



PBRL 2288 (01) Summer 2026

PR Case Study: Learning to Think Strategically

A case study is a detailed analysis of a specific phenomenon (e.g., issue, project, activity, situation, campaign). Academically, this assignment provides a space to strategically and critically analyze a specific case of public relations practice in your co-op work placement. Professionally, it develops the report-writing skills necessary in today's workplace. You will analyze your case in the context of what you have learned in the classroom and in the workplace about public relations. Through this assignment, you have the opportunity to reflect on and synthesize your learnings to date.

Objectives

You will select a case for analysis. In this case study, you will:

- Discuss how public relations is practiced in an organizational context, with reference to the specific case you selected.
- Analyze your case by identifying its communication objectives, drawing on public relations theory and/or historical precedents, and showing how success is or could be evaluated.
- Draw sound conclusions and make feasible and valid recommendations that may apply to future cases.

Individual Case Study Selection and Development

- Select a case study focus based on something you are observing and/or engaging with at your current place of co-op employment.
- Develop a topic and outline for your case study.
- Throughout your work term, compile relevant background information and work samples that may help you write the case study report.
- Begin your research and report writing early. Make it an ongoing part of your daily routine.
- If you have questions about the direction or content of your case study, consult the faculty co-op advisor. Email to schedule a meeting.

Deadline

Submit your assignment via Moodle by 11:59 p.m. ADT on Friday, August 21, 2026. Meeting deadlines is critical in public relations. Late work will not be accepted. You are expected to stay on top of your workload, and it is your responsibility to inform the faculty advisor before a problem arises that could prevent you from meeting the deadline. Other arrangements may be possible under certain circumstances.

Format

The case study report should be 1,500-2,000 words, not including the title page, table of contents, references, or appendices. Use 11-point serif font, a ragged right margin (left aligned), and double-spaced lines. Ensure the pages are numbered. See the template on the final page of these instructions for a sample title page. You may add appendices to share samples of materials referred to in the text.

Submission Requirements

- Submit an MS Word file (.docx). You may submit a second/duplicate PDF file to preserve formatting, if you wish.
- Label your submission using this standard: SurnameIN[initials]-2288-S26-CaseStudy (e.g., SmithA-2288-S26-CaseStudy.docx)
- If you have materials (e.g., work samples) that cannot be submitted through Moodle, please advise the faculty advisor in advance of the deadline to arrange submission. Late work is not accepted.

Structure of the Case Study Assignment

This structure is offered as an example. Structure your paper in a way that best fits your case.

Table of Contents

List the sections in your report and appropriate page numbers.

Executive Summary (no more than one page)

Provide a concise overview of each section of the report. It is more detailed than an abstract and is part of the report. Write this summary so the reader can understand the case, the action taken, the results of any evaluation, and your recommendations without having to read the full report. It may help to envision your reader as your boss's boss (e.g. if you report to the Director of Communications, write as if their boss may be reading your executive summary).

Background Information

Provide context for someone with no knowledge of the organization. This section comprises a short overview of the organization and of how public relations is positioned within it, including the department's/management's approach to public relations practice.

Description of the Case

Provide history, evolution, and circumstances. Describe the issue, problem, project or activity that is the subject of your case study. Include a brief history or context, along with a summary of the evolution of the case and its consequences or impacts on the organization. For example, if analyzing an issue, consider how it arose, what risks it posed for the organization, and what the consequences might be if left unresolved. If analyzing a project, consider why the organization launched the project, what need it was meant to address, and what the impacts might be of success (or failure).

Objectives

Identify the measurable objectives. Success in any planning process depends on setting concrete and measurable objectives. In public relations practice, this means communication objectives. What is the organization trying to communicate and to whom? That is, what is it that the organization's publics need to know, be aware of, or understand about the case? These objectives may be expressed explicitly in planning documents but, if not, use your knowledge of the case to intuit what the objectives could be.

Analysis

Discuss steps followed to meet the objectives. Describe the actions taken or the products developed and analyze how well these actions or products reflect and respond to the objectives. Identify the human and financial resources available and any difficulties faced in delivering on the objectives. Draw on public relations theory and/or identify earlier examples of similar cases in your organization or other organizations. Is there a theoretical basis for the organization's approach or some precedents that support (or contrast with) the actions taken?

Evaluation of the Solution

Discuss the evaluation strategy. One of the key public relations functions is to evaluate outcomes and determine if the activities achieved the objectives. If this was not done in your workplace, this section allows you the opportunity to propose an evaluation strategy which can assess whether the objectives in your case have been met or can be met. Your strategy should include a reasonable time frame, be affordable given the resources available, and show how the success or failure of the objectives can be measured. Please note that it may not be feasible to fully implement an evaluation strategy before the end of your co-op term.

Conclusions & Recommendations (approximately one page)

Describe your conclusions about the case and proposed alternatives. Think critically. Develop your own argument(s) about the effectiveness of the strategies employed or the actions taken. Are there alternative strategies or approaches that may have been more effective? Do the solutions make sense given the resources available? Were there lessons learned in your case that could assist the organization if similar conditions were to arise in the future, or that could assist you in your own future public relations practice?

Citations

Adhere to the guidelines of the American Psychological Association (7th edition) for citations. The complete APA guide is always on reserve in the library or you can refer to the [précis on the Library's website](#). An online search will yield other websites with explanations and examples of APA 7 style.

Assessment

You will receive a 'pass' or 'fail' grade for the case study assignment (just as for the course). If your case study does not meet the stated objectives, you will receive a failing grade, and you may be asked to resubmit your assignment if it could receive a 'pass' with reasonable revisions. A revised assignment must be resubmitted by the date specified by the faculty advisor, usually within five business days. You will have only one chance to re-write a work term assignment. Failure to revise the assignment to a satisfactory level will result in a failing grade for the co-op term.

Sample Title Page

YOUR NAME (Student ID)

Name of your co-op employer

City, Province

Date of submission

MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

Department of Communication Studies

PBRL 2288 (01) S2025

Case Study Report

TITLE FOR THE REPORT

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Tracy Moniz

Co-op Position: Note your title here (e.g., Communications Assistant)

Word Count: Word count, excluding title page, contents, reference list, and appendices