

DSM-596 | Section 21880 | Summer 2019

DSM Final Project Capstone

Conceptualizing, Pitching, And Launching Your Digital Media Project

Instructor: Freddy Tran Nager, MBA, fnager@usc.edu

Class Dates & Time: Tuesdays, 6pm-10:10pm

Classroom: ANN 211

Office Hours: available by appointment

Units: 4

Prerequisites: COMM 502, DSM 520, DSM 560, INF 549

In this culmination of your DSM experience, you will plan and develop a digital project of your choice, such as a website, app, social experience, podcast, or even a book on a relevant topic. You may choose to work solo or collaborate with another classmate, and the final result may either be a market-ready product or a minutely detailed plan. Regardless of the subject or format, your capstone project should reflect what you have learned in this program and draw on in-depth research of both primary and secondary sources.

OBJECTIVES

Over the course of 12 weeks, you will acquire expertise and experience in the following:

- Identifying and researching key stakeholders who could help or hinder your project.
- Critically analyzing the market and various media for opportunities and obstacles.
- Establishing goals, guidelines, and milestones for digital media project development.
- Defining metrics and analytical tools to gauge your project's short- and long-term performance.

INSTRUCTOR

Freddy Tran Nager has over 25 years of professional experience in digital media and marketing. At MCA Records/Universal Music Group, he launched one of the web's first entertainment sites. He subsequently served as a senior creative on Toyota interactive media for ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi. He has since worked on numerous websites and campaigns for a diverse array of clients, from startups to Fortune 500 companies to nonprofits. Freddy founded and currently runs the marketing-and-media consultancy Atomic Tango LLC, and is a partner in the branding agency Ad Victorem. A second-generation Trojan, he received his MBA from USC's Marshall School of Business and his undergraduate degree from Harvard. He has taught at Annenberg since 2012.

READINGS

There are no required textbooks for this course. However, the following books are highly recommended:

- *Made To Stick* by Chip Heath & Dan Heath
- *A Beautiful Constraint* by Adam Morgan
- *Perfect Pitch* by Jon Steel

ASSIGNMENTS

While individual projects and milestones will vary, you will have multiple shared requirements:

- **Peer Review (10%):** In class and on Blackboard, you will provide constructive feedback on classmate projects, as if you were a professional consultant guiding a client. Consequently, your contributions should consist of more than just opinion; you should draw from experience and studies to provide insightful advice. (Note that providing negative feedback — including mere criticism without constructive recommendations — could result in a loss of points.) The goal of peer review isn't simply to attain additional opinions on your project. It's also to gain experience providing positive and constructive feedback and direction. And above all, it's to forge a tight network of peers who rely on each other and are responsible for helping each other develop the best possible projects, as if you were all members of the same company or community. Everyone in this capstone class should consider each other as their first and primary source of feedback and support.
- **Assignment 1 — Ideas (10%):** Develop 3 potential project ideas, each distinct from each other (not just variations of the same idea). For each one, explain WHY you selected it, along with an analysis of Interest, Opportunity, and Expertise. These ideas shouldn't be guesswork: you're expected to research the market and conduct critical evaluation of yourself and your resources. You will subsequently choose one of those ideas, and with the approval of your instructor, develop it into your final project.
- **Assignment 2 — Statements (10%):** For your selected idea, write both a mission and a vision statement. Your two statements should be specific, concrete, and inspiring, and finessed to the point where they could appear in a business plan, company website, or other medium.
- **Assignment 3 — R&D Plan (10%):** Create a detailed list of research methodologies and sources covering all stakeholder categories, along with deliverables and milestones leading to your final project. This should be specific, down to contact information for sources and dates for completion.
- **Assignment 4 — Research Findings (10%):** Submit a paper presenting your research results, along with your critical analysis (i.e., reporting is not enough). Write and format this paper as if you were submitting it to an investor, producer, or supervisor. In addition, present a video or audio interview of one of your stakeholders on Blackboard. This should be "professional" quality, meaning that it should be edited to eliminate unnecessary information, have an intro and outro, and include a summary of key points.
- **Assignment 5 — Pitch (10%):** Based on your research and work to date, present your idea to the class as if you were pitching a potential investor, producer, or other key stakeholder. A PowerPoint presentation or working demo is optional, but make sure your pitch is persuasive and well-supported by evidence that your project has potential.
- **Assignment 6 — Final Project (30%):** Submit the final version of your project, which will be assessed on the basis of completeness, originality/creativity, application of research, and production quality.
- **Assignment 7 — Exhibition (10%):** For an in-class event, prepare a small exhibit promoting your product with promotional materials (such as a flyer or poster). As with the pitch, provide evidence that your project has potential.

GRADES + GUIDELINES

A	93.0% or higher (rare)
A-	90.0%-92.9%
B+	87.0%-89.9%
B	83.0%-86.9%
B-	80.0%-82.9%
C+	77.0%-79.9%
C	73.0%-76.9%

C-	70.0%-72.9%
D	60.0%-69.9%
F	59.9% or lower

- **Criteria:** A's and A-minuses must be earned by "going the extra mile" to develop professional-caliber work that could be produced or published as is with only minor edits. A-level work is mistake-free, reflects in-depth research of authoritative sources, demonstrates strong understanding of the subject, and shows high-level creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. Recommendations will be provided on request to students who earn an A.

B's are awarded for graduate-school caliber work, reflecting in-depth research of authoritative sources, critical thinking, and a strong understanding of course material. The ideas and communication would need to be stronger to succeed in a professional setting.

C's are given to undergraduate-caliber work, reflecting little critical thinking and insufficient research.

D's and lower are given to amateurish work, marked by insufficient research, many errors, or superficial analysis.

- **Deadlines:** Without an exceptional circumstance and permission from the instructor in advance, late assignments will not be accepted.
- **Attendance:** You must attend required class meetings (see the Calendar in this syllabus), arrive on time, and stay for the entire class (missing more than 10 minutes counts as a half absence). Makeup assignments will be given for any excused absences, such as illnesses or athletic commitments. Should you need to miss a class, notify the instructor in advance (except, of course, in the case of emergencies), and obtain what you missed from classmates and Blackboard. Two or more unexcused absences may result in a course grade of C- or lower. Note: coming to class while ill, or using a phone or computer, will be counted as an absence, since you are in attendance but not truly present.
- **Critical Thinking:** In communication there are few "right" answers: what works for one company might fail for another, or even for the same company at another time. Assignments must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.
- **Professional Writing:** Since this is a graduate program in communication, your writing and other production values will be factored into all assignment grades. Eliminate all errors by proofreading carefully, using Microsoft Word spelling and grammar check, and Grammarly.com (recommended). If you need help with fluency or simply polishing your work, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach: <http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/>
- **Research and References:**
 - Your work must be supported by research from authoritative sources, such as academic journals, professional news publications, and credible experts. Please vet your sources.
 - If you use Wikipedia, do not cite it as a reference. Rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article, and cite if applicable.
 - Do not limit your research to Google searches. Interview experts on campus or online, or conduct focus groups and surveys.
 - Bibliography entries must include complete source information — a URL alone is never enough. Chicago Manual of Style format preferred (<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org>), but you may use any format that includes ALL the following: COMPLETE author names (not just surnames or initials), article/chapter titles, the name of the publication/website, and dates of publication.
- **Respect:** Treat classmates and speakers with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. Also, *be present*: **all computers and phones must be turned off and put away during lectures — no exceptions.**

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

Tab for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

CALENDAR

Each class session will include a mixture of lectures (instructor and guest speaker), student presentations, peer review, and hands-on development. On some weeks, we will not meet in the classroom, but you must post updates and communicate with your peers on Blackboard. Note that the following schedule is tentative and subject to change.

- **May 21: Intro** — Introduce the class and each other. Develop ideas based on Interest, Opportunity, and Expertise. Assignment: 3 ideas due next week.
- **May 28: Missions** — Discuss and select ideas. Craft mission and vision statements. Assignment: Statements due next week. Recommended reading: *Made To Stick* by Chip Heath & Dan Heath.
- **June 4: Research** — Explore resources and methods, including key stakeholders (company, competitors, customers, community). Assignment: R&D plan due next week.
- **June 11: Research Updates** — [NO CLASS MEETING] Present findings and project considerations to date on Blackboard. Assignment: Research Findings, including interview, due June 25. Recommended reading: *A Beautiful Constraint* by Adam Morgan.
- **June 18: Research Updates** — [NO CLASS MEETING] Present findings and project considerations to date on Blackboard.
- **June 25: Research Updates** — Present findings and project considerations to date. Practice pitching techniques. Assignment: Pitch to class next week. Recommended Reading: *Perfect Pitch* by Jon Steel.
- **July 2: Pitch** — Half of class will present their project ideas to investors and other key stakeholders.
- **July 9: Pitch** — Half of class will present their project ideas to investors and other key stakeholders.
- **July 16: Development** — [NO CLASS MEETING] Present findings and project considerations to date on Blackboard. Work on final project. Assignment: Final Project and Exhibition due August 6.
- **July 23: Development** — [NO CLASS MEETING] Present findings and project considerations to date on Blackboard. Work on final project.
- **July 30: Development** — [NO CLASS MEETING] Present findings and project considerations to date on Blackboard. Work on final project.
- **August 6: Exhibition** — Submit final project. Present your work at an in-class event. Assignment: Final peer review online.