LUMEN LEARNING

Business Communication Instructor Guide

Module 4: Using Research and Information Tools

Table of Contents

Learning Outcomes

[Detailed Course Learning Outcome Spreadsheet is linked here](#).

Topic	Student Learning Goals
The Power of Information	- Understand how you use research in writing business reports - Understand the steps in the research process - Identify the main types of data used in business reports - Understand the difference between primary and secondary research
Internal Data Sources	- Recognize different primary sources and types of internal data - Explore different ways to gather and analyze internal data
Search Techniques	- Recognize common tools and strategies for doing online searches - Recognize tools used to find business information in secondary sources
Evaluating Information Sources	- Understand the seven main aspects of information literacy - Understand the importance of evaluating sources and identifying biases - Understand the CRAAP (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose) method for evaluating sources - Learn how to effectively integrate sources into your writing
Ethical Use of Information	- Understand the importance of professional integrity in business writing - Learn how to properly document and cite sources

Summary of Module

Readiness Check focuses on the basic uses of spreadsheet software.

Practice provides content that closes the module with an example of how research is used in entrepreneurship and flashcards as a study aid.

Student's Choice: an interactive that explores primary vs. secondary research

Among the **real world examples** in this module are:

- McKinsey and Company's report on the Future of Work After Covid 19 as an example of secondary research
- Comparing Wikipedia, Google Search, Google Scholar, and library databases
- Google's search algorithms, SEO, and search quality

Module Resources

Cheat Sheet

[Module 4 Cheat Sheet in English](#)

[Module # Cheat Sheet in Spanish](#)

Instructional Support

[Activity Two Handout](#)

[Module 4 Slide Deck](#)

[Video List](#)

[Evidence-Based Teaching Practices](#)

Activity One: Facts and Impact

Evidence-Based Teaching Practice

Higher Order Thinking

Students will analyze and compare business reports using critical thinking skills to differentiate different styles of presenting research to achieve various goals.

Time on Task

Students will read, analyze, and discuss the use of research in business reports to gain insight into the importance of the research process.

Background

In this activity, students will review different business reports to identify how research has influenced the content, recommendations, and conclusions. This exercise will help students understand the importance of thorough research in business and improve their analytical skills.

Learning Outcome Alignment

- Discuss the impact of research in business reports.

Instructions

Time Estimate: 45 minutes

1. Conversation starter

When was the last time that you did research before you made a decision?

2. Review

You may wish to review types and characteristics of various business reports.

3. **Split class into groups of 3-4 students**

   Students will need to be able to access the internet.

4. **Select two reports to compare**

   Reassure students that while some of the reports may seem long, this activity does not require them to closely read the reports.

   a. [IBM's "Challenging the modern myths of remote working"](#) (6-page PDF)

   b. [water.org's 2023 annual report](#) (9-page PDF)

   c. [KIND Snacks' impact report](#) (19-page PDF)

   d. [Strada Education Network's "Alumni Perspectives on How College Experiences Improve Their Lives"](#) (24-page PDF)

   e. Other reports of your choosing

5. **Read and analyze**

   Students should skim the reports and determine:

   a. What types of research were conducted?

   b. How did the research influence the recommendations and conclusions?

   c. How was data or evidence presented?

   d. What was the purpose of the report?

   e. Which report was more effective in achieving its purpose and why?

   f. **Optional AI Component:** After students complete their own analysis, they could ask an AI tool like Claude or ChatGPT to analyze the same report and compare the AI's insights with their own to identify differences in perspective.

6. **Share findings**

   Groups will present their analysis to the class, followed by a discussion.

Discussion Prompts

- **What types of research were most common across the reports?**

- **Were there any reports where the research seemed insufficient or biased?**

Debrief

You may wish to spend some time discussing biases in reports and assessing their credibility not only based on their research methodology and credibility of sources but also on the funder of the research.

Online Variation

Discussion Board: Create a discussion board for the exercise.

Individual Analysis: Students individually analyze their assigned report and post their findings on the discussion board.

Peer Feedback: Students are required to comment on at least two other students' analyses.

- IBM's "Challenging the modern myths of remote working" (6-page PDF)

- water.org's 2023 annual report (9-page PDF)

- KIND Snacks' impact report (19-page PDF)

- Strada Education Network's "Alumni Perspectives on How College Experiences Improve Their Lives" (24-page PDF)

- Other reports of your choosing

In this discussion, you will review a business report to identify how research has influenced the content, recommendations, and conclusions. This exercise will help you understand the importance of thorough research in business and improve your analytical skills.

Select a report to analyze and answer the following in your first post:

1. What types of research were conducted?
2. How did the research influence the recommendations and conclusions?
3. How was data or evidence presented?
4. What was the purpose of the report?
5. Did the research seem insufficient or biased? Explain your answer.

Next, comment on the analyses of two classmates. Skim the report that they chose and explain whether you agree or disagree with their evaluation.

Activity Two: Just the Facts

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices

Contextualization

Students will practice their research skills by fact-checking questions that can arise in business contexts.

Structured Lessons

This activity allows educators to break down the research process by guiding students through presenting the process in a logical progression that fosters critical thinking and research skills, ultimately helping students develop a firm understanding of credible information in the discipline.

Background

In this activity, students will select a hypothetical business scenario and a related research question to fact-check. They will verify the accuracy of the claims made in the scenario by finding credible sources. This exercise will enhance their research and critical thinking skills and emphasize the importance of source evaluation in business communication.

Students will choose between scenarios on the Activity Two Handout. The questions posed in the scenarios have been fact checked by the nonpartisan, nonprofit FactCheck.org.

- No Proven Health Risks from Aspartame, But Also No Proven Benefits
- Electric Vehicles Contribute Fewer Emissions Than Gasoline-Powered Cars Over Their Lifetimes
- Is Bacon Better for You Than Tilapia?

Learning Outcome Alignment
- Describe common tools and strategies for completing online searches
- Identify tools used to find business information in secondary sources
- Identify the seven pillars of information literacy
- Discuss the importance of evaluating sources and identifying biases

- Describe the components of the CRAAP analysis process

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30-45 minutes

1. Conversation starter

When was the last time you had to verify information before making a decision? How did you go about it?

2. Review

You may wish to review general research strategies as well as the specific resources available through your institution's library services.

3. Split class into groups of 2-3 students

Students will need to be able to write down their ideas either on paper or electronically and they will need to do online research.

4. Distribute handout

📄 Activity Two Handout

5. Research

Research and find **credible** sources to answer the selected question, ensuring you use a variety of source types:

   a. Academic journals

   b. News articles

   c. Industry reports

   d. Government publications

   e. Websites

   f. Interviews

Discussion Prompts

- **How do you determine the reliability of each source?**

- **What did you learn about the research process that you didn't know before?**

Debrief

Groups will present their findings to the class, followed by a discussion on source credibility and the importance of accurate fact-checking.

Large Class Variation

Use a tiered reporting system.

1. Divide the class into thirds and assign earth third one of the handout scenarios.

2. Within each section, have students form small teams to research their assigned question.

3. Teams working on the same scenario compare findings in "expert groups".

4. Each scenario section selects representatives to present key findings to the full class.

Online Variation

Give students the option of choosing one of the three research questions in the [Activity Two Handout](#).

Research and find credible sources to answer the selected question, ensuring you use a variety of source types:

- Academic journals
- News articles
- Industry reports
- Government publications
- Websites
- Interviews

Present your research in a memo and also answer the following:

1. What challenges did you face in fact-checking the scenario?
2. How did you determine the reliability of each source?

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3. What did you learn about the research and citation process that you didn't know before?

Activity Three: Citation Styles

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices

Engagement

Students actively practice citation rather than learning through reading or lecture.

Scaffolding

This activity builds upon Activity Two with students using more than one citation style to explore their differences.

Background

In this activity, students will use the research they conducted in the previous activity to create citations in two different styles. They will compare the formats and discuss the importance of following the preferred citation style of their organization.

Learning Outcome Alignment
- Describe the importance of professional integrity in business writing
- Document and cite sources using the correct style and formatting

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30 minutes

1. Conversation starter

Why are citations important in business writing?

2. Review

You may wish to review the various citation styles.

3. Students will work in the same groups as Activity Two

Students will need to be able to write electronically. Groups will revisit their research from the previous activity, ensuring they have all the necessary details for each source.

4. Apply two citation styles

Each group will choose two citation styles to compare (e.g., APA and MLA, or MLA and Chicago, APA and Chicago). For each source they used in the research activity, groups will create citations in both selected styles. This includes in-text citations and reference list entries.

Discussion Prompts

- **What are the key differences you noticed between the citation styles?**

- **How might the choice of citation style impact the readability and professionalism of a document?**

Debrief

Discuss why an organization might prefer a particular citation style used in academic settings or they may prefer their own citation conventions.

Online Variation

You will revisit your research from the previous activity, ensuring you have all the necessary details for each source. You should have already included citations in your previous submission. Now you will create citations in another style and compare the result to your previous work.

Submit your revised memo with new citations and answer the following:

1. What are the key differences you noticed between the citation styles?
2. How might the choice of citation style impact the readability and professionalism of a document?
3. Why is it important to follow the preferred citation style of your organization?

Assignments

Assignment Package

This document contains a collection of written assignments and recommendations about how to incorporate them into your course.

AI Assisted Assignment Package

In this version of the course assignment package, all major assignments include a component where students use an artificial intelligence tool as part of their work process.

Module Discussion: Training Artificial Intelligence

This discussion explores students' opinions on the limitations of the use of copyrighted materials used for training artificial intelligence language models.