

MGT 419

BUSINESS STRATEGY CONSULTING SKILLS – Spring 2018

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

In organizational and marketing strategy courses such as MGT 201 or MGT 248, students learn theories and frameworks to diagnose business issues and recommend performance improvement, such as Porter’s Five Competitive Forces, Nohria’s Organizational Structure, or Grant’s Diversification and Vertical Integration Strategy. In this course, you will learn practical business consulting skills which will help you apply these strategies in the workplace.

Strategy consultants from firms like McKinsey, Bain or PwC apply the “CEO perspective” of these strategic models to answer complex business questions that companies don’t have the time, objectivity or perhaps competency to tackle themselves. Professional consulting itself is a craft with structure, frameworks and best practices. In this course, you will learn some of the key tools that business strategy consultants use to frame and analyze problems and communicate findings.

And, since professional consulting is a combination of structure and relationships, the course will also introduce you to issues of relationship management and organizational politics during a consulting engagement.

This course will be useful preparation for all students’ Integrated Management Project and other class projects. It is also useful for those students interested in consulting and internal staff roles such as strategic planning, M&A, product management, and market research.

Course Materials

- 1. Business Strategy Consulting Skills Course Syllabus:** You are responsible for the information contained in this syllabus.
- 2. Text Pak:** Selected readings and a case available on Study.net. Lecture slides with notes as well as supplemental material will be available ahead of class on Canvas. Lectures and book readings provide descriptions of the frameworks, concepts and consulting methods for the in-class discussions and team exercises. The case will provide the content for the team exercises and final where you will demonstrate various consulting skills. Please know the case content well before coming to class so as to make the time spent in class most effective.
- 3. Handouts:** I will give you additional materials in class or via email.

Course Requirements

This 1 unit elective is graded and team-based. Each team will consist of about 4 students, all of whom will share the same grade. The course grade will be based 50% on the homework and 50% on the final.

- 1. Attend all sessions:** You must attend all days, in full, to pass the course. I will take attendance.
- 2. Come prepared:** Come to class having read all the relevant material.
- 3. Participate in class:** Students are expected to pay attention and participate in class discussions, group exercises and projects. Students should not be texting, doing emails or engaging in other multitasking during the day. Please put away your laptops and phones during lectures. Notes can be taken on lecture slides which will be handed out in class. Ideal class participation involves thoughtful comments and questions, not just “floor time” or repetition of facts from the readings.
- 4. Demonstrate grasp of techniques:** Students need to demonstrate a good grasp of the various consulting skills in the class exercises, as evidenced by the homework and final team assignments. See descriptions of expectations in the Course Schedule below.

Prerequisites

This class is open to all GSM students. Recommended but not required: MGT201 Organizational Strategy and Structure or MGT248 Marketing Strategies.

Course Schedule

IMPORTANT NOTE: All “Readings” and “Case” should be read before class.

All “Exercises” will be completed during class. No pre-work is necessary for these Exercises.

Students should bring their laptops to class in case you wish to use them for the exercises.

CLASS 1: Thursday 5/10/18

3:10-3:40

Class Overview and Introduction to Strategy Consulting

Readings:

The Practice of Professional Consulting, Chapters 1-3 – Edward G. Verlander

Discussion:

Why do companies hire consultants? How does business strategy consulting differ from operational, IT, change management or other forms of consulting? What makes a consultant a “professional” and why is this important?

Handout:

Copy of lecture slides for note taking in class

3:40-5:30

Structured Framing: Problem Statements

Readings:

McDonald’s Corporation (rev. Sept. 14, 2015)– Marne L. Arthaud-Day, Frank T. Rothaermel, Justin Collins. **Be sure to read and digest this case before class or you will not have sufficient time to complete the exercises or be a full participant for your team.**

Discussion:

What is a problem statement or SCQ and why is it important to organizing a project or engagement?

Handout:

Copy of lecture slides for note taking in class

Team Exercise:

Create a SCQ for complex situations to be passed out in class.

Homework:

Develop SCQ for McDonald’s case. Due May 14, 2018. 25% of grade.

CLASS 2: Thursday 5/17/18

3:10-5:30

Structured Framing: Issue Trees

Readings:

The McKinsey Mind, Introduction and Chapters 1-2 – Ethan M. Rasiel & Paul N. Friga

Discussion:

What is an issue or hypothesis tree and why is it important to organizing the research and analysis for a project or engagement?

- Handout: Copy of lecture slides for note taking in class
- Team Exercise: Create an issue or hypothesis tree for complex situations from last class.
- Homework: Develop an issue or hypothesis tree for McDonald's case. Due May 21, 2018. 25% of grade.

CLASS 3 Thursday 5/24/18

3:10-4:40

Relationship Management – Guest Speaker

Readings:

The Practice of Professional Consulting: Navigating Organizational Politics pages 155-161 – Edward G. Verlander

Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used, Chapters 8 & 9 – Peter Block

- Handout: Copy of lecture slides for note taking in class

4:40-5:30

Issue Tree Review

Discussion:

Review McDonald's issue trees and answer questions

CLASS 4 Thursday 5/31/18

3:10-5:30

Structured Communications: Minto Pyramid

Readings:

Intro to Minto Pyramid Principle in Structured Communications section of class lecture notes, posted on Canvas

- Handouts: Minto pyramid template and copy of lecture slides for note taking in class

- Team Exercise: Organizing recommendations, key lines and support.

- Final: Create a mock pyramid draft of a final consulting deck for the McDonald's case with Answer/Recommendation, key lines, and suggested 1-2 levels of support for each key line using templates in Resources. I am not looking here for "right" recommendations or actual detailed support. What I am looking for is a demonstrated understanding of the principles of inductive reasoning, MECE, vertical and horizontal relationships, key lines, compelling support points, and storytelling.

Turn in June 7, 2018 as final. 50% of grade.

Notes About Expectations for Class Behavior

1. It is expected that all class members will treat each other with respect and dignity.
2. It is unacceptable to insult, harass, or demean any member of the class.
3. Professional business behavior should be modeled in the classroom, including use of appropriate language, jokes, or stories.

In general, students should adhere to the [UC Davis Principles of Community](#), copied below.

The University of California, Davis, is first and foremost an institution of learning and teaching, committed to serving the needs of society. Our campus community reflects and is a part of a society comprising all races, creeds and social circumstances. The successful conduct of the university's affairs requires that every member of the university community acknowledge and practice the following basic principles:

We affirm the inherent dignity in all of us, and we strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by respect for each other. We acknowledge that our society carries within it historical and deep-rooted misunderstandings and biases, and therefore we will endeavor to foster mutual understanding among the many parts of our whole.

We affirm the right of freedom of expression within our community and affirm our commitment to the highest standards of civility and decency towards all. We recognize the right of every individual to think and speak as dictated by personal belief, to express any idea, and to disagree with or counter another's point of view, limited only by university regulations governing time, place and manner. We promote open expression of our individuality and our diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity and respect.

We confront and reject all manifestations of discrimination, including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, status within or outside the university, or any of the other differences among people which have been excuses for misunderstanding, dissension or hatred. We recognize and cherish the richness contributed to our lives by our diversity. We take pride in our various achievements, and we celebrate our differences. We recognize that each of us has an obligation to the community of which we have chosen to be a part. We will strive to build a true community of spirit and purpose based on mutual respect and caring.