



Preparing to Speak at Staples, Inc.

TEACHING NOTE

Purpose of Case Study

1. To introduce the topic of developing business presentations.
2. To encourage students to think about the issues involved in giving a successful presentation.
3. To help students recognize the importance of excellent verbal communication skills in furthering the strategic business objectives of a company.
4. To enhance student understanding of the media's role in certain public speaking events.

This case study lends itself best to classroom discussion and is useful for highlighting the basic considerations for successful speech preparation – audience, purpose, and occasion – and how these affect message development and delivery.

Identify the Business Problem

Staples, Inc. is about to make a huge announcement that has the potential to enhance business for the company in a number of ways. First, the name Staples becomes part of the pop cultural fabric of Los Angeles; second, the company's public image is enhanced by its association with such a popular venue; and third, Staples will continue to benefit from the “free publicity” that the name of the arena will generate for as long as the arena exists. While this is a major coup for Staples, there are certainly people watching this announcement who may be less enthusiastic

This teaching note was prepared by Cynthia Maciejczyk under the direction of James O'Rourke, Concurrent Professor of Management, as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation.

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about it (sports fans, perhaps, and certainly Staples' major competitors). At this press conference, it's crucial that Thomas G. Stemberg, CEO of Staples, deliver just the right message to the city of Los Angeles and the public in general.

Forecast the Most Desirable Outcome

The most desirable outcome for Staples is that there is no negative publicity associated with the naming of the new sports arena.

Identify the Critical Issues

These are the main issues involved in this case:

- Staples' strategic business goals;
- The surrounding community's interest in this announcement;
- Defining the objectives for the announcement;
- Delivering a targeted message to a wide range of audience groups;
- Preparation needed to make this "speech" a success.

Stakeholder perspectives include:

- City of Los Angeles;
- Staples Customers;
- Sports Teams (Lakers and Kings);
- Shareholders;
- Competitors.

Identify and Discuss Possible Solutions to the Problem

Mr. Stemberg must deliver a positive message tailored to appeal to a wide audience.

Teaching the Case

Because this case does not involve complex facts or events, you can distribute the case at the beginning of the class period in which it will be discussed. Give the students 10 minutes to read the case and ask them to think about the issues described above.

For the remainder of the class

Have the students discuss the issues listed above. Some points for consideration may be:

Making a positive impression on the citizens of Los Angeles. By purchasing the naming rights to the stadium for \$100 million, Staples helps to revitalize the downtown of Los Angeles by making the new stadium a reality. Stemberg will want to capitalize on the positive buzz about Staples this deal will generate.

Since Stemberg's remarks must be brief, what should the theme of his message be? As Stemberg will have only about 5 minutes to make an impression on the public, what should he focus on in his statement?

Tailoring the message. Should Stemberg tailor his message to a particular group? Can he do this in a message that will have such a wide distribution. The event is attended by the Sports press, so he knows this is big news in the Sports field. Many of those listening are Lakers and Kings fans.

Identify the stakeholders in this case and their separate interests and concerns:

City of Los Angeles. The Staples Center will be located in one of the largest media markets in the country. L.A. citizens will be interested in Stemberg's message as it relates to their city's ability to build a new sports arena. Members of city government will be looking for a positive statement about the relationship between Staples and the city.

Customers. Staples customers will get a kick out of being associated with a company that has its name on one of the most popular and well-known sports venues in the country.

Sports Teams. Team management will be interested in the Staples message as part of the larger announcement. Again, they will be looking for a positive spin on the deal.

Shareholders. This group will be concerned about the financial well-being of the company. As with the other stakeholders, this group will be looking for a positive statement about Staples involvement with the L.A. community.

Industry competitors. Competitors will be interested in how Staples publicizes this news. They will need to develop strategies to combat the positive publicity for Staples this event will arouse.

Last 5 minutes of class

Conclude the discussion.

The key to this case, as with nearly all other management communication cases, is to let the students speak freely, but guide their comments toward the situation facing Ms. Allen and Mr. Stenberg and the communication issues the case presents.