

Digital Public Relations (A704098)

Course size	<i>(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)</i>			
Credits 5.0	Study time 150 h	Contact hrs	45.0 h	

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2023-2024

A (semester 1)	English	Gent	lecture
			seminar
			independent work

Lecturers in academic year 2023-2024

Soens, Ellen	LW22	staff member
Claeys, An-Sofie	LW22	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2023-2024

	crdts	offering
Postgraduate Certificate Computer-Assisted Language Mediation	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Digital communication, public relations, internal communication, external communication, corporate communication, social media

Position of the course

The course 'Digital public relations' familiarizes students with the strategic use of digital media for the internal and external communication of organizations. When organizations apply digital media strategically, they can strengthen or repair their relationship with internal as well as external stakeholders. These same stakeholders can use digital media to put pressure on the reputation of companies or help build it together.

Employees can turn into brand ambassadors and shape their organization's conversational human voice through social media or defend the company in times of crisis. At the same time, employers often tend to see the risks associated with social media in the workplace. They fear cyberloafing, criticism or leaks of confidential information. For external communication, social media offer an extra tool in addition to more traditional press releases and press conferences to address stakeholders. At the same time, well-intended social media campaigns can become the victim of hashtag hijacking. In the context of crisis communication, social media offer a way to monitor issues, to determine the sentiment among the public and to address stakeholders without traditional media functioning as gatekeepers. At the same time, however, those same social media oftentimes start new crises.

Digital media can therefore be considered a two-sided sword within public relations. In this course, students will learn to maximize the advantages of digital media for internal and external communication and limit the risks. The classes encompass both a theoretical component, in which students learn how to apply digital media strategically for public relations, and a practical component, in which skills will be taught.

Contents

The course 'Digital public relations' familiarizes students with the most important theories, concepts and strategies within the area of digital corporate communication. Both the internal and external communication of organizations will be discussed. In addition, students learn to

apply theory to practice through insights from guest speakers, specific cases and assignments. With regard to external communication, we discuss concepts like conversational human voice, dialogue in public relations and the role of authenticity in the communication via social media. In addition, explicit attention is paid to crisis communication, because digital media can be both cause and solution during times of organizational distress. With regard to internal communication, students will learn how organizations can best formulate social media guidelines in order to maximize the opportunities of employees' work-related social media use (e.g., corporate ambassadorship) and to minimize the risks (e.g., cyberloafing, leaking confidential information). Students finally learn how to develop an effective employee ambassador program.

Initial competences

The student has a good command of English.

Final competences

- 1 Explain the most important theories and concepts within the area of digital public relations.
- 2 Predict the impact of digital strategies for internal and external corporate communication.
- 3 Evaluate digital PR-campaigns.
- 4 Apply theoretical insights regarding strategies for digital public relations to specific cases.
- 5 Develop a theoretically underpinned social media policy for employees.
- 6 Develop digital communication actions.
- 7 Develop an employee ambassador campaign.
- 8 Use digital media to assess the impact of a crisis on the reputation of an organization.
- 9 Select effective strategies to limit the impact of a crisis.

Conditions for credit contract

This course unit cannot be taken via a credit contract

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Lecture, seminar, self-reliant study activities

Extra information on the teaching methods

Classes, seminar, self-reliant study activities

Due to Covid-19, it is possible that teaching and assessment methods may deviate from the ones described.

Learning materials and price

Hand-outs.

Ufora: Online documentation and cases.

Estimated cost: 0 EUR

References

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- Crijns, H., Cauberghe, V., Hudders, L., & Claeys, A.-S. (2017). How to deal with online consumer comments during a crisis? The impact of personalized organizational responses on organizational reputation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 75, 619-631. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.05.046>
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Roshan, M., Warren, M., & Carr, R. (2016). Understanding the use of social media by organisations for crisis communication. *Computers in Human Behavior, 63*, 350-361. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.05.016>

Sanderson, J., Barnes, K., Williamson, C., & Kian, E.T. (2016). 'How could anyone have predicted that #AskJameis would go horribly wrong?' public relations, social media, and hashtag hijacking. *Public Relations Review, 42*(1), 31-37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.11.005>

Soens, E., & Claeys, A.-S. (2021). Can organizations guide employees' social media behavior? The benefits of incentive rather than restrictive social media guidelines. *Journal of Communication Management, 25*(4), 454-471. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-02-2021-0017>

Thelen, P. D. (2021). Employee Advocates: Unlocking Their Power Through Internal Communication. In L. R. Men & A. Tkalac Verčič (Eds.), *Current Trends and Issues in Internal Communication* (pp. 75-92). Springer International Publishing.

Course content-related study coaching

Interactive support via UFORA and during classes. Individual and collective feedback during classes, via e-mail or via UFORA.

Evaluation methods

continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the first examination period

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the second examination period

Examination methods in case of permanent evaluation

Participation, assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent evaluation

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

First session:

Besides the assignments, the (permanent) evaluation is based on attendance and participation during classes.

Group assignments, some of which accompanied by presentations.

Individual assignment about a theme discussed during classes.

Second session:

Same, group assignments can be altered to an individual assignment.

Calculation of the examination mark

Group assignments (60%), individual assignment (30%), permanent evaluation of cooperation and approach to cases during classes (10%).

In order to pass, students need to participate in at least 80% of all evaluations and obligatory activities such as guest lectures. In case of legitimate absence, an individual assignment can be fulfilled instead.

The partial marks of assignments for which the student passed during the first session, will be transferred to the second session.

Facilities for Working Students

Student attendance during educational activities is required and participation during classes is part of the assessment. Livestream and/or lecture recordings are provided. Limited possibility of feedback by e-mail.