PRD GIFT Winner AEJMC 2019
"Think Different": How to Incite Creativity with a Two-word Campaign Challenge

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Rationale

Public relations students at Virginia Commonwealth University plan an advocacy campaign for a client in their service-learning capstone class. Students develop their campaigns following the ROPES PR model (research, objectives, programming, evaluation, and stewardship). This two-word challenge is assigned during the campaign programming stage. I use this assignment to promote creativity and to help students understand how their client's mission can inform campaign messaging. Students work in teams to create a series of two-word messages using Photoshop. Based on available class time, students are given 30-45 minutes for content creation. Then, the client judges and provides feedback on the final messages.

The client is invited to class for a mid-semester check-in and students are informed that the meeting will involve a competition. In class, students are separated into small teams and they are tasked with the two-word challenge. The class structure is as follows:
- Analyze past two-word campaigns, including REI's Opt Outside, Apple's Think Different, and Emerald Nuts' Yes Good
- Review theoretical concepts from the elaboration likelihood

model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)

- • Provide evidence for why simple, repetitive messaging enhances information recall
- • Discuss the client's mission statement and use it to brainstorm two-word messages
- • Work in teams to create a series of three messages in Photoshop
- • Pitch the messages to the client and receive feedback

This is an interactive assignment that gives students an opportunity to receive feedback on their campaign ideas before refining their strategies and tactics. Additionally, students in service-learning classes benefit from a mid-semester client meeting.

Student Learning Goals

Students will (1) enhance their teamwork and client communication skills in a fast-paced, deadline-driven environment, (2) recognize the importance of consistency in expressing a client's visual identity, and (3) demonstrate their abilities to use Adobe Photoshop to create digital content.

Connection to Public Relations Practice

Working with community partners is demanding and the greatest successes from this assignment come when clients challenge students' ideas. For instance, one team used emotional appeals to create two-word messages for their client, the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Figure 1). After the students shared their messages, the client stated they prefer messages that communicate hope rather than despair. The students welcomed this feedback and they changed their message strategies moving forward (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Initial two-word messages created by students for Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Figure 2: Modified message strategy based on client feedback

References

Kolowich, L. (2019). 8 brainstorming ideas to inspire brilliant pitches [web blog post]. Retrieved from: https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/brainstorm-productive

Oxley, N. L., Tettelbach, R., Eubanks, J., & Papkin, S. (2006). *Creative project team thinking*. Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2006—Latin America, Santiago, Chile. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute. Retrieved from https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/creative-project-team-thinking-brainstorming-8131

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*. New York, NY: Springer.

Appendix A
Assignment Description

Design a series of three messages that each contain only two words. These messages should aim to exemplify your client's mission and communicate their visual identity.

Step 1: Write down the client's mission statement and underline all words that you deem important, powerful, and action-oriented. List associated words and phrases using the word storm technique (Kolowich, 2019)

Please keep in mind the four basic rules of brainstorming from Oxley, Tettelbach, Eubanks, and Papkin, 2006:
- "list as many ideas as possible
- no idea is out of place
- innovation is welcome

• combine and improve ideas"

Step 2: Determine which word combinations you plan to use in your messages.

Step 3: Choose photos from the client's website or select royalty free images from https://unsplash.com.

Step 4: Create a Photoshop template with a consistent font (typeface, color, size) and photo filter. Remember to use the transformation controls to avoid distorting your pictures when placing them in the template.

Step 5: Export your messages to your Google Drive as .png and .psd files.

Step 6: Upload the .png files to the shared Google Slide for presentation.

Step 7: Designate one member of your group to present your messages to the client.

Step 8: Take note of the client's feedback and, if necessary, revise the messages by next class.

Student Learning Goals

- Enhance your teamwork and client communication skills in a fast-paced, deadline-driven environment
- Demonstrate your ability to use Adobe Photoshop to create digital content
- Recognize the importance of consistency in expressing your client's visual identity

Assessment

The client and I will give you feedback based on the following questions:

- Do these messages clearly communicate the client's mission?
- Is the visual design aesthetically pleasing, professional, and consistent between messages?
- Does the team clearly communicate their campaign ideas to the client?

Class Time Allocation

Timing	50-minute class	75-minute class
Introduction lesson	5 minutes	15 minutes
Content creation	30 minutes	45 minutes
Presentations	15 minutes	15 minutes

Equipment

Students can use Canva as a substitute for Photoshop if the class is taught in a room without access to Adobe Photoshop.

Appendix B
Student Examples

Client: Orchard House School

Mission: Orchard House School educates and inspires middle school girls in a responsive, academically engaging community that fosters each girl's intellectual curiosity, social responsibility, emotional integrity, and physical well-being.

Figure 3: Example messages for the Orchard House School

Client: Backyard Harvest

Mission: Backyard Harvest works in partnership with our community to connect those with extra fresh produce and those who need it most.

Figure 4: Example messages for Backyard Harvest

Client: Kade & Vos

Mission: At Kade & Vos, we actively participate in advocacy for equality and inclusive sizing in the fashion industry. Women of all sizes deserve a comfortable, luxurious, versatile, and sustainable cotton underwear that they can wear all day every day, no matter their size.

Figure 5: Example messages for Kade and Vos