MAN-374(H) - GENERAL MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY - SPRING 2011 -

Professor Dr. Francisco Polidoro Jr.

Office CBA 4.258

Office Hours Wednesdays 2:30-4:00 pm or by appointment

(Office hours may vary periodically, check announcements in class)

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Required Reading

1. Grant, RM. 2005. Contemporary Strategy Analysis. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

2. Course packet at the Co-Op. (Note: It is a violation of the honor system to duplicate course packets.)

Course Description

Why do some firms perform better than others? General managers grapple with this question as they attempt to enhance the performance of the firms they manage. In this course we will explore possible answers to this question, examine a variety of analytical models that help us identify critical issues that affect the performance of firms, and build on our understanding of complex business situations to devise realistic solutions that address those issues. Although the specific challenges that general managers face vary across organizations, industries, geographic regions and time, the fundamental analytical skills required in the examination of strategic issues can be applied in many contexts. I encourage you to build those skills and to focus on the development of your own personal approach for identifying and addressing key strategic challenges.

Students are expected to develop the ability to examine strategic issues from the perspective of the general manager of the corporation, division, plant, or other business unit, who must be concerned with the overall success of the organization. Because the general manager's task cuts across functional areas, this course builds on your previous work in the program and provides a comprehensive management perspective. Not everyone who takes this course will ultimately become a general manager. Yet, this course will benefit virtually all students. The recent trend in the corporate world toward flatter, less hierarchical organizations has resulted in strategic decisions being made at ever lower hierarchical levels. Accordingly, even nonexecutives are likely to make decisions and initiate actions that have significant strategic implications. Many entry-level positions require employees' involvement in projects that are initiated to elicit innovative and creative ideas to improve the functioning of the organization as a whole. Similarly, functional specialists need to take into account the overall needs of the business when addressing problems in their own areas and thus need to develop a keen awareness of, and appreciation for, the challenges that the corporation faces. Therefore, it is increasingly important that university graduates acquire managerial skills and understand how their actions affect the total enterprise.

In order to capture the pragmatic, action-oriented, and complex nature of the general management task, this course is taught through the case method. We will supplement the case discussions with readings, lectures, and conceptual discussions.

Course Objectives

- 1. Develop the ability to view the firm from the perspective of general managers. Achieving this goal presupposes synthesis of knowledge acquired in previous courses and understanding which part of that knowledge is relevant to general managers.
- 2. Understand the key factors that explain why some firms persistently outperform other firms.
- 3. Understand the fundamental concepts in strategic management and build on those concepts to identify how firms can create value, appropriate value and sustain value creation in an industry.
- 4. Learn to distinguish between basic causes of business problems and attendant symptoms.
- 5. Practice the formulation of realistic strategic recommendations and implementation plans that balance the tradeoffs inherent in any strategic situation.
- 6. Enhance analytical thinking and the ability to report conclusions effectively in both written and oral form.
- 7. Learn how to gather and analyze information on a specific firm and the respective industry.
- 8. Discuss some of the practical realities of running different types of businesses.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

1.	Class Contributions	20%
2.	Written Case Analyses and Quizzes	10%
3.	Midterm Exam	30%
4.	Term Project	40%

- 4.1 Critique (group grade) (5%)
- 4.2 Project contributions (individual grade, peer evaluation) (5%)
- 4.3 Presentation (group grade, peer evaluation) (10%)
- 4.4 Industry Analysis (group grade) (10%)
- 4.5 Firm Analysis (group grade) (10%)

Individual final grades will result from the student's performance in each of the activities and assignments listed above. Final grades in this class will be awarded according to the plus/minus system. See http://www.utexas.edu/provost/planning/plus-minus/ for more details.

Class Contributions

Attendance

The course emphasizes case analysis and, accordingly, an important part of learning takes place in the classroom. Therefore, attending all classes is essential. Since the course is designed to help you develop a personal synthesis, rather than repeat textbook content, it is not possible to make up for an absence. If for some unavoidable reason you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out from your classmates what material we covered and what additional assignments or handouts you missed. I will not track attendance – it is your responsibility to come prepared and actively contribute to class. You will not be directly penalized for missing classes. If you miss several classes, however, it will be obviously difficult for you to achieve a high grade for class contributions.

Preparation

For the learning process to be effective, it is absolutely necessary that you carefully prepare the cases and readings before class and actively participate in the case discussions during class. The session plan at the end of this syllabus indicates the materials students should read in preparation for each class. I expect you to be fully prepared for each class. I may call upon you at any time to answer specific questions and contribute to the class discussion. To avoid embarrassment, please let me know in advance if some emergency has made it impossible for you to be prepared adequately for class. Preparation involves a thorough analysis of the case and developing a personal position on the case's issues. Unless you think about these issues and adopt a personal position when preparing for class, it will be very hard to learn from your peers' contributions.

Class discussions

The vast majority of general managers' interactions with others are verbal. For this reason, this course emphasizes the development of verbal skills. You can consider the classroom a laboratory in which you can test your ability to convince your peers of the correctness of your approach to complex problems and of the results that your approach will generate. The questions below capture some of the behaviors that lead to effective class contribution.

- Is the student willing to share his/her views?
- Are the points that the student makes relevant to the discussion? Do the comments add to our understanding of the situation?
- Does the student provide evidence-based comments? Does the student distinguish among different kinds of data (i.e., facts, opinions, beliefs, concepts, etc.)?
- Is the student willing to test new ideas or are all comments safe (e.g., repetition of case facts or colleagues' comments without analysis)?
- Is the participant willing to interact with other class members? Is the student a good listener? Are the student's points linked to the comments of others?
- Do comments clarify and highlight the important aspects of earlier comments and lead to a clearer understanding of the issues in the case?
- Does the student ask questions rather than limit participation to responding to others' questions?

In a typical class session, I will ask one or more students to start the class by answering a specific question or discussing a specific issue. Preparation of the case and associated readings should be sufficient to handle such a lead-off assignment. As a group, students will then try to complete the analysis of the situation and address the problems and issues that the case presents. At the end of class, I may call a few students to summarize the class discussion and the take-away lessons from it.

Grades for class contributions

I make notes on class contributions after every single session. You will also have the opportunity to let me know what you believe your level of class contributions to be. I will determine your grade for class contributions based on your contributions during the entire semester. When determining your grade, I will take into account both the frequency and the quality of your contributions. You are welcome to see me during office hours, at any stage during the semester, to discuss your class contributions.

Office Hours

Your performance in this class is important to me. I will be happy to discuss the course, your progress, or any other issue of interest to you on an individual basis. Please see me in class or during office hours. I am also available, within reason, to meet with you outside these times. To set up an appointment, please send me an e-mail. Do not wait until the end of the semester to see me regarding your concerns with the course material or your performance.

Scholastic Dishonesty

The McCombs School of Business has no tolerance for acts of scholastic dishonesty. The responsibilities of both students and faculty with regard to scholastic dishonesty are described in detail in the Policy Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty for the McCombs School of Business. By teaching this course, I have agreed to observe all of the faculty responsibilities described in that document. By enrolling in this class, you have agreed to observe all of the student responsibilities described in that document. If the application of that Policy Statement to this class and its assignments is unclear in any way, it is your responsibility to ask me for clarification. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. You should refer to the Student Judicial Services website at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/ or the General Information Catalog to access the official University policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty as well as further elaboration on what constitutes scholastic dishonesty.

Students with Disabilities

Upon request, the University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) are housed in the Office of the Dean of Students, located on the fourth floor of the Student Services Building. Information on how to register, downloadable forms, including guidelines for documentation, accommodation request letters, and releases of information are available online at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/index.php. Please do not hesitate to contact SSD at (512) 471-6259, VP: (512) 232-2937 or via e-mail if you have any questions.

Religious holy days

A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform me of the future absences at the start of the semester, so that the applicable arrangements can be made.

A detailed version of this syllabus will be available to students registered for MAN-374 (section 04430) and MAN-374H (sections 04440, and 04445).