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School of Business Administration

BUSINESS STRATEGY | BA 495 | University Studies Senior Capstone Course

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**Res:**  *Course Research Website*[**http://guides.library.pdx.edu/ba495?hs=a**](http://guides.library.pdx.edu/ba495?hs=a)

**REQUIRED READING**

* Capstone Strategic Management ISBN# 9781308347288 as a softcover book available at the PSU books store or ISBN# 9781308356211 as a color e-Book per the links below.
  + - [Purchasing a book with an access code - PDF](http://create.mheducation.com/shopresources/pdfs/eBookstore_instructions_access_code.pdf)  <http://create.mcgraw-hill.com/shop/>
  + - [Purchasing a book using a credit card - PDF](http://create.mheducation.com/shopresources/pdfs/eBookstore_instructions.pdf)  <http://create.mcgraw-hill.com/shop/>
* Or, you can buy ***Frank T. Rothaermel, Strategic Management: Concepts.*** *2nd ed. (ISBN-13: 978-0077645069*
* Using the 1st ed. of Rothaermel’s book (*ISBN-13 9780077324452)* may work out just fine since the concepts are the same, but the illustrations discussed (which are sometimes discussed in class) may not be the same.
* Cases and assigned readings not included in the textbook will be posted on D2L.

**ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING**

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*The letter grade equivalent for the total points is as follows:*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **A** | **A-** | **B+** | **B** | **B-** | **C+** | **C** | **C-** | **D+** | **D** | **D-** | **F** |
| **Minimum Points** | *187* | *180* | *173* | *167* | *160* | *153* | *147* | *140* | *133* | *127* | *120* | *< 120* |



**COURSE OVERVIEW & GOALS**

**Capstone Student Handbook:** Review carefully! [www.pdx.edu/sites/www.pdx.edu.cae/files/capst-stu-bk05.pdf](http://www.pdx.edu/sites/www.pdx.edu.cae/files/capst-stu-bk05.pdf)

Effective strategies lead organizations to stand out—for **what** they do and **how** they do it. One of the primary pillars of PSU’s strategic focus is to develop students who can apply interdisciplinary learning to real world issues and become leaders of change to better serve their communities. This capstone has been a key component of PSU’s international recognition for a distinguished undergraduate experience, as noted by our strong rankings <http://www.pdx.edu/insidepsu/rankings-recognize-psus-rise>

In this course, we will rely on business strategy frameworks to thoroughly analyze the client’s strategic issues and formulate recommendations. The strategy content and the client project have been selected so our students can experience the key goals of the University Studies Program (**appreciation of the diversity of the human experience, communication, critical thinking, and social/ethical responsibility)** while making community impact.

**5 Primary Goals of the Business Strategy Capstone Course**

1. Make a difference in the community. This means being “all in” to serve your client, striving to produce recommendations for superior future performance.

2. Appreciate human diversity. In this course, we will focus on diversity issues that are central to business success: embracing cultural differences, addressing the needs of varied stakeholders, and working through differences across team members.

3. Understand social and ethical responsibilities. Businesses confront profound social and ethical issues in their pursuit of corporate social responsibility. Both through case analyses and the client work, you will need to weigh the social, environmental, and economic implications of your recommendations.

4. Engage in effective communication. Throughout your career, effective communication will be fundamental to your success, so we will practice both written and oral, and individual and team communication.

5. Hone critical thinking skills. Your client project will require you to thoroughly understand the client’s problem, analyze pertinent data, and formulate recommendations. Working with a client will make this process very real and exciting.

**ADVISING AND ASSISTANCE**

The SBA provides academic advisors as well as career/internship advisors to assist students to enrich their college experience. Academic advisors are trained to provide counsel in a wide range of issues. From selecting a business major to evaluating transferred transcripts, academic advisors are here to help students with all of their degree related questions. All SBA advisors are available by appointment, which must be scheduled in advance. Drop-in hours are available as well. Drop-in hours are held regularly throughout the week and are designed to help answer routine or simple questions. For more information about SBA advising and drop-in hours please visit the School of Business website at <http://www.pdx.edu/sba/> and click on student resources. The following is a brief summary of the type of issues with which academic advisors can offer assistance: **DARS reports / SBA admissions requirements / Major selection and requirements / Transcript evaluation / Course overrides / Transfer credit petitions / Career planning / Portland State rules and policies**

# GROUP PROJECT WORK & HANDLING OF ANY GROUP CONFLICTS

Team members will be collectively responsible for completing each of the Capstone assignments and the grades earned on the Team Projects will be assigned equally to each group member.Each team should elect a “Team Leader” to direct the development of the various components of the project work, make life easier on the client, organize team meetings, help lead team discussion and communicate with the professor or client from time to time. The professor may communicate to the Team Leader or any team member as needed.Don’t be the ‘free-rider’ on the project. I'm sure all of you have been on teams where someone did not fully contribute to the project, but expected the same grade as those making a strong contribution. **Therefore, strong contributions to projects, showing a collaborative attitude, regular attendance both in class and at team meetings are essential for optimal grading.** In situations where someone is not sharing in the responsibilities of the project, or delivering poor quality / late work to the group, I may use evaluations to assess one’s contributions.

If there’s a problem that I am made aware of: **Step 1** is for all of us to meet and sort things out with an improvement-plan. **Step 2** is a follow-up meeting to check on improvement. **Step 3**, peer evaluations, which can retroactively affect your grade on previously graded assignments, only occurs if there are still problems. In this case, individual grades on the project may be adjusted for a lack of group participation at the discretion of the professor. **An individual’s project grades can be as much as 30% less than the group’s per this review process**.

# LAPTOP / PHONE / MOBILE DEVICE POLICY

# Laptop use during lecture is prohibited, unless you are using the laptop to take notes. If that is the case, please see me for permission. In these circumstances, I’ll ask that you email me your notes taken for the lecture for the first 4 class sessions. *Exception*: on the days where we have in class exercises, having a laptop within your group is helpful, but not essential. On these days, it is encouraged to have one on hand.

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# Cell phones and mobile devices, PDAs etc. should be silenced and put away during class. If you routinely engage in texting, surfing or other device use during lecture, it sends a strong signal to me about your participation in class and your participation grade will be lowered to reflect this. Also, please refraining from posting any lecture materials, taking/posting photos of slides to public websites (i.e. facebook™, twitter™ and similar public forums).

# MISSED CLASSES / EXAMS / ASSIGNMENTS + ACADEMIC HONESTY

Admittance to this course: If you miss class sessions 1 and 2, you cannot add this course. Missed classes directly affect your individual participation grade, but can also obviously affect your group-grades. All assignments are due at the beginning of class without exception and late assignments will not be accepted. D2L will not accept journal entries after 6pm on the day they are due. Windows to take the quiz are also pre-programmed in D2L, so do make sure to make time for the exams also.

**Academic Honesty**: Students will uphold the honor code in all work associated to this course. All work must be original and non-original work should be appropriately referenced. Copying material from the internet or any other source without proper citation is considered plagiarism and cheating and will receive a failing grade. For more information regarding PSU’s policies on behavior and academic honesty, please see: <http://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct>

# INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS, TESTS, JOURNAL ENTRY DETAILS

**QUIZZES:**

Quizzes are based on (1) lectures (i.e. orally presented materials, board work, and slide material), and (mainly) (2) reading assignments (book reading and special topic articles). These are short, timed, quizzes of 3-10 questions in multiple choice and T/F format to ensure that the strategy vocabulary and their applications are understood. You may use your notes and book (but quizzes must be taken by you without the help of others), but they are timed quizzes according to the number of questions on the quiz, so do make sure you study hard. If you miss the window (by midnight within two days of the lecture on that topic) to take the exam, you will not have the option to take it again—these are lost points, so make sure you set aside appropriate time.

**REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRIES:**

**These are handed in electronically only via the ‘dropbox’ on D2L. Please note, they are not accepted after the due date after class meeting time has begun.** These write-assignments are central to the University Studies Capstone Program courses. The purpose of these is to allow students to apply strategy concepts to real-world situations as seen from your perspective and the view of others. Point-scoring for these are as follows:

*Effort/Ideas lacking*= 1-2 *Superficial ideas, ok editing*= 3 *Good ideas/ok editing*= 4 *Good ideas/perfect editing* = 5

**Entry Format**: Typed, heading of the assignment centered at top, 11-point font, times new roman, single-spaced.

**ENTRY 1: Diversity/ Critical thinking —** *“Reflection on diversity versus client & community”* **(1-1.5pg length)**

* Consider your client’s project and discuss the stakeholders that the project COULD serve if successful.
* Consider the specific roles of diversity (defined in many different ways, such as stakeholder-, ethnic-, socioeconomic-, cultural-, age-, functional-based, etc.) and how the project could serve communities.
  + Does it serve a diverse set of actors? Who will it serve and whom will it not serve if successful?
* What are the biggest challenges that you face in supporting both the client and your group to help the project succeed (and serve its purpose)?
* What do you see as potential outcomes from your interaction with the client project (client and group) in terms of your own growth both professionally and personally?

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| **ENTRY 2: Ethical / Social Responsibility—** *“Reflect on* ***your*** *opportunity to champion a cause”* **(1-1.5pg length)***.*   * Per the Grameen Intel Case: Thinking about Huque’s story, consider your own story at this point of your life. Discuss key factors in your upbringing or education, family, or cultural experiences where you were exposed to values, causes or situations that stuck with you, helped define you as a person, or affected how you make key life decisions. * Identify a cause or problem that you feel well equipped, passionate and/or motivated to support. What is the backstory on your interest in this cause? * Identify the steps, key events, or routes in your life that would allow you to get involved with this cause (encourage the students to detail more than one realistic route). Does it require achieving specific milestones (i.e. job/career related , personal wealth, family situation, or education)?   **ENTRY 3: Diversity / Community Interface —** “Reaction to a cause-project” **(1-1.5pg length)**   * Choose one of the other causes (besides the one you worked on) you were exposed to react to. * Describe why you chose this cause and how the presentation-communication on it helped or hurt your connection to the cause. * What parallels or key differences do you see between this cause and the one your group took on? * What strategy challenges do you see this cause facing in the years to come? * How might they overcome those challenges? * Is there a diversity component to this cause that you see as helping or hurting this cause? * What are the skills that you specifically possess that would be valuable in supporting or helping this cause?   **ENTRY 4: Writing /Communication—“Reflect on your individual growth in communication” (1.5pg length)**   * Write a reflective essay and analyze new insights and growth developed as a result of working with a team/group (e.g. roles that they and others assumed in the group, the effective distribution of labor, how you communicated with other group members effectively, and what were some of the effective approaches to collaborative writing and presentation-making with peers). * Discuss and provide evidence of what you learned about your communication skills while working with a community partner (e.g. communicating across any differences in a professional organizational setting). * Identify how your oral communication skills developed as a result of the Capstone (e.g. conflict resolution, navigating across difference, listening to others, public speaking and presentations with various stakeholders, such as class colleagues, community members, and/or stakeholders). |

**PARTICIPATION: Class discussion contributions**

Please bring your nametag each lecture until I have your name memorized. A central part in developing your inquiry, critical thinking and communication skills will be active and thoughtful contributions to the class discussion. Your contributions here help refine your managerial and presentation skills, so everyone is expected to participate in each class session. I usually ask for volunteers, but **I also cold call so I know that you are reading**.

In evaluating class contributions, I consider both quality and the frequency of contribution, but I weigh quality more heavily. In assessing quality, I consider the following dimensions:

* Is the student creatively demonstrating strategic thinking and visioning?
* Does the comment simply repeat facts from the case, or does it provide analysis that adds to our understanding of the case and its broader implications?
* Does the comment fit well into the flow of the discussion? Is it linked to the comments of others?
* Does the comment reflect creative thinking, perhaps by tying together multiple viewpoints or tying back to material covered previously in the course?
* Is the comment delivered in a respectful, constructive tone?
* Overall: How significantly did this student’s contributions enhance the learning environment as a whole?”

**CAPSTONE AS A CAUSE [where] GROUP-LEADS-CLASS PROJECT:**

**There are two parts to this exercise/assignment:**

1. Find a capstone-related cause/issue: Your group will find a ‘cause’ to research. The cause can be social, political, economic, education- etc (open to your group’s discretion!), but you want to find cause or issue that you can connect to your capstone project in some way. It’s always interesting to find a debate, or a multi-sided topic with several organizations representing the interests of all sides or media attention.
2. Introduce the cause/strategy problems to class and engage your peers: Your group will lead the class discussion on the topic. The *discussion* and how you choose to lead the class is in your hands—it can occur with a game, performance, skit, role-play, debates, video, clay-animation, lecture/presentation, or other formats. The goals are to: (a) communicate the cause, why it matters, who benefits, who does not, organizations involved on all sides of the cause (if both exist), and (b) **what are the strategy problems that these organizations face now or in the future.** If you could choose an organization connected to the cause to support with capstone work, which would it be, and what needs might they have for volunteers?

**CAPSTONE PROJECT REPORT DETAILS**

CAPSTONE PROJECT: Solve a Strategy Problem for a Community-based Client

Working with an interdisciplinary team, you will think like a consultant to solve a strategy problem(s) for the client that account for the concepts/theory discussed in the course. After the second-class session, you will be assigned a team with members who represent a cross-section of the business majors. By course end, the team will produce one final written report that makes clear recommendations depending on the Client’s scope of work.

**GENERAL GRADING RUBRIC FOR PROJECT PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS**

The following rubrics are emphasized in grading the deliverables. The weights of these vary per deliverable.

* Demonstration of High Quality Research: Assignments & project deliverables should present information that is current, useful, and directly relevant to the business issues that matter to the deliverable. Its important to demonstrate that in-depth research has been done. The project deliverable guidelines are helpful here.
* Analysis & Interpretation of Research: Your assignment should demonstrate an understanding of the issues, not just a reiteration/regurgitation of facts and figures found in other sources. A clear, explanatory connection between what has been uncovered by investigation and the recommendations made are critical. Use of course topics and materials should also be apparent.
* Organization: **Write professionally. Be clear & concise. Edit and edit again, then edit.** Your work should be neatly structured (e.g. headings, subheadings), well written, clear and to the point. Final reports are typed, double-spaced (note- this differs from journal entries), 11-point font, with 1” margins. Typographical errors (i.e., grammar, spelling) should be nonexistent. Use figures/charts/graphs as need be (including the source where obtained), as long as they are explained in the text and interpretation is not left to the reader. Since all team members contribute writing, please ensure that the report/presentations read as “one voice”. Carefully document source references and include a bibliography with in-text citations. Use the MLA convention (www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/mla OR owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/ )

**WRITTEN REPORT: FORMAT;** The completed report should be approximately **18-20 pages**, NOT including Charts, graphs, and tables can be put after the main body text, but explain them in the text. The report should be typed and organized using subheadings for easy reference and formatted per above details on organization. Ensure all charts/data/sources for quotes are cited. **Each final report will have different elements, a unique problem focus, and depending on the client’s scope of work, some of these sections may not be relevant to your client’s needs. In short, there is no ‘one-size/format-capstone to fit all group work’. So, what follows below is a very general guide that includes elements that are common in business/marketing plan capstone projects:**

*I. INTRODUCTION:*

* **Cover Page** – The cover page should clearly state all members of your group alphabetically, the client’s organization, and the date. No need to use bindings or coverings, just staple the upper left-hand corner.
* **Table of Contents** – Sections of the report and page numbers. The appendix must be ordered in the sequence referred to in your paper.
* **Executive Summary** - The purpose is to provide a quick overview for easy reference and to create interest and “excitement” for the reader to continue into the specifics of the report. The executive summary should be written after the body of the report is completed. **Each paragraph is similar to a “journal abstract” and should be an informative summary of the critical recommendations of each section.** Some general guides:
* State the overall key strategy problem(s)/confronting issue/opportunity that faces the client per the SOW.
* You then briefly state or summarize how much and which of their challenges are based on external versus internal environment issues and how this creates and relates to the strategic options analyzed (1/3 page).
* Lastly, you state your overall recommendation that you have for the client, and how the rest of the analysis serves to support this recommendation. (i.e. 1-2 sentences)
* A final paragraph summarizes each area covered in the body of your plan that supports your recommendations, such as Client Description/Management, Marketing, Financial Analysis, and Strategic internal/external areas of focus. Whatever these areas are per your SOW, briefly summarize whey they matter to your recommendations (no longer than 1 page).

*II. BODY: (\* means a chart is required in addition to the FULL text explaining the chart)*

**An Introduction to the Client, their History, Challenges, Opportunities and Current State of Operations:**

* Summarize the key pieces of client/market information that are meaningful to addressing their issues. This is essentially an outline of the client’s strategy problems. You can do this in paragraph form and then break out certain ‘lists’ if need be (w/ bullets/numbers). Ideally, if you can relate the “intended strategy vs. realized strategy” that occurred, you are on the right track. Set the stage for recommendations.
* Organization’s history: Here, you only care about the history that matters to a consultant making a strategy recommendation. Do this if the history is relevant to the consulting project.

**Management Strategy-** Use the following rough guide—again, what appears here is client/SOW-specific:

* Future (needed) Organizational Structure (may include external vs. internal resources, such as alliances)\*
* Necessary Human Resources-related Issues (Wages and Benefits)\*
* Production Process\* (PERT diagram of process or schedule that matters to the Client’s organization – example: restaurant – daily schedule, remodeler – job schedule, financial planner – client meeting etc.)

**Market Strategy/Feasibility Analysis**: Based on the first two presentations/analyses presented. This section should be rich with information & analytical rigor! How you arrived at your conclusions is meaningful to the client.

* Target Markets Focusing on Client’s Strategic Issue (RESEARCH – should have 7 –10 “cited” sources)
* You should focus only on the aspects or specific external environmental dimensions that matter.
* Include an updated VRIO analysis of their key resources and combinations of resources according to RBV in how they support sustainable or temporary competitive advantages.
* Summarize, the key aspects of the internal environment that affects the firm’s ability to realize their “intended strategy” (i.e. corporate culture problems, turnover, lack of capability).
* Competitor analysis (detailed analysis of the top 3-5 competitors relevant to strategy problem, SWOT)
* If conducting an alliance strategy plan (i.e. per licensing plan), do a detailed analysis on the top 3 partners.
* Time matters. If industry cycles/events exist that affect some competitors more than others, note these.
* Focus on Product/Service Characteristics & Pricing Strategy vs. manufacturing/service offering constraints.
* What Promotional Plan (Promotional mix and budget) makes sense per their challenges/opportunities?

# Financial Plan: The financial analyses/exercises reviewed in class *may* be relevant, but you essentially have to identify which financial exercises/analyses matter to your client’s problems. Here, you must 1 identify the correct exercises/analysis methods, 2 show that you have identified the right pieces of data that help you perform this analysis, and 3 in cases where you are unable to get information, you need to show how and why you made specific assumptions in your model. These models should be extremely comprehensive.

* For each exercise you determine, multiple scenario analysis is required given any contingencies. Note the contingent assumptions you made and how to do they matter to the identified exercise? Justify!

**Some examples of applicable exercises may include:**

* Financial Feasibility Study: How much money does the Client need to act on the recommended strategy and how do you propose they obtain this money? At what timing or according to what assumptions is the money needed? Overall will this project be successful and why (last part of this section)
* Projection of anticipated costs at start up\* (research – cite your sources)
* Projected monthly cash flows / operating budgets\*
* Pro Forma Income Statement for first 3 years, Sales projections for 2 years of operation per your plan\*
* Break even projections\* (refer to text and [www.JavaCalc.com](http://www.JavaCalc.com))
* What kind of licensing revenue should the client expect from licensing their technology out? Comparing this to keeping product inside the firm… or licensing out for specific applications, regions, etc.\*
* What are the trade-offs (revenue, cost, market-access, quality, reputation etc.) of partnering vs. in-house?

*III. CONCLUSION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS:*

**Strategic Alternatives For The Firm To Consider To Be More Competitive:**

* Go over the, say, 2-4 options that you have uncovered for the firm to consider in moving forward. Describe each of these with at least a paragraph. Weigh only the relevant pros/cons of each. They may concern different aspects of firm strategy. For instance, they may have specific problems in managing organizational culture problems of which you have a couple of recommendations, while also facing some external environmental issues that require different alternatives to be proposed.

**Strategic Recommendations***:* What should the client do, and why, regarding its strategic challenges?

* Consider the short term (one year or less), intermediate (2 -3 years) and long range (4+ years) goals. These are GOALS – Small, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Specific. “THUS, based on these alternatives… the consulting team recommends the following strategies to be pursued: (STATE THESE HERE)” No new research material for why they do this— just need to defend this choice relative to the other options on why it’s the best through analyzing the options. Here, you say WHAT you recommend, WHY you recommend it (per all your research/analysis), and sudden or emergent CONTINGENCIES that the firm needs to be aware of in embarking on this strategy so that they realize what they intend to do.

**CONCLUSIONS [1/2 page]:**

* Here, you review the ‘sub’- summaries of each of first 3 sections and, therefore, how it leads to the final recommendation. No new material here, just need to make sure everything ties together.

*IV. ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS:*

**Appendix**: All full-page charts, tables, graphs, etc. (smaller tables figures can be integrated in text)

**Bibliography**:

* I will expect at least 7 DIFFERENT and HIGHLY CREDIBLE secondary sources to be utilized, credited, and cited in your report. DIFFERENT also refers to uncovering various different ‘types’ of sources.
* Possible types of sources include credible Internet, competitor information, brochures, personal interviews, marketing collateral, periodicals, newspapers, trade journals and books (one or more of each type – often students have a total of 5 or more sources for each “type”).

\*While recommended page lengths are given for some of the written portions of the project, note that page length is not as important as adequately addressing the assignment through the general guidelines provided above. Many of the sections identified here may not be relevant to your project.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

* Many aspects of the guide for the written report are helpful to addressing the presentation deliverables.
* All presentations must be emailed to me 1hr prior to class start on the due date + also bring them on a USB.
* They must also be emailed to the client directly after the presentation.
* Time available for each presentation is typically 20 minutes + 5 minutes of Q/A and longer for the final one.
* Print enough copies in ‘handout’ format: 1 for me, ‘N’ for the clients (can use ‘handout-format’ to print).