Sample answers to Discussion Questions and teaching focus points for "Data-Driven Public Relations"

Truth and the Researcher's Attitude

<u>Discussion Questions</u>

1. In the case of wedding rice, what kinds of questions might a PR person have asked or sought answers if advising the legislator who proposed the law banning rice at weddings?

Students should approach claims that don't contain specific data or evidence with a good deal of skepticism. In this case, a good PR person might have asked where the legislator got her information; if any bird experts had been consulted; if there were documented situations that would lend credence to the stories; if this subject was one that the elected official wanted to spent time, energy and money on.

2. Look up urban legends on the Internet and suggest ways of examining two of them to suggest if they have some basis in truth or are just folklore.

One of the most useful internet sites is snopes.com. It provides fairly solid and respected evidence on common beliefs and current suggestions. It is true that some folk tales and other legends have some basis in fact.

3. When hearing a claim that sounds too good to be true or stretches credibility, what should your first step be?

Always a good idea to ask where the information came from. Then to go to reputable sources, from government agencies to respected research organizations to businesses to see if there are mentions of the claim.

<u>Exercises</u>

1. Go the website of a company in the Fortune 500. Look under investor information and using the revenue for the past four years, use Excel to determine the increase or decrease by year. Put into a spreadsheet and print it out.

This exercise is pretty straightforward. Students may not know what the Fortune 500 is, but once they search for it and find some companies, they can easily search financial services sites for revenue and then import or copy those numbers into Excel.

2. Here is a list of numbers that represent how much time it takes a group of students to walk up two flights of stairs in a university building. Using the Excel Data Analysis Toolpak, calculate the following:
   a. The average or mean.
   b. The mode or most common number in the list.
   c. The minimum and maximum numbers in the list.

35 seconds
38 seconds
22 seconds
33 seconds
40 seconds
33 seconds
29 seconds
34 seconds
33 seconds.

Here is a screen shot of finding the mode.
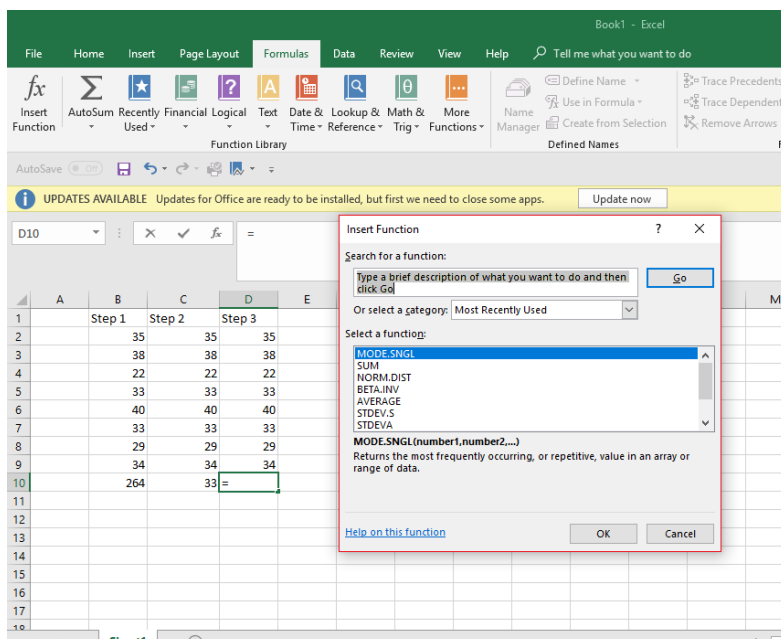
Students merely need to click on Formulas and then on the downward arrow under the large sigma to get the names of the tools they need to use.

The spread sheet above shows the answers for total of the numbers, the mean or average and the process for finding the mode is highlighted. The answer is 33.

To find minimum and maximum, they can use the same process. Or in this case, merely scan the list.