current clients
- Keeping tabs on the competition
- Partnering with other PR agencies (pros and cons)
- National or international networks
- Subcontracting -- Identifying needs and potential vendors

Week 7: Request For Proposals

Readings: Copies provided

Topics

- Where to find RFPs
- What to look for
- How to interpret
- Making the “go/no go” decision

Week 8: Proposal Preparation and Evaluation (Capabilities and Budget)

Readings: Managing a PR Firm - Chap 14
Copies provided

Topics

- From the agency side: How to prepare response (Content, managing internally, presentation, etc.)
- From the client side: How to evaluate presentation

Week 9: Project Presentation

Paper Three due (Proposal)

Week 10: Final Exam