

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER

MAY, 2010

(FULL TIME / IDE STUDENTS).

TITLE OF PAPER : PUBLIC RELATIONS

COURSE CODE : BA 523 / IDE BA 523

TIME ALLOWED : THREE (3) HOURS

- INSTRUCTIONS :
- (1) TOTAL NUMBER OF QUESTIONS IN THIS PAPER IS SIX (6)
 - (2) THE PAPER CONSISTS OF SECTION A AND SECTION B.
 - (3) ANSWER THE QUESTION IN SECTION A WHICH IS COMPULSORY AND ANY THREE (3) QUESTIONS IN SECTION B.
 - (4) THE MARKS ALLOTTED FOR A QUESTION /PART OF A QUESTION ARE INDICATED AT THE END OF EACH QUESTION / PART OF QUESTION.
 - (5) WHERE APPLICABLE, ALL WORKINGS / CALCULATIONS MUST BE CLEARLY SHOWN.

NOTE: MAXIMUM MARKS WILL BE AWARDED FOR GOOD QUALITY LAYOUT, ACCURACY, AND PRESENTATION OF WORK.

THIS PAPER MUST NOT BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR.

GOOD LUCK !!!

SECTION A: COMPULSORY**QUESTION 1** Read the case and answer the questions that follow:**CASE: BAGGING THE ELLUSIVE EXCLUSIVE**

“How can we maximize publicity on the new survey?” asked Sarah Jane Persimmon, vice president for public relations of Quagmire, Inc.

Quagmire, one of the nation’s largest asset management firms, catering to the wealthiest Americans, had finished conducting its first survey of the “Attitudes of the Affluent.” The survey had been the brain child of Quagmire President R. Ulrich Widmee.

President Widmee had been hopeful that by maximizing publicity on the survey’s findings, Quagmire would be linked positively to its target audience, “What would be great,” he told Sarah, Jane as they discussed the survey, “would be a major piece in the *Wall Street Journal* that our clients would notice.”

He left it to Sarah Jane and her public relations department to figure out how to achieve the firm’s publicity goals.

“I’ve got it,” breathlessly responded Samantha Shram, one of the department’s newest associates. ‘Let’s have a press conference and have the president preside.’”

Sarah Jane was loath to stage a press conference, aware of the liabilities that press conferences always evoked. But this time, in light of the company’s new survey data, she was intrigued.

The survey had revealed that despite terrorist attacks and stock market declines, affluent Americans were still optimistic about the economy and the market.

“This should be big news,” Sarah Jane said. “The entire business press will be interested, and I’m certain we can get R.U. on the cable channels **too**. So we need a splash, and a press conference may just be the ticket. Samantha, you take charge.”

“Gladly,” answered Samantha.

THE MEDIA PLAN

Samantha's first step was to devise the media plan, including targets and literature. She decided to invite all the leading business dailies and periodicals, as well as CNN, CNBC, Fox News, MSNBC, and the local Chicago affiliates. She planned to notify the media with a "Media Advisory" on Tuesday, alerting them to a "news conference of major significance on next Monday."

She recommended and Sarah Jane agreed that President R.U. Widmee would host the conference and reveal the findings of the survey. It would be held in the wood-paneled Quagmire boardroom. Canapés, finger sandwiches, and assorted cookies would be available. (Samantha knew the press had a "nose for news" and a "stomach for food.")

Samantha carefully worded the advisory, so as not to give away the primary findings. She wrote:

The results of Quagmire, Inc.'s first survey of the most affluent Americans will be revealed by President R. Ulrich Widmee at 11 AM. Monday in Quagmire's boardroom.

Among the findings that will be reported include:

1. Affluent attitudes post terrorist attacks and stock market losses
2. Affluent confidence or lack thereof in the economy and the administration
3. Affluent investment strategy in an uncertain time
4. Affluent primary concerns for their children and themselves

We know this will be a much-discussed survey, and we hope you can be with us.

In light of the subject matter, the prestige of Quagmire, and the fact that the company's president would preside made Samantha feel confident she would draw a full house on Monday. She messengered the advisories to every top journalist in town.

THE EXUBERANT RESPONSE

By Thursday, Quagmire had already received 10 acceptances to the press conference, including *the New York Times*, *CNN*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Chicago Sun Times*, among others.

"This is going to be great," Sarah Jane exulted to Samantha. "You're doing a great job." And Samantha, in all humility, agreed with her superior officer's assessment, particularly when she got the encouraging voice mail from Max Womflash, the *Wall Street Journal's* asset management editor.

"I got your note about the new survey. It sounds intriguing. Please call me."
"Bingo," shouted Samantha. "The Journal is hot to trot."
She dialed back immediately to reel in the big fish.

THE FLY IN THE PUNCH BOWL

"Max, hi, Samantha Shram returning your call."

"Hey Samantha. Listen, this survey of yours sounds fascinating. We're very interested and would like to take a look at it."

"Great, Max. But I'm afraid you'll have to wait till Monday for that. But I know R.U. would love to speak with you personally about it, maybe just after the press conference."

"Samantha, you don't understand. We really need to see the survey before the press conference. If we like it and can have it exclusively before the press conference, then we'll run a piece in the *Journal* on Monday morning."

"But, Max, that's the day of our press conference. If you run the story in advance of the press conference, I'm going to have 20 very upset journalists on my hands."

"I guess that's why they pay you the big bucks, Samantha. Anyway, the only way we'll use the story is if we run it in advance. If we can't get it early, then we won't be at the press conference. Sorry. But that's the rules."

"Max, you're putting me in an impossible box."

"Sorry about that. But I don't need a decision on it right now. But I will need one in an hour. Lemme know."

Questions:

- (a) What are Samantha's options in deciding on the response and what would be the pros and cons of each option?
(10 marks)
- (b) What factors should you take into consideration when handling the media?
(20 marks)
- (c) Discuss the five major steps you would follow when organizing a press conference
(20 marks)

Total marks [40 marks]

SECTION B:
ANSWER ANY THREE (3) QUESTIONS:

QUESTION 2

The recent allegation that some examination papers were found in a local bar has created a negative publicity for the Swaziland Examinations Council. Advise the members of the Council on the process they would follow in preparing for the public relations campaign on this issue.

[20 marks]

QUESTION 3

As public relations practitioner, you have been assigned a role of conducting a research. Explain the methods you would apply in public relations research.

[20 marks]

QUESTION 4

If organizations wish to sustain their positions of power in society, they have to accept their social responsibilities. Discuss. [20 marks]

QUESTION 5

Discuss the relevance of understanding ethics and the ethical standards that have to be adhered to within the public relations profession

[20 marks]

QUESTION 6

- (a). The greatest test for any public relations practitioner is the ability to manage in crisis and in almost all crisis there are instant warning signs that invariably appear. Discuss [10 marks]
- (b). What advice would you give to an organization facing crisis? [10 marks]

Total marks [20 marks]