

Sánchez Business Writing Assignment Sheets

In this course, students were asked to take on matters of place. Please click on the links below to read the assignment sheets for the following assignments:

Backgrounder Project: Students were responsible for conducting secondary research on a specific anticipated natural disaster and implement a plan for their fictional local businesses and organization to utilize resources for relief and aid. Students practiced writing specific communiques to check in on their progress.

Marketing Proposals: Using design and desktop publication software, students, in groups, adopted the role of marketing firms to communicate their vision for promoting commercial growth and tourism in specific places. Students presented their ideas to a panel of graduate students acting as decision-makers.

Job Documents: Students researched jobs that interested them and wrote cover letters and resumes that rhetorically addressed the expectations of each position. Students also developed video resumes to practice explaining their skills and interests concisely via technologically mediated means.



Project One: Backgrounder

Theme: Natural Disaster Preparedness

Description

For this assignment, consider the following scenario:

Your boss, Mr. K., has suddenly taken an active interest in an impending natural disaster that will likely strike your metropolitan area in the next three to five years. He wants the company to lead the way in coming up with innovative ideas in order to be at the front lines to help people in the area. He has asked you to do research on the imminent problem that will affect the area so that you can present it to the company's resource committee that meets in three weeks.

You would like to show that you have done enough research to come up with a proposal for the company to help manage resources after a (specific) disaster strikes the area.

This assignment asks you to do some background research on probable natural disasters that will strike a particular city or region. You will be able to choose whichever region and disaster you would like. You can also select the company and industry you work for, as long as they are based on real contexts. You will write a report and create a document using best-practice design and readability principles.

You will not be given explicit instructions on what should be in a backgrounder, what a backgrounder looks like, or what your boss is expecting. All you have to go off of is his informal comment in the hallway. Use this assignment to show how innovative, creative, and self-policing you can be.

Review the data on your chosen—and very real—natural disaster.
Review data on similar situations that have come before and what companies such as yours have done to manage the resource and safety of the public after disasters have struck.
List a few general recommendations based on your research.

Using the material in Professional Writing Online on reports, as well as our analysis of models and examples of reports, compose a report that documents your research findings. The aim of this report is to articulate the main positions that professionals take in relation to planning for natural disasters in a particular industry. To that end, using your “pull” research techniques, library research techniques, secondary research techniques, and your own industry knowledge, draft a report of appropriate length (content, images, appendices, graphs, etc.) that outlines these positions and gives decision makers relevant data for their work.

Deliverables

By the end of the unit, you will have turned in the following:

Weekly memorandums

Whitepaper/Backgrounder Report (paper)

Other classwork as needed

Assessment Criteria

I will have different assessment criteria for each backgrounder, as many of you will define the project differently. However, I will say that most other assessment criteria will apply here. This could include, but is not limited to:

- Professional ethos (see handout)
- Formatting
- Visual Design
- Clarity
- Conciseness
- Innovation/creativity
- Proper citation (MLA or APA)
- Appropriate number of sources and use of sources
- Accuracy
- Grammar and mechanics
- Use of outside resources
- Display of process
- Participation in peer review and instructor review
- Appropriate length
- Amount of text, visuals, and white space



Project Two: Marketing Proposal

Theme: Localities

Description

Consider this scenario:

A city or small town is looking to promote itself in order to lure new residents, tourists, and businesses within its city limits. They have put out a request for proposals in order to listen to different ideas that several marketing agencies have for promoting the area. Luckily, your firm is in the mix, but you have some heavy competition so you are going to need to be as creative and as accurate as possible in your ideas. In addition to creating marketing materials for the city/town, they have requested that you come up with at least one possible idea for beautifying or developing the city based on your research. You have six weeks to develop materials in order to represent your company in a positive and professional light--and to win the contract.

Project Two asks you to work in a group in order to develop marketing materials for a metropolitan region or small town that would like to enhance its city. Usually requests for proposals are very specific (we will look at some), however, this project asks you to come up with these pieces on your own (which area is looking; their hidden potential, their problems, what you can do about them, and so forth). The vast majority of the work for this project will ask you to work in teams in order to draft proposals, create mock-ups, and give a presentation on your bid. The following is a list of the deliverables, the majority of which are explained in some detail below.

Presentations:

Two-Minute Individual (Week 7)

Fifteen-to-Twenty-Minute Group (Week 12)

Deliverables:

An 11x17 poster w/o white edges (due with group presentation, Week 12)

Logbooks (due Fridays, Weeks 8, 9, 10, and 11)

Community Profile (Week 8)

Budget Proposal document (Week 9)

Annotated Bibliography (Week 10)

Team Evals (Week 12)

Mailings & Mockups (Week 12)

Two-minute Individual Presentation (Week 7)

On Friday, October 4th, you will give a brief (max 2-minute) oral presentation to the class that outlines your idea for this unit. You will detail what city or town you would like to focus on, your plans for promoting it, your ideas for beautifying an aspect of the region. You may use visuals only if you email them to me before 9:00am on September 30. There is no guarantee that we'll have time for them though, so have a secondary plan. Dress nicely for this presentation.

The class will vote on the best presentations. The students who present the four (or five) best ideas will become the managers for their teams (I will try to put people in teams as best as I can based on whom they thought had the best ideas). You will know your teams when we return from October Break.

Further Resources:

On page two of the Tips for Giving Oral Presentations section in PWO (1.9.3) we get the three of the most important tips for talks:

Tip 1: Answer in one memorable sentence a question about your main point, and frame it with your audience in mind.

Tip 2: Support your points visually.

Tip 3: Orchestrate your delivery.

These are fleshed out in more detail in the text, and there are plenty more tips to learn from.

Weekly logbooks (Weeks 8-11)

You must turn in weekly logs on everything that your group has done that week starting on week 8. Think of these as detailed journal entries or memos without page limits. Take copious notes on the work that everyone has done and how they have followed through with the work. I want to feel comfortable that I'm not micromanaging for you. With one or two exceptions, I expect these to be turned in to me as hard copies.

Community Profile (Week 8)

Because we will lack a real request for proposal, I will ask that you draw up a very crude profile of a) the place you are thinking of using as your potential client, b) your plans for marketing the city and c) your plans for beautifying some aspect of the city, along with any research you have done on the situation.

Proposal (Week 9)

Your ideas will cost money to implement. Normally towns and cities have a very set limit on how much they can allocate for these types of projects. I want you to get a good sense for how much whatever project you take on usually costs and set a price limit based on comparable request for proposals. You will submit a formal initial itemized budget three weeks before your final deliverables and presentation are due. This will allow me to get a good sense of what to expect. If you need to change the total, let me know ahead of time.

Annotated Bibliography (Week 10)

As with Project One, you need to have a healthy mix of popular, professional, scholarly (or technical) sources. Starting on week 8, keep track of all of your sources and write up a brief summary of each. We will go over the proper format of annotated bibliographies during Week 10, but in the meantime, just make a 1-2 paragraph summary for each source. I expect each person in the group to have summarized at least one popular and one technical/professional/scholarly source.

Mail Deliverable (Week 12)

Each group will include a packet along with their oral presentation. This packet should act as a reminder of everything you present when the committee is deciding whether or not to go with your proposal. Do not simply print out your PowerPoint presentation. Successful mail deliverables have been very creative in the past. Treat this like you would a professional proposal presentation. At the very least, include a detailed budget, samples of your proposed items, and contact information.

15-20 Minute Group Presentation, Mail Deliverables, Mock-Ups, 11x17 poster (Week 12)

Each group will present project results in a 15-20 minute presentation. Go through in detail and develop your response to the Request for Proposal that you drew up. I will act as the decision-maker who will pick the company to contract with—I may also invite guest decision-makers. Like your backgrounder, you should include case studies and appropriate visuals. Please support your presentation with a visual presentation tool.

With your group, think through the following issues of oral presentation:

1. The distance between speaker and audience (Audience Awareness): What kind of distance will your group try to establish? Why?
2. Good, understandable talks have:
 - a. A simple-to-follow pattern of points
 - b. A clearly marked structure
 - c. Supporting data and examples as needed (PWO par.8)

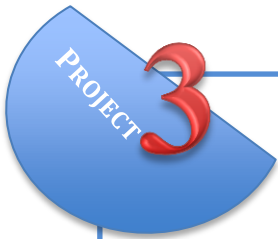
You should have all of your materials ready to go for this presentation, including the mailers, mock-ups, and poster that you create. Note: the poster must have no white edges.

Other work (Miscellaneous)

As with any work situation, be prepared to have other tasks just thrown on your desk with a quick turnaround time. Despite the short notice, you must still turn in usable and professional documents.

Grading

Grading for this project will be like any other project, with one exception. At the end of the group-project unit I will select one team to “win the account.” Although each team will likely present on different scenarios, there will be a clear winner across contexts. The team that wins the account will receive an automatic A for the project. Note that while this is a competition, the grades will not be competitive. Other teams might also make an A; those A’s will just not be automatic.



Project Three: Job Documents

Description

Project Three asks you to construct new or improve current job documents in order to make yourselves more marketable for professional applications. I know that several of you already have CVs and Resumes, but I will ask you to push yourselves in creating these documents and think outside the box whenever possible. The responsibility is on you to make this project as meaningful as possible: are there particular jobs that you want to apply for? What is the next level up? (what comes after the MA or after the entry level position?) What are alternate options for you at this point? These are a few questions for you to explore as you develop or refine your documents.

Deliverables:

Memo on Making Project Three Meaningful (Individual)

Detailed Job Report (Group)

Chronological and Functional Resumes (Individual)

Cover Letter (Individual)

Dossier of Company (Group)

Video Interview (Individual)

Reflection of Video Interview (Individual)

Other Requirements

Presentation of Video Interview (Group)

Readings (Individual)

Memo on Making This Project Meaningful (Week 13)

As alluded to above, everyone is at a different point in their professional development. In order to make sure that you gain something valuable from this project, you will submit a memo to me by Tuesday, November 12th at 5pm with a breakdown of the following information: your college major(s); your experiences ; which industry you see yourself as being most interested in; how will you make this project meaningful (see the description above for some of these ways). As with all memos, be specific.

Detailed Job Report (Week 13)

Before working on your job materials, you should get a good sense of what it means to search for and apply to jobs in a particular field. Based on your Memo, I will put you into groups with similar interests so that you can collaborate on this document. In these groups you will each search for at least 20 jobs in your field on a national or international scale, then

- 1) Provide each group members' list of jobs;
- 2) Describe the convergences that come up in your final lists;
- 3) Map out these opportunities in meaningful ways in Google Maps;

- 4) Look at the Bureau of Labor Statistics information online and discuss whether your research above matches what the BLS describes. (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>)

Chronological and Functional Resumes (Weeks 13 and 14)

We will be creating or revising our current resumes. You should upload them to the course site before the appropriate class. Depending on the day, we will be workshopping, peer reviewing, or revising resumes, so mind the dates.

Cover Letter (Week 14)

As with the resumes, we will be workshopping, reviewing, and revising our cover letters for a particular job. Please mind the dates and don't be late with your posts.

Dossier of Company (Weeks 14 and 15)

One of your group members will volunteer to present a video interview to the class (See below for more information). The entire group will create a Dossier for this volunteer to look over before the video interview. Some aspects to keep in mind here might be the company's values, accomplishments, current challenges, its products or services, the size of its assets, who owns it, and so forth. Think of this as a mini backgrounder. Include as much information as possible to help your volunteer.

Individual 2-minute Video Interviews/Resumes (Weeks 15 and 16)

The final two weeks will be dedicated to having you video record yourself in a faux interview setting. I would like you to record yourself looking into a camera and answering the types of questions that you may be asked during an interview. Your group will help to devise personal interview questions as well that are specific to your job. I will request a copy of these personalized interview questions. You must also turn in your video resume to me on some type of hardware that you don't care about losing, such as a USB drive or DVD.

Analysis of Video Interview (Week 16)

Along with your video, you will submit an analysis of your interview. Describe the video—what distracts you, what do you do well. Observe and discuss your behavior, body language, inflection, and surroundings. I expect you to be thorough. You can include time stamps if this helps you.

Group Video Interviews/Resumes (Week 16)

One of your group members will volunteer to present her/his interview to the class. Unlike the Individual Video Interview, the whole group must collaborate on presenting the best interview you possibly can. Someone can be the interviewer, someone can be in charge of picking the best location, someone can be in charge of coaching the interviewee. These can be filmed and refilmed as many times as needed until the production is just right. You will present these during the final week of class. Be prepared to defend your decisions, as I expect the entire class to be engaged and ask questions about your group's production decisions (last opportunity for ethos).

****Note, that the person who volunteers to be the interviewee does not have to submit a separate two-minute Individual Interview, but must still do an analysis.****