



Cornell University

To: HADM 3364 Students
From: Amy Newman
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Subject: Assignment 3: Boston Park Plaza: Team Social Media Presentation

For Assignment 3, you will research and present recommendations about a social media tool for the Boston Park Plaza Hotel and Towers, part of the Starwood brand. This assignment challenges you to become an expert in a communication technology, tailor recommendations to a specific audience, deliver a PowerPoint presentation, and work as part of a team. This is a real assignment for a real client who is interested in your expertise.

Scenario

The client for this project is the sales and marketing division of Boston Park Plaza, a Starwood property on the register of "Historic Hotels of America," located in downtown Boston. This property provides a "classical, caring experience" for its guests, with 941 guestrooms, 65,000 square feet of function space, and nine restaurants and lounges featuring Todd English's Bonfire Steakhouse, Swan's Café, and McCormick & Schmick's Seafood Restaurant. On February 5, members of the sales and marketing group will web conference in with our class to discuss the property and their objectives for this project.



The group wants to use more communication technologies to market the hotel. Of particular interest is social networking (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, MySpace). But the group is also open to blogging (e.g., WordPress, TypePad, Xanga), video, email marketing, consumer-generated content, and other technologies, tools, or sites you believe would provide new marketing avenues for the Boston Park Plaza.

As you can imagine, this is a real challenge for such a distinguished property. Flashy web sites, gimmicky techniques, and cartoonish graphics are out of the question. Whatever you recommend must conform to the Boston Park Plaza brand standards (which the group will share with us) and reflect the proper image of this hotel. This is particularly difficult on sites such as Facebook, which allow limited design options. Your recommendations also must consider initiatives by other Starwood properties, for example, Aloft's foray in SecondLife, W's use of text messaging, and

Bonfire's current MySpace page. The new avenue should fit within the context of the larger Starwood brand and media strategies.

Another challenge is Boston Park Plaza's limited funding and staff support for this initiative. They will not have, for example, a dedicated person to update "What are you doing?" tweets ten times a day. The sales and marketing group wants to implement something they can realistically manage. Ideally, they would like you to develop an initial framework (e.g., a Facebook page, a blog template) that they can easily implement and update.

How to Proceed

To complete this assignment, you will work in teams to choose a social media technology, research how it is used by other companies, and recommend ways Boston Park Plaza can capitalize on the technology as a marketing tool. You can work with people you choose, or I will assign teams based on your interests.



Either way, you'll need to think strategically about what leaders in the company need to know and do to make your recommendation a reality. It's possible that those who will decide whether to accept your recommendations know little—or have never heard of—the solution you suggest. Keep this in mind as you plan your presentation and the level of detail to include.

Oral Presentation Deliverable

In teams, you'll present your findings and recommendations to our class, and I'll send your videos and PowerPoint presentations to the Boston Park Plaza team. For the class presentation, students in the audience will play assigned roles, for example, a sales and marketing VP, sales manager, marketing manager, marketing coordinator, communications VP, CTO (Chief Technology Officer), and legal counsel. One of the challenges of this presentation is to address specific audience members' concerns. With students playing assigned roles, we'll improve participation, make the presentation more realistic, and help you practice asking and addressing pointed questions.

Plan for a 20-minute presentation plus 10 minutes of Q&A (30 minutes total). You will certainly want to demonstrate the technology as part of your presentation. You also should prepare a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation. And you may practice with our TA before your scheduled presentation date.

Consider including the following topics in your presentation—not necessarily in this order.

Research

- Explain the communication technology: what is it, and how does it work?
- How do other companies use the technology?
- What benefits have other companies derived?
- What are the potential downsides (costs, issues, or limitations) of this technology?

Recommendations

- How can Boston Park Plaza capitalize on the benefits of this technology? For what audiences?
- How would this technology improve marketing? How do you know it will work? Be realistic about what this initiative can do.
- How will the site or tool look? What examples will you provide to make the recommendation real and easy to implement? Can you create an initial template or design?
- What process do you recommend for keeping the content fresh and updated? How will this work with limited funding and staff?
- Based on your research, which issues and limitations are most important for Boston Park Plaza to consider (e.g., legal issues, preservation of the brand)?

I hope you enjoy this project. I know the Boston Park Plaza group is looking forward to your recommendations!