BUSINESS COMMUNICATION MEMORANDUM

DATE: FALL 2021

TO: VBP PARTICIPANTS

FROM: VBP MANAGEMENT TEAM

RE: Virtual Business Professional (VBP) project

Project Goals

This project emphasizes the development of critical-thinking, communication, and team-building skills among students with the following specific goals:

1. Help you learn how to collaborate in virtual teams
2. Introduce you to a virtual communication platform and emerging smart meeting tools
3. Have you assess your effectiveness in the virtual collaboration process
4. Teach you leadership skills in virtual collaboration projects
5. Provide you an opportunity to examine, analyze, and assess a real organizational challenge and provide recommendations
6. Collaboratively write a professional report about your findings.

Consulting Challenge (Your Consulting Challenge Will Be Based on Which Company Your Team Chooses)

You will be participating in a collaborative business writing competition. Your professors will choose the top three reports for each company. A company representative will select the winning team. You will be notified about the results at the end of the project. **Your team will choose one of the participating companies: Google, Netflix, and SpaceX**.

You will evaluate the online reputation of your chosen company. Specifically, you'll do the following:

1. Identify elements of the company's online presence, such as a web page, Facebook page, Twitter feed, Instagram page, blog, and so on.
2. Analyze the quality of online presence in terms of building and maintaining the company's reputation. Identify major conclusions about your company's online presence. You must use the criteria from your reading (Dowling &Moran, 2012) to evaluate the company's reputation (built in or bolted on) and provide evidence for your conclusions. Your report must identify whether the company is conveying its core values through its social media use.
3. Provide recommendations for how the company can improve its online presence that address each of your conclusions. As needed, provide additional evidence for these recommendations.
4. Write a report that introduces the company's online communication tools, provides an analysis of its online presence, and offers recommendations for improvements. The report should be up to **five page** long (single-spaced, about 2500 words, **excluding** an executive summary, table of contents, and Works Cited page).

The top three reports will be forwarded to Google, Netflix, and SpaceX for their review and consideration.

Team Composition

You will be joining a global team comprised of students from different universities across the world. Your membership in the team will be randomly assigned. Your professor will notify you about the composition of your team before the start of the project.

Communication Platforms

You will use a combination of Slack and Zoom for your virtual team communication. You will work in Slack online communities where you will exchange documents, edit documents, and use its messaging system. Please refer to the document "How to set up your virtual communication infrastructure" (posted on the password-protected VBP website).

Course Materials

A variety of handouts, articles, and videos are required for part of the VBP program. These materials can be accessed at the following site:

https://www.marshall.usc.edu/departments/business-communication/vbp-project/vbp-course-materials
(password: vbp2021)

Grading
The grading is based on your participation in the project, completion of all of the assigned steps, and the quality of your report. The project weekly activities **are due by the end of due date (midnight) EST**:

PROJECT SCHEDULE AND ACTIVITIES

Week	Individual tasks and Group Activities	Readings and videos	Percentage	Due date
0	• Create your free Slack and Zoom accounts, upload your profile picture, and download the Slack and Zoom mobile apps. • Create your VBP Slack team workspace (refer to "How to set up your virtual communication infrastructure"). *Just one person will set up the workspace. You'll see the primary designee in your team member list.* • Watch the video "How to use Slack" and familiarize yourself with the platform • Familiarize yourself with how to turn on captions in Zoom • Complete MBTI assessment online (https://www.16personalities.com/)	https://slack.com/features#why-slack https://get.slack.help/hc/en-us		Oct 4

Week	Individual tasks and Group Activities	Readings and videos	Percentage	Due date
	• Complete the Pre-survey <u>after</u> you have taken the MBTI assessment (https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/vbp-pre-fall-2021)			
1	• Contact your team members to schedule the first team meeting • Complete the assigned reading and watch an instructional video.	Larson, B.Z. & **Makarius, E.E. (2018). The Virtual Work Skills You Need** — Even If You Never Work Remotely. *Harvard Business Review* Video #1: virtual team collaboration		Oct 11
2	• **Hold Team meeting #1:** ○ Discuss your personality profiles using the handout "Week 2 VBP Teambuilding exercise" ○ Share the following with one another: your hobbies and interests; something unique about the city where you currently live or about your hometown; and your favorite vacation. ○ Create a team charter (use provided template; Appendix A) for the project • Post your team charter in your Slack workspace AND on your local course management system	Molinsky, A. & Gundling, E. (2016). How to Build Trust in Your Cross-Cultural Team. *Harvard Business Review*, June 2016. Video #2: cross-cultural collaboration	10	Oct 18
3	**Individual Meeting Preparation** Take 1 to 2 hours to do some cursory research on Google, Amazon, and SpaceX and familiarize yourself with the assignment prompts. Prepare a document "Meeting Preparation: Company Proposal" that includes the following: • Choose one of the three companies and explain why you think that this company would be the best choice. • Identify the organization's online presence (website, company blog, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, other social networking websites). • Decide which platforms/aspects your team will focus on and why these platforms/aspects would make an interesting case for the analysis and be ready to share at the meeting. *Each team member does this individually so that the entire team has good options to choose from	Dowling, G. and Moran, P. (2012). Corporate Reputations: Built In or Bolted On? *California Management Review*, 54(2), 25-42. Video#3: corporate reputation management	10	Oct 20
3	**Meeting minutes: Project Plan** **Hold team meeting #2 and use provided template to include the following information in your meeting minutes:** • Complete the Meeting Transcription Activity. See details in the "Week_3_Meeting-		10	Oct 25

Week	Individual tasks and Group Activities	Readings and videos	Percentage	Due date
	Transcript-Assignment" in the online course materials (following this activity, you take a two-minute poll: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/otter-ai-fall-2021). Include a summary of your team's experiences with Otter.ai as part of the meeting minutes. • Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of each platform discussed. • Provide an action plan with tasks and due dates for each team member • Post your team meeting minutes (template provided in Appendix B) in your Slack workspace AND on your local course management system.			
4-5	**Draft of your formal report** • Read "VBP_guidelines for your report" • Complete your analysis of different social media platforms and share on Slack for your team members to review and discuss. • **Hold team meeting #3** to consolidate your analysis and discuss actionable recommendations to be included in the report. • Post your team meeting minutes using the provided template (Appendix B) in your Slack workspace AND on your local course management system	Video #5: collaborative writing Wilson, H. J., Guinan PJ, Parise S., Bruce D. Weinberg B.D. (2011). What is your social media strategy? *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2011.	10	Nov 3
5	• Post your completed draft in your Slack workspace AND on your local course management system. (It doesn't have to be complete, but it has to include all team member contributions identified by name).		10	Nov 8
6	**Final Report** • Post your final report on Turnitin website (one report per team; information will be provided) AND on your local course management system. • Complete post-survey (link will be provided) • Complete Team member evaluation on http://teammatesv4.appspot.com/ (instructions will be provided)	Team evaluation and post-survey must be completed to receive credit for the project	50	Nov 15

GRADING BREAKDOWN	Percentage
• **Participation**	50%
• **Formal Report**	50%
Total	**100%**

APPENDIX A: Team Charter Template

Team Charter for [INSERT TEAM NAME]		
Purpose (What is the purpose of being a team?):	Goals (What are measurable and specific goals that support and link to the purpose?):	
Team Member Roles and Responsibilities		
Name & email	Role	Task
Team Rules		
Ground Rules (see examples provides below): 1. Meetings will start on time (penalties will be enforced for lateness) 2. We will have an agenda for each meeting 3. Work responsibilities must be fulfilled on time. 4. Consensus will be used for decision-making.	Communication Protocol: *Primary mode of communication:* *Frequency of communication:* *Response time:* *Who is primary communication coordinator?* *Who will communicate what to whom (meaning, not all members necessarily need all information):*	

APPENDIX B: Meeting Minutes Template

Team Name: _____

Meeting purpose: _____

Date: _____   Start time: _____   End time: _____

Meeting attendees (list by name):

Absent (list by name and indicate if the participants notified the team about their absence ahead of time):

Agenda item #1: Taken from Agenda
Discussion (optional): Brief description of discussed topics

Agenda item #2: Taken from Agenda
Discussion (optional): Brief description of discussed topics

Agenda item #3: Taken from Agenda
Discussion (optional): Brief description of discussed topics

Action Items	Responsibility	End product	Due Date
Insert very specific action items, steps to be included in each high-level action plan phase.	Assign to specific person(s), not the entire team.	Describe as a tangible, completed product.	Determine the target date for completion.