

**Business M727 E
Marketing Communication
Fall 2023 Course Outline**

**Information, Marketing, Operations Area
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University**

COURSE OBJECTIVE

To provide students with a strong working knowledge of the management of the marketing communication function within organizations by combining industry-based practices with marketing communication and consumer behaviour theory.

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Tuesday Evenings 19:00 –21:50
Diego Figueiredo, Instructor
figuered@mcmaster.ca

Office Hours: 30 Mins before class and
by appointment as required
Contact: Email & Via Zoom

Outline Class Location: In-person

Course Website: <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value:	3	Team skills:	Yes	IT skills:	No	Global:	Yes
Ave to Learn:	Yes	Verbal skills:	Yes	Numeracy:	Yes	Political:	No
Participation:	Yes	Written skills:	Yes	Innovation:	Yes	Social:	Yes
Evidence-based:	Yes	Experiential:	Yes	Final Exam:	No	Guest speaker(s):	Yes

COURSE DESCRIPTION

M727 builds on previous marketing courses by focusing specifically on aspects of marketing communication (marcom). The course emphasizes customer engagement through advertising, promotion and management of customer brand experience using on and off-line channels, social media platforms and technology applications. Communications (“public relations”) and personal selling are no longer viewed as “separate” from the marketing function, given their key role in reaching and influencing business-to-business and business-to-consumer audiences. Concepts, strategies, tactics and tools related to these areas will therefore also be covered. Students will learn that effective marketing communication begins with effective strategy and the critical need for defining and aligning overall business, marketing and marketing communication strategy and execution. As part of strategy development within a marcom context, basic concepts of consumer/customer segmentation and behaviour analysis will be reviewed. Through this analysis and review, students will also gain a high-level understanding of marketing technology applications in marcom contexts. We will share practical managerial knowledge concerning the operation of marketing communication agencies, the development of communication objectives and budgets, and the implementation and evaluation of creative and media strategies. This course has a North American emphasis but we will also be comparing international examples with marketing communication in Canada and the United States. This course is taught through lectures, videos, required reading of on and off-line reference materials, cases and online discussion.

This course will be presented in-person every Wednesday evening beginning at 7 pm. This will offer opportunities for in-class questions, discussion and feedback and synchronous learning. Students are therefore strongly encouraged to attend as often as possible. Classes will not be recorded but presentations will be posted to Avenue to Learn.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to complete the following key tasks:

- Understand the importance and interdependence of business, marketing and marketing communication objectives, strategies and tactics;
- Define the meaning and key attributes of brands and branding within organizations;
- Discuss the critical role that marketing communication strategies & tactics can play in establishing and enhancing an organization’s customer experiences & brand(s);
- Explain the impact of digital technology on today’s brands and branding efforts and the range of tools and marketing technologies available to today’s marketers
- Analyze business situations involving marketing communications and determine key strategic issues, strategic options and tactical action plans;

- Formulate a marcom plan for profit and not-for-profit organizations;
- Apply and manage marketing communication strategies, tactics and tools as controllable investments in generating measurable results;
- Develop and apply a creative strategy as part of creative development;
- Judge the appropriateness of various marketing communication creative approaches & tactics; and
- Recommend effective marcom budgets, strategies and tactics

COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Avenue to Learn registration for course content, readings and case materials http://avenue.mcmaster.ca	FREE
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COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

Visit recommended web sites and published articles through links provided (Avenue to Learn), read all assigned cases and actively engage in the M727 Discussion Group (A2L)	FREE
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EVALUATION

Learning in this course derives primarily from assigned readings, participation, in-lecture discussions and case analysis. You will also be deeply involved in out-of-class group investigation and analysis of a selected organization's current marketing communications planning and practices. Your effective documentation and presentation of key findings and recommendations related to this investigation is critical to your success in this course.

Components and Weights

Assignment #1 Due September 24 th	Individual submission of Canadian Marketing League: 7Up ZERO Case (3 Minute video submission + slide deck)	15%
Assignment #2 Due October 22 nd	Group submission of "live" case analysis Format: <i>video presentation (10min max) + slide deck</i>	15%
Assignment #3 Due October 31 st	Group Submission of Marcom Audit of a student-selected organization <i>Format: video presentation (10min max) + slide deck</i>	25%

Assignment #4 Due December 5 th	Recommended digital marketing strategies and tactics for above Organization (group) Week 13 (Format: Slide Deck)	25%
Assignment #5 November 28 th or December 5 th	In class presentation of Marketing Recommendations & Plan (group) Week 12/13 (or earlier if groups prefer) (Format: 20 min presentation)	10%
Participation	Quality of In Class & A2L Discussion Group Participation (individual – ongoing)	10%
Total		100%

Evaluation Details

CONTRIBUTION TO CLASS LEARNING THROUGH ONLINE DISCUSSION (INDIVIDUAL MARK: 10%):

Your participation in our M727 Discussion Group will be assessed in terms of the value that it adds to our class meetings and on-line discussions. Simply using “digital space” does not add value (please refer to “Class Participation” section below).

CASE HAND-IN (INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP MARKS: TOTALLING 30%): The specific cases that you are required to analyze will be presented and distributed in class one or two weeks before your submission is due. Specific guidelines on case analysis are presented in a separate document. **10% per day Grade Reduction late penalty**

PROPOSED ORGANIZATION FOR MARCOM ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDED PATH FORWARD (NO GRADE, BUT A REQUIRED TASK): Your proposal should identify the organization that you plan to work with, briefly outline its marketing situation, its current marcom activities and budget, and state your specific focus for analysis.

MARCOM AUDIT (GROUP MARK: 25%): The audit involves an analysis and assessment of an organization’s current strategic and competitive environment, its positioning within that environment, current & emergent relevant market trends and how they are or might impact the business, and most importantly, the on and offline marcom strategies and tactics currently being utilized by the organization to drive growth.

RECOMMENDED MARCOM GROWTH PLAN (GROUP MARK: 25%): Your Growth Plan will build on the background that you have established with your audit and will include specific communication objectives, online and offline marketing recommendations, budget allocation and control/evaluation details.

PROJECT PRESENTATION (GROUP MARK: 10%): Groups are required to present their Marcom Growth plans to me as the course instructor and the class. This will provide an opportunity to enhance each group's presentation skills. You are also expected to share video recording of your presentation with your client organization.

PEER EVALUATION: You are required to complete a peer evaluation at two points during the term. The first evaluation must be submitted by 4:00 pm on the day after your Marcom Audit is handed in. This first evaluation should consider individual contributions to the group effort that was required to produce both the Proposal and Audit. You should be assessing your own performance as well as that of your group members. A meeting will be requested with any group whose member ratings are inconsistent or indicative of dysfunctional conflict. You should always be prepared to produce evidence in support of the evaluations that you complete and address any performance gaps within the group before raising them to the instructor. If you decide to give a group member (other than yourself) a rating that reflects less than what should be their fairly earned share of the available grade for distribution, you should communicate that decision to the group member. This will give that group member an opportunity to defend and/or correct their behaviour as the course progresses and will enrich the collective learning experience. An essential skill for every professional working in a progressive organization is the ability to give and receive real-time feedback. Please practice this skill with your group.

The second evaluation must be submitted by 4:00 p.m. on the day after your Marcom Recommendations & Plan has been submitted. This evaluation should be based on your assessment of individual contributions to the group effort that was required to prepare and present your Marcom Growth Plan.

The peer evaluation form and instructions for its completion are available on your Avenue to Learn site. A certain amount of give and take between group members is expected throughout the course of the term. However, at the end of the term we will review your evaluations in order to determine whether any students have made less than equitable contributions to their groups. Where warranted by individual performance, the average evaluation scores will be used as a discounting factor applied to the group mark.

Remember: if you are submitting an evaluation score for any given group member that is less than yourself or the average of other group members you must inform that group member of the lower grade, and your reasons for assigning it. Openness and transparency as the term progresses will help avoid end of term conflict and "surprise" accusations of underperformance.

*** If you do not submit a peer evaluation, I will assume equal contribution across all group members.**

GRADING CONVERSIONS:

At the end of the course your overall percentage grade will be converted to your letter grade in accordance with the following conversion scheme:

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A+	90-100	12
A	85-89	11
A-	80-84	10
B+	75-79	9
B	70-74	8
B-	60-69	7
F	00-59	0

At the end of the course your overall percentage grade will be converted to your letter grade in accordance with the conversion schedule above.

Communication and Feedback

Students who are uncomfortable in directly approaching an instructor regarding a course concern may send a confidential and anonymous email to the respective Area Chair or Associate Dean:

<http://www.degroote.mcmaster.ca/curr/emailchairs.aspx>

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student. Emails regarding course issues should NOT be sent to the Administrative Assistant.

Instructors are encouraged to conduct an informal course review with students by Week #4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery. Instructors should provide evaluation feedback for at least 10% of the final grade to students prior to Week #8 in the term.

Participation

A grade will be assigned for class attendance and participation in discussions during the lecture. Students are encouraged to make an effort to attend lectures and to read posted articles, blogs and other content designed to help them understand lecture content and commentary. This will help you build a deeper understanding of marcom concepts and their practical application as the course progresses. History has shown

that students who are prepared to discuss and post questions about readings and assignments with the class as a whole in a timely manner tend to earn higher grades and learn more.

Students will be assigned grades on the basis of their participation within the M727 A2L Discussion Forum Group. I will begin posting content in this Forum and will ask for student feedback and opinion on the content presented. Students will then be expected to find and post relevant content and seek feedback and input from classmates. The content must be relevant to the course, and must reflect socially acceptable norms for respectful communication.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

It is the student's responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the University Senate Academic Integrity Policy at the following URL:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

This policy describes the responsibilities, procedures, and guidelines for students and faculty should a case of academic dishonesty arise. Academic dishonesty is defined as to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. Please refer to the policy for a list of examples. The policy also provides faculty with procedures to follow in cases of academic dishonesty as well as general guidelines for penalties. For further information related to the policy, please refer to the Office of Academic Integrity at:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>

MISSED EXAMINATIONS / TESTS / PARTICIPATION

When students miss a regularly scheduled midterm, test or class participation for legitimate reasons as adjudicated by the MBA Academic Services Office, the weight for that midterm/test/participation will be distributed across other evaluative components of the course at the discretion of the instructor. Documentation explaining such an absence must be provided to the MBA Academic Services Office within five (5) working days upon returning to school.

To document absences for health-related reasons, please provide the Petition for Relief for MBA Missed Term Work and the McMaster University Student Health Certificate, which can be found on the DeGroot website at:

<http://www.degroot.mcmaster.ca/MBA/registration.html>

University policy states that a student may submit a maximum of three (3) medical certificates per year after which the student must meet with the Director of the program.

To document absences for reasons other than health related, please provide documentation supporting the reason for the absence and the Petition for Relief for MBA Missed Term Work:

<http://www.degroote.mcmaster.ca/MBA/documents/relief.pdf>

Students unable to write a midterm at the posted exam time due to the following reasons: religious; work-related (for part-time students only); representing university at an academic or varsity athletic event; conflicts between two overlapping scheduled midterm exams; or other extenuating circumstances, have the option of applying for special exam arrangements. Such requests must be made to the MBA Academic Services Office at least ten (10) working days before the scheduled exam along with acceptable documentation. Instructors cannot themselves allow students to unofficially write make-up exams/tests. Adjudication of the request must be handled by the MBA Academic Services Office.

All applications for deferred and special final examination arrangements must be made to the MBA Academic Services Office. Failure to meet the stated deadlines may result in the denial of these arrangements. Deferred examination privileges, if granted, must be satisfied during the examination period at the end of the term immediately following. There will be one common sitting for all deferred exams. Please refer to the MBA Calendar for further details.

If any exam is missed without a valid reason, students will receive a grade of Zero (0) for that component.

Grades will be reduced at the rate of 10% per day for all late assignments.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) offers various support services for students with disabilities. Students are required to inform SAS of accommodation needs for examinations on or before the last date for withdrawal from a course without failure (please refer to official university sessional dates). Students must forward a copy of such SAS accommodation to the instructor immediately upon receipt. If a student with a disability chooses NOT to take advantage of an SAS accommodation and chooses to sit for a regular exam, a petition for relief may not be filed after the examination is complete. The SAS website is: <http://sas.mcmaster.ca>

POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE COURSE

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term, especially in light of shifting conditions caused by the current pandemic. The

university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your registration and continuous participation (e.g. on A2L, in the classroom, etc.) with the various learning activities of MBA M727 E will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

APPROACH TO THE COURSE

During the lectures and online within the Discussion Forum, your instructor and guest lecturers will be actively seeking student opinions and informed points of view. Well-developed written and verbal presentation skills will therefore be an asset in successfully completing M727.

Group Work:

As a business practitioner, I am acutely aware of the training and learning benefits associated with group work. Although some students are employed full or part time (making involvement in group work challenging), I believe that the extra scheduling and coordination effort required for group management is more than offset by the superior learning experience that it provides.

To help better manage the challenges noted above, the size of your group should be no more than four people. This will make scheduling easier, and will keep the number of group members low enough that each one is essential. It will also help prevent diffusion of responsibility.

You will be asked to submit the names of your group members by the end of the second class.

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

Throughout the course, I will be distributing articles, cases, and materials from various sources through Avenue to Learn that will be part of your required reading. I also recommend that you scan various on-line resources such as Canada's www.strategyonline.ca, the excellent USA-based reference for advertising called Advertising Age (www.adage.com) as well as sources for marketing technology information and news such as <https://twitter.com/chiefmartec> , www.martechtoday.com, www.Trendhunter.com and www.socialmediatoday.com

Webinars:

[Fastest Growing Social Channels](#)
[Bowman's Strategy Clock \(Positioning\)](#)
[Humanology On Air](#)
[Inside the Mind of a CMO](#)

Articles:

[Modern Marketing: what it is, what it isn't and how to do it.](#)
[Bowman's Strategy Clock](#)

The Major Assignment

The most significant assignment to be completed for this course is the major infield case project. For this assignment, you will be asked to conduct an analysis of and provide recommendations for the marketing communication strategies and tactics of a brand or company of your choice. You will be required to submit this analysis to your instructor, present it to your classmates and to the management of the company analyzed. As outlined above, this major group assignment is worth 60% of your grade in this course.

As a member of a group or team, there should be a reasonable chance for having a management contact within a business firm that could serve as a study subject.

Completing the Major Assignment

Overview

The purpose of working with business decision makers as part of the requirements for this course is to ensure that each student has an opportunity to learn how selected organizations manage marketing communication. While the readings and your instructor's and guest lecturers' experience can help develop an understanding of this process, direct contact with managers making marketing communication decisions and recommendations is a powerful (and enjoyable) learning experience.

Because selected information regarding each company studied will be shared with the rest of the class, there will be an opportunity to discuss the range of approaches and management techniques uncovered during this exercise, and the relative merits of each.

At its core, your major assignment represents a "Marcom Audit" of a selected organization or brand that will lead to "Marcom Recommendations" designed to generate higher levels of marketing performance. Like any audit, you must investigate what the organization or brand is currently doing, and then recommend any changes which you believe should be made (based on the information you have gathered, assumptions that you may have made, and material covered in this course).

The Major Assignment is divided into four parts; 1) the Study Proposal, 2) the Marcom Audit, 3) Marcom Recommendations and 4) the Presentation of the Audit and Recommended Plan.

- 1) The Study Proposal identifies the organization that you will be engaging as part of your major assignment, and ensures that you have adequately "thought it through" before launching into this important undertaking. It is a critical "coaching opportunity"; if we start well, we have a good chance of finishing well.
- 2) The Marcom Audit identifies key findings (what the organization has done in the past and is currently doing within the environment that it finds itself) as well as key marketing communication issues, challenges and opportunities faced by the organization. The audit, therefore, is not a passive listing of "what" the organization has done and is doing, but also an active articulation of the "so what" associated with the facts uncovered in the process. The Marcom Audit however, is not a presentation of recommendations; it lays a solid foundation for the presentation of the recommended plan.
- 3) The Recommended Marcom Growth Plan is an extension of the audit, in that it uses the audit as the basis for presenting recommended strategic marcom direction, tactics and rationale.
- 4) The Presentation of Audit & Recommended Plan. You will be required to present the results of the major assignment to your instructor and your classmates (and share a video recording with your client). **To ensure that your client receives a copy of your Audit and Plan documents, you will submit the name, title and e-mail contact information of the client that you are working with for this project.**

A Note About Lecture Content Scheduling

The course schedule presented on the following pages represents the intended in-class delivery timing of the described content. Although the schedule will be followed as

closely as possible, you will note that some lecture content delivered by guest lecturers has been labeled as “tentative”. This is because guest lecturers – industry practitioners who have been invited into our class to present their informed and experienced point of view – must sometimes reschedule their classroom time for business reasons beyond their control. While this is not ideal, the benefit of receiving up-to-date information on practical matters important to our academic and professional development far outweighs the schedule juggling that it sometimes involves.

Avenue to Learn will be the primary tool used to notify students of any scheduling updates. Please note that assignment due dates for case studies and the Major Assignment (Marcom Audit and Recommendation) will not be changed or postponed.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Business M727
Marketing and Communication
Winter 2023 Tentative Course Schedule**

WEEK	DATE	LECTURE CONTENT/ASSIGNMENTS & DUE DATES
1	Tue. Sep. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review course outline, class introduction, expectations Discuss Major Assignment & Discussion Group formation Introduction to the <u>CMO Series & Key topics</u> Building a Marcom Toolkit (strategy and frameworks) Assignment #1: CML 7Up
2	Tue. Sep. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit names and email addresses of Group Members Building a Marcom Toolkit continued (strategy and frameworks) CMO Topic: Driving Growth: Business Growth & the Changing Role of the CMO Key Topic: Brands and Branding CMO Topic: Building Purpose-led Organizations Assigned case reading / Q&A
3	Tue. Sep. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss Assignment #1 CML 7UP Submit Proposed Organization for Marcom Study Guest Lecturer Jim Letwin, Executive Chairman Jan Kelley. Case discussion on objectives & budgets.
4	Tue. Oct. 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Topic: Demand Generation (Guest Speaker) Sales funnels, B2B vs B2C/ Intro to digital tools and approaches for driving growth
5	Tue. Oct. 10	<p>Industry Guest Lecturer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e-commerce & digital marketing “Live” Case Briefing
6	Tue. Oct. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Topics: Performance Digital (Guest Speaker) Digital tools & approaches –SEO, SEM. AdWords
7	Tue. Oct. 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take up live case assignment CMO Topic: Owning Customer Experience Customer Experience & Journey Mapping

WEEK	DATE	LECTURE CONTENT/ASSIGNMENTS & DUE DATES
8	Tue. Oct. 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Marcom Audit due • Digital Experience (Guest Lecturer) • Intro to Creative/Message strategy and execution •
9	Tue. Nov. 07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Feedback on Marcom Audit Submissions • Field Trip! • Creative Strategy and Execution workshop @JK– hosted by a JK creative team, this will be your chance to be copywriters, art directors, account directors and clients
10	Tue. Nov. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Topic: PR, Social & Influencer Marketing (Guest Lecturer) • The blurring roles of marcom, communications, PR, Publicity and Corporate Advertising
11	Tue. Nov. 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group presentation time slots assigned • CMO Topic – Disrupting from Within (Implementing AI, ML and true predictive 1:1 marketing) • The Future of Marketing: Looking ahead to Web 3, NFTs, the Metaverse • CMO Topic: Driving organizational alignment through collaboration
12	Tue. Nov. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis of all material covered • Instructor coaching and Group preparation for Marcom Growth Recommendations; <p>Group Presentations Begin</p>
13	Tue. Dec. 05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marcom Recommendations & Plan Must be Submitted • Group Presentations End

APPENDIX A: Content Outline for Major Project

1) Marcom Audit (20%)

Your video report (max 10 minutes) must be submitted before the beginning of the 7 pm class on Wednesday, March 8, 2023. Each group member must complete a peer evaluation form (download from course website); it is due no later than 4 pm on March 5. A 10% per day penalty will be applied for late submission.

Before you can develop a communications plan for your selected organization, you must understand their history, current position and future plans. Your Marcom Audit should include relevant elements of the components outlined below.

Your work here has two purposes.

1. First, your audit will provide the foundation for your Marcom Plan
2. Second, it will allow me to assess the extent to which your foundation captures, organizes and clearly presents the key elements and implications of the organization's current marcom strategies and tactics.

For this document (the Marcom Audit) your instructor is your audience. This means that you need to provide information concerning the points below whether or not these are facts that your organization already knows and understands. Next, your primary and secondary sources should be cited appropriately. Furthermore, if you identify areas for which your organization has no information, you should state this rather than omit these items from discussion.

Finally, you should provide justification for any assumptions based on your understanding of the organization subject matter covered in the course.

Executive Summary

- Highlight key findings of the Marcom Audit – outline key marketing communication strategies and tactics being used and their perceived impact on the business versus objective

General Introduction to the Organization and its History

- Very briefly describe the origins of the organization and its relevant history (public company, privately owned, years in business, key products/markets)
- In general, what is the “go to market” strategy? Is the product or service sold through intermediaries (wholesalers, independent dealers, retailers) or direct-to-consumer?
- Who are the organization's/brand's primary and secondary customers/buyers and influencers?
- How and when do they typically buy?

- What Is the level of organization/brand awareness and trial within the marketplace?
- How is the product/service *positioned* in the marketplace? How is it viewed or perceived relative to its key competitors – how is it different/better? (What is its unique selling proposition or primary value proposition?)

Review Current Situation & Marcom Plan

- How is the organization performing?(sales, profit, share of market)
- What are the key marketing and marcom objectives for the organization?
- How is the goal of marketing and marketing communication (advertising, promotion, SEO/SEM. Google or Facebook Advertising, Personal Selling) defined? (For example, what is its primary purpose – lead generation, build product awareness/trial etc)
- What percentage of marketing investment is digital versus non-digital/offline?
- What role does the organization’s website play in the marketing of its products (e- commerce? Lead generation, qualifying and nurturing?) Is the organization satisfied with or confident about online customer experience?
- How are overall results generated by marcom investments and any specific campaigns measured?
- What impact has the pandemic had on the overall business (revenue, profit)?
- What changes to marcom investment strategy and tactics – if any – were made after the pandemic?
- What impact have these changes had on business performance?

Assessment and Analysis of Current Digital Situation and Process

- Identification of digital and offline assets – the goal here is to uncover marketing strengths, weaknesses and opportunities
 - What digital and offline platforms, channels, tools and tactics are currently being used by the client to promote its product offerings?
- The focus of this assessment should be digital
 - Website assessment – speed, navigation, ease of understanding, use, conversion (to be defined in class)
 - Relevance of digital offerings to the perceived needs of identified audiences (especially in comparison to key competitors)
 - Web site and media investment analytics – availability, use and integration of data into performance measurement, learning, program adjusting & revised goal setting
 - Social Media – usage (which platforms, and how often) for organic and paid content and level of audience engagement vs key competitors
 - Status of organic (SEO) and paid search (SEM) – how frequently and effectively used?
 - Current search ranking and performance on key search terms
 - Digital ad content performance (views, clicks, conversions)
 - Google Business – use and effectiveness

Internal Assessment

- Strengths and weaknesses of the organization itself that could affect marcom planning and execution
 - Do they seem to know their customers - who they are and how and why they buy?
 - Is there alignment between sales, marketing, operations and finance regarding goals and resource allocation?
- Strengths and weaknesses of product/service offering
 - Does it seem that general market and buyer perceptions about the organization's image is consistent with the company's view of itself?
- Assessment of the firm's promotional organization and capabilities
 - Capability of firm to develop and execute relevant and effective digital programs and campaigns
 - Realistic/adequate budgets to achieve defined goals

External Messaging Assessment

- Does the organization have a stated message/creative strategy to guide the development of any ad campaigns they may be investing in?
- Do marketing and selling messages directed at customers and influencers seem to consistently and persuasively reflect the stated message strategy/unique benefits of the brand or organizations?
- Include samples or digital links to samples of advertising and promotion campaigns used to promote the brand/product/organization
- Is the creative effective? How do we know this (how are results tracked?)

Competition

- Identification of direct and indirect competitors
- Competitors' key benefits and positioning
- Competitors' message and media strategy (how do they differ versus the subject company?)
- Organization's position relative to competitors (How would the subject company or brand appear on a positioning map? Can you estimate the brand or company's "share of voice" versus competitors?)

Initial Marcom Planning

- Description of organization's current Marcom objectives (in their own terms, whether general or specific)
- Refined communication objectives (your group's definition)
- Budget determination: tentative budget and allocation

Conclusion

- Set the stage for your recommended Marcom Growth plan by identifying high level strategic direction for your path forward.

2) Marcom Recommendations & Plan (25%)

Document (slide deck) to be submitted by 7pm Wednesday April 12, 2023; your group will be responsible for sending a video presentation* and one copy of your report to the client organization *after* the presentation. **** I recommend you record your final rehearsal.***

You will receive feedback on your Marcom Recommendations & Plan presentation immediately after it is delivered. If feedback warrants it, you may find it necessary to adjust your final *client* copy of the report. Please remember that the paper that your group submits will reflect not only the group and its members, but also the DeGroote School of Business and the university to the business community. Your attention to accuracy, completeness and relevance is therefore critically important.

Please hand in your group's peer evaluation (download from course website) by 4pm the day after your group delivers its virtual presentation to your instructor.

Your **Marcom Recommendations & Plan** should build on the background that you established with your audit. The checklist presented below will be helpful.

Please note that your plan is not expected to address every single communication platform – just the most important to your selected company. Depending on your organization, some digital platforms or tools will be inappropriate and/or irrelevant. Furthermore, you may be dealing with scarce resources both in terms of dollars and personnel. Your group's chosen (client) organization is the primary audience for the final Marcom Growth Plan. This plan should include the elements described below.

Executive Summary

The first section of your paper should include:

Marketing Communications Audit Key Findings (a brief summary to set the stage)

Overall Marcom Objectives & Strategies

- Clearly state your recommended overall communication objectives for your client company. There may be sub-objectives that “ladder up” to these broader objectives – these should be dealt with within the body of your report
- Provide a strategic summary that helps readers to understand the overall recommended marcom picture (which marcom elements – such as social media platforms, major media or sales platforms) you are recommending and in summary, why you have chosen them. Summary of Budget Allocation
- Provide an overview of recommended budget deployment and brief rationale

Details of Recommended Marcom Plan

- Provide specific plan details that include:
 - Specific audience target(s)
 - Positioning/message strategy

- Present Short-Term “Quick Wins”
 - Quick wins are actionable changes and/or tactics that can be implemented within 90-days and, based on your analysis, have the highest probability of generating results
 - You will detail the predicted impact of recommended immediate improvements to existing Marketing Communications Strategies and Tactics (i.e. increased ROI, increased understanding of available data, streamlined processes, etc.)

- Longer-Term Recommendations
 - Articulate how your recommendations build a strong foundation for all future Marketing Communications Strategies and tactics
 - Describe how your client’s digital platforms, programs, offerings and processes should evolve into the future in order to optimize growth opportunities

Conclusion

Brief summary and future outlook if recommended plans are implemented.

3) Project Presentation (10%)

Depending on enrollment, group presentations will take place either during the last two classes, during the last class or at times convenient to the presenting groups. Presenting Marcom Recommendations & Plan will result in learning for both the group and class. You are encouraged to invite “clients” to your presentation. Presentation time will be limited to a maximum of 20 minutes, followed by a maximum of five minutes for questions. Because you will be receiving your “content” marks for the audit, recommendations and the plan itself, your presentation grade will be based entirely on your presentation skills and delivery. I expect that all group members will play an active role in both the development and delivery of the presentation. Please be reminded that a peer evaluation form must be submitted at the end of the last class.