

Learning objectives

By successfully completing this assignment, students will apply some of the skills related to the professional practice of crisis communication. They will demonstrate they understand the basic theoretical and methodological notions of Crisis communication and that they possess a critical reflection on the ethical and social implications of its practice.

Students will research, identify, critique Crisis Communication activities as disseminated by an organization in crisis and extrapolate from said traces the strategic thinking that guided its crisis communication response.

The purpose of the assignment is for students to demonstrate their understanding of how organizations, through Crisis Communication, act strategically to reconcile with external publics who have been, or perceive to have been, offended by organizational action.

Assignment Description

Crisis Communication culminates in a proactive series of communication activities deployed within the public domain through media content: publicity, events, appearances, advertising and other electronic, printed or audiovisual communication tools and tactics.

Students will:

- Present an overview of the crisis
- Explain how the organization created, or is perceived to have created, the trigger event, or failed to either prevent it or adequately respond to the impact of the crisis within its area of responsibility
- Provide and analyze portions of the organization's communication response, or samples thereof
- Critique said response
- Reflect on the benefit or detriment to society of crisis communication, as illustrated by their case study
- For full marks, student should also ensure to refer to, or at least allude to, in their paper, the theories presented in-class.

Students are therefore tasked with identifying, describing and analyzing a current¹ Crisis Communication effort in order to demonstrate their knowledge of:

Strategic communication responses deployed by crisis-affected organizations;

Crisis communication plans, strategies and tools;

Skills related to the professional practice of crisis communication.

¹ Assignment restricted to campaigns that have taken place within the past eight years.

Ensuring Student Success

Final exam topic submission for approval (10%, marked as a test, deadline is noon, May 24th)
To be submitted on BlackBoard. Submission platform to be opened May 17th, at 6PM. No duplication, first registered gets the prize.

Submission comprises three main sections: an overview of the crisis, a description of initial findings, and the Proof of life section, which your professor will use to ensure students have indeed identified a crisis worthy of a case study.

Proof of life

Overview of research topic (60 words max)

Apple founder dies at 56

How Apple avoided a stock meltdown

Apple Inc.'s 2011 crisis communication campaign to avoid a repeat of shareholders' January 2009 reaction (30 billion \$ stock loss) following Steve Jobs' health problems as his death from cancer nears.

Advice: Student should treat this intro as a newspaper article lead (evocateur title, clear, crisp writing, 5Ws, stating the issue / challenge).

Corporate and News Media (50 words)

Apple statements about Jobs' health, Apple's Product launches (2008 to 2011) available on apple.com, Media articles including NYTimes and Ottawa Citizen, company valuation from ycharts.com.

Proof of life (ready to clic)

At least five hyperlinks leading directly to organizational discourse related to the crisis.

Identification

Last Name, Initial(s); Student ID

Final exam deadlines

The double deadline principle applies.

- a) Final take home exam to be returned by noon, June 17th, 2016, dropbox #15, DMS 11th Floor. To ensure students select an appropriate case study, exam topics will have to be submitted and approved by the professor.
- b) Also before noon, June 17th, 2016, submit an electronic file via BlackBoard along with any electronic materials (audio and video files).
- c) Failure to meet any one of these deadlines will result in late penalties of 33% for each day.
- d) Students who anticipate they will fail to meet the deadline must inform their professor by email (lbenoi2@uottawa.ca) to request an extension as soon as they realize the deadline cannot be met. Failure to contact the professor beforehand results in penalties being applied. Last minute requests for extension without medical note, exceptionally extenuating circumstances, will not be granted.
- e) April 29th, 2016, is the last day to submit term papers. After 12:00 (noon) that day, a grade of zero out of 45 % of the semester grade will be assigned.

Term Paper Content and Evaluation

Students present their findings in the form of a term paper that summarizes:

1. Overview of the crisis situation (10%)
 - a. Nature, scope, summary of event
 - b. Trigger event overview
 - c. Crisis Pattern Analysis (i.e. Maple Leaf and Rob Ford crisis patterns)
2. Organization(s) directly involved or impacted (10%)
 - a. State the organization central to your case
 - b. Briefly introduce other organizations involved or impacted.
 - c. Provide an audience segmentation (audience, crisis impact, perception)
 - d. Explain its role and responsibilities related to trigger event, using CMTs as analytical tool. Use bullets.
 - i. Executive cell: demonstrate understanding of strategic direction
 - ii. OPS cell: demonstrate knowledge of pertinent technical expertise required in crisis mitigation and resolution
 - iii. COM cell: explain ops-support, rep management, or both if warranted
3. Strategic organizational discourse (15%)

This is the central piece of your case study. Communications flows from your research and analysis of the crisis, its events, involved organizations and affected publics.

 - a. Provide, in table format, per audience, corresponding BIRT strategies and key messaging.
 - b. Summarize each strategic response and indicate whether, in student's opinion, the selected strategies were appropriate to the case
 - c. Critique and recommend improvements
4. Ethical reflection (5%)
 - a. Assess ethical and social implications of the campaign
5. Annexes (5%)
 - a. Media (either corporate media or news media) representing key evidence or highlights of the Crisis Communication response.
 - b. Key research findings (extracts from key report, academic paper or third party crisis analysis)
6. Bibliography
 - a. Minus one point for each incorrect citation
 - b. Students are responsible to adhere to Academic Fraud Regulation, available at the following link: <http://web5.uottawa.ca/mcs-smc/academicintegrity/regulation.php>.

Other considerations

Minus 5 points for incorrectly naming your file (see protocol).

Submission guidelines

1. Follow Table of contents as per Term Paper Contents.
2. The submission file, up to a maximum of 2,500 words, is in Word (.doc), not (.docx) and does not include any spaces in the file name
3. Follow this protocol for file naming
 1. Student ID, Case Study Title, i.e. 1234566_Apple_Surviving_Jobs
4. Follow APA formatting rules with care.
5. Except for tables and graphs, the text uses TNR, 12-point font; is double-spaced; don't use any **bold** text, nor underlining (except with URL addresses); review citations and references with a fine-toothed comb. All URL addresses in the text are activated and ready to click.
6. All images, figures, and tables are included in the submission file. Figures and images should be uploaded using the following image formats: BMP, TIFF, EPS, JPEG; not GIF.
7. All audio and/or video files have been saved as separate files and uploaded using the MPEG format (MP3 for audio and MPEG for video) and listed as an annexed List of additional files.
8. Cover page, Table of contents and Bibliography are mandatory and are not included in the 2,500 words maximum, neither are Annexes, or words within submitted media.