

MGT 419

BUSINESS STRATEGY CONSULTING SKILLS

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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. (Note, those courses are not prerequisites.)

Strategy consultants from firms like McKinsey, Bain, Accenture or EY apply the "CEO perspective" of these strategic models to answer complex business questions that companies don't have the time, objectivity or depth of skills 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.

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

This course will be useful preparation for all students' Integrated Management Project and other strategic undertakings. 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: Two optional books and one case have been assigned for this class (see below, don't buy until after first lecture). Lecture slides will be available on Canvas. Please know the case well before coming to class to optimize in class time.

Course Requirements

This 1 unit elective is graded and team-based. Each team will consist of about 4-8 students, all of whom will share the same grade. The course grade will be based 50% on homework #1 and 50% on homework #2.

- 1. Attend all sessions:** You must attend all days, in full, to pass the course.
- 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. Ideal class participation involves thoughtful comments and questions.
- 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 assignments.

Prerequisites

This class is open to all GSM students. It is recommended prior to your capstone IMPACT project, but can also be taken after.

Notes About Expectations for Class Behavior

It is expected that all class members will treat each other with respect and dignity. It is unacceptable to insult, harass, or demean any member of the class. 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.

Course Schedule

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

1) Class Overview and Introduction to Strategy Consulting

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?

2) Structured Framing: Problem Statements

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

Team Exercise: Create a SCQ for complex situations

3a) Structured Framing: Issue Trees

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

Team Exercise: Create an issue or hypothesis tree for complex situations

Homework -- 50% of Grade

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

1. Situation Complication, Question template filled out using McDonald’s case
2. Issue OR Hypothesis tree template filled out using McDonald’s case

CLASS 2

3b) Issue Tree Review

Review Pillsbury issue trees and answer questions

4) Research Plan

How do you tie issues and hypothesis to research? What types of research are practical in a typical consulting engagement? How can you think through to end use to help focus research? How to avoid research pitfalls such as steering the answers?

5a) Structured Communications: Minto Pyramid

How can you structure communications for clarity and to maximize the uptake of recommendations? What is the difference between projecting and documents created to be left behind? How and when you should use inductive and deductive logic? How to anchor and use way finders to help with clarity and structure?

Team Exercise: Organizing recommendations, key lines and support.

Take Home Final -- 50% of Grade

1. Minto Pyramid template filled out using McDonald's case
2. 10 (ish) page PowerPoint presentation that links to your pyramid outline and demonstrates effective use of the principles and practices of effective presentations

CLASS 3

5b) Structured Communications Review

Review final – “school solution” sample model

6) Relationship Management

What can you do to become a trusted advisor? How can you reduce resistance? How do you influence a client to activate strategy? How to you stay in touch between engagements?