Learning Objectives

This group assignment is designed with several purposes in mind:

- To show the need for well-written business documents;
- To develop strength in writing a multitude of business documents of all types and tones;
- To emphasize the benefits of teamwork and understand the importance of team collaboration.

This assignment satisfies the following Marshall Writing 340 Learning Objectives: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, #9, #10. And, the following Marshall Learning Goals: #2, #3, #6.

At any stage of this project, feel free to meet with me as a group. Since this is a collaborative exercise that promotes teamwork, each member is expected to contribute equally to the assignment and not leave the work to one or two partners. Therefore, each person will receive the same grade for the group assignment.

Assignment

Your organization has designed a brand new product. Executives have come to your two departments, the Communication Division and the Research & Analytics Division, for assistance. They want your divisions to work together to describe and explain the product; to research the appropriate demographic for this product; and to provide suggestions on how the new product should be positioned in the market. It is now your super-team’s responsibility to create all of the communications and analytics for this new product and present it to a group of venture capitalists.

Step 1: Decide on the Product

You must decide on the product you'll be writing about. This item can be a newly-created product (for example, a living dinosaur) or an existing product that the company has designed with a new and different twist (think back to when Apple created the iPod Mini from the iPod). It can be something big (a flying car) or small (an electric skateboard). It can be serious (a new symphonic instrument) or fanciful (a new breed of dog). You cannot write about a product that currently exists in its present form. And, you cannot create an app (this is not a new product!).

Step 2: Perform Research and Analysis

Look at current products that are not at all similar to yours. Research how the products were sold. Find the items’ press releases. Study the products’ taglines and the description of the product on the packaging and in the press materials. See if you can find stories about the product in the newspaper or on the Internet.
Step 3: Prepare the Deliverables

Your team is responsible for creating all the communication and research/analysis for this new product. Remember: your team’s written words will officially define this product for the company and your team’s analytics will solidify the product’s demographics so whatever you write must be clear and must correctly describe the product, its position in the market and its audience.

Your team will be creating the following items:

- **Cover Letter** to the Venture Capitalists you’ll be presenting to. This document serves as a record of the team’s work – what you were tasked to do, your methodology, and a description of the final set of deliverables. Look at this as an Executive Summary of sorts; it should appear on top of the deliverables.

- **A full description of the product.** It should be clearly written so the product can be visualized from just the words on the page. It should include as many details as possible but be written in a fluid style that is easy to read and understand (in other words: prose style, not simply bullet points).

- **A short (succinct) description of the item that can be used on the packaging.** Start with your full description and edit it into a short, clear and concise description.
  - YES: This is a succinct description of the product that appears on the packaging.
  - NO: This is not a description of the packaging.

- **A tagline for the product.** Think about taglines for products you’re familiar with, such as “The Real Thing” (Coca-Cola), “Don’t leave home without it” (American Express), “The Ultimate Driving Machine” (BMW), “What’s in your wallet?” (Capital One). These are catchy and memorable.

- **Research and Analysis** on how and where to sell the product. For this component, you should do research on demographics (who will want to buy this product; who will use it; who has the money to pay for it). Consider this: the Marketing Department will depend upon your analytics when they create the marketing and advertising plan for the product.

- **A press release** announcing the product and including other pertinent information that you want the public to know, including:
  - Description of the product;
  - Story behind the product;
  - Quote from an executive;
  - Paragraph about the parent company.

- **An ad** for the product. This can be a print ad or an electronic ad. (Grading for this element will be based on the level of creativity shown.)

- **Bios** of all team members. These should be one paragraph, in prose form. Imagine yourself having a job at the company; now, come up with a title and the “experience” that got you to this position. Your “bio” should provide credibility of your background for the executives.

- **Power Point/Prezi Presentation** about the new product, created for a presentation to the Ventura Capitalists. Since your team is responsible for the product’s description and sales opportunities, it’s up to you to tell your audience how the product will be sold and positioned. A copy of the PPT presentation should be included with the deliverables.

- **Meeting Minutes.** A written memo of each group meeting, including an agenda of topics covered; who attended the meeting; the time and location of each meeting; and a comment on each decision made. Present these when you hand in your final written materials. NOTE: I suggest you write up the minutes of each meeting immediately after the meeting takes place; do NOT wait until the night before the project is due to create this element. Doing this will not make you happy!

The deliverables should be bound and presented in a professional manner, with a Title Page, Table of Contents (if desired), appropriate sections, possible graphics, page numbers, etc. Remember: you are presenting this to one or more Venture Capitalists so the tone, style and presentation must reflect that.
**Step 4: Make the Formal Presentation**

Each group will present its proposal in a *formal oral presentation* to the Venture Capitalists interested in funding this project. Professional comportment (and dress) will be required. All students are required to attend every presentation.

**Grading**

The project is worth 19% (150 points) of the semester grade.

Grading will be judged on several criteria:
- Clarity of writing
- Depth of writing (how rich/detailed are the long and short descriptions; what kinds of details are included in the product’s analytics; how thorough is the press release)
- Creativity (how creative is the ad; how catchy is the tagline)
- Professional quality of the written deliverables
- Oral Presentation (how professional is the presentation, including Power Point, comportment, team chemistry and energy)

The points will be allocated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cover Letter</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Elements</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading is by the group and will be based on the effectiveness of the group’s organization and teamwork, the strength and depth of the written materials, the quality of the presentation and on the oral component’s preparation and strength of delivery.

Note: The group grade may be negatively affected by the quality of an individual’s participation in the written element. I reserve the right to change an individual’s grade if it has been documented and proven that a particular member has not participated in the written element to the full extent of the project.

Have fun and good luck!
GROUP PROJECT ASSIGNMENT

LIST OF DUE DATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs., Feb 23</td>
<td><strong>Group Assignment delivered.</strong> Please note: you will have several opportunities during the semester to work with your team in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues., Mar 28</td>
<td><strong>Group Project Update Memo due.</strong> This memo should inform me of your team's progress to date – the topic, the research and work you’ve done to date, who is responsible for which component. The memo must be detailed and submitted to me before the end of your class period on this date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs., Mar 30</td>
<td><strong>Computer Lab, BRI 202A.</strong> Your team will have an opportunity to work together on the project. This is the last chance for your team to work on the project in class before presentations are delivered.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues., Apr 4</td>
<td><strong>Group Presentations.</strong> All members of each group must participate in the presentation. <strong>All components of the project are due on November 15.</strong></td>
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<td>Tues., Apr 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs., Apr 13</td>
<td></td>
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1 As in any typical work situation, deadlines are established by your supervisor but the responsibility for meeting those deadlines is on you! I will not be reminding you of any upcoming due dates; instead, I expect you will make note of all deadlines and adhere to them on your own.