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LINCOLNUNIVERSITY MBA PROGRAM

Business Strategy & Decision Making
BA 380
3 Units
Wednesday 12:30-3:15pm
Fall Semester 2011

Instructor: Marshall J. Burak
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Office Hours: Wednesday, 11-1:30pm

Required Text

Strategic Management, Concepts and Cases, 9th Ed., Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson, Cengage Learning/South-Western, 2011, ISBN # 978-1439042304

Catalog Description

BA 380 – Business Strategy & Decision Making

Each student is expected to develop a better understanding of business strategy approaches and techniques, and to acquire knowledge and skills relating to the decision-making process. Emphasis is on decision-making while still recognizing the importance of the specialized functions of an organization. Readings and case materials are reinforced with participation through written tests, a paper, and oral presentations in decision-making and computer applications. This is the capstone course, and not for beginners. (3 units) Prerequisites: all core MBA and at least two concentration courses.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Business Strategy & Decision Making

Today's business firms develop, grow and operate in an extremely complex and often fiercely competitive marketplace. Decisions that managers make must, therefore, be based on the most complete and current information available about their markets, products, technology and resource availability. Such decisions require inputs from many sources and disciplines and must, by virtue of their complexity, draw upon the skills, knowledge and experience of the entire management team. Successfully competing in a rapidly evolving global business environment depends upon management creating a strategic focus and coherent plan for growth, innovation and superior financial performance. Ultimately, it is management's careful



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consideration and blending of information, opportunity and resources that form decisions that have strategic value in terms of the continuing successful development of the firm.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will focus on the corporation and the set of strategic factors that underlie the basis for formulating and implementing management decisions. These strategic factors have both internal and external impact on the firm in terms of influencing both the organization of the business and its outreach to and interaction with the global marketplace. Cases will be used to illustrate how business firms develop strategic responses and management decisions to critical issues such as competitive threats, technology change, growth opportunities and financial performance. Emphasis will be placed on the analytical techniques and tools for creating useful and valid business, market and financial information that becomes the foundation for the development of strategic management decision making. In addition to a mid-term and final exam, students will be required to complete a team project requiring the comprehensive analysis of a business case. A core learning experience in this course is involving students in the process and methodology used to analyze a complex business case to determine and critique the company's strategic focus and basis for management decision making. Students will be expected to apply these tools in their assessment and recommendations related to their team project case.

Instructional Methodology

I. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

This course emphasizes a realistic look at how moderate to very large size firms develop and make strategic decisions. The approach includes an appraisal of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities facing companies and uses real business cases as the basis for analyzing and evaluating company responses. Students are expected to have read the text and case assignments prior to class meetings. Class discussions will be based on an examination of the assigned text material and illustrative cases. The assigned textbook is to be considered a basic resource providing a presentation and explanation of strategic business concepts and the formative factors that guide and determine management decision making. The assigned textbook readings parallel case assignments and class discussion topics. It is important that both the reading and case assignments are completed in preparation for productive class discussions.



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II. READING AND PROBLEM ASSIGNMENTS

Reading assignments from the text, *Strategic Management, Concepts and Cases*, provide background concepts and analytical tools useful in evaluating assigned cases.

Case assignments are used primarily for purposes of providing practice in the development of useful information forming the basis of management strategies and decision-making.

III. COMPREHENSIVE PROJECT

Successful completion of this course requires an in-depth analysis of a business case including an analysis of the company's market position, strategic initiatives and focus, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, technology, competitive environment, resources and financial condition. Teams will be formed and each team will be assigned a different case for their project. At the beginning of this course instructions will be provided related to this assignment including development of the case analysis, assessment of the company's strategies, key decisions, financial condition and performance, evaluation of the company's successes and failures, formation of a set of recommendations and the submission of a completed team project report. Time will be set aside during my course visit to consult with and support each team as they undertake their project assignment. The final team project report will be due to me by December 7th and may be submitted either in hard copy by mail or in electronic form by e-mail.

IV. Course Standards

- A. Students are expected to attend each class meeting and be prepared to discuss the assigned text and case materials. Students who come to class late will not be admitted until the break period. Every member of the class is expected to participate in discussions surrounding the assigned chapter and case content.
- B. Tests contain a combination of multiple choice questions and short essay answers to case type questions. Students may use their class notes and text books during the exams. Students are not allowed to use cell phones during the exam and are required to do their own work in answering the exam questions. Laptops are not allowed during exams unless your text book is in an e-form and/or your notes and access to the class power point slides are in an electronic form.



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V. EXAMINATIONS AND GRADING

- A. Examinations will be designed to test for: 1) an understanding of the factors that influence corporate strategies and decision making, and 2) the ability to recognize their appropriate application toward creating successful business growth and financial performance.

- B. Comprehensive Projects require students to submit a project proposal early in the course. Once the topic and research methodology is approved by the instructor, the student is to develop and complete their project for submission in correct written form. The project is due at the last class meeting and may be submitted in word-processed hard or soft copy. Student projects are graded based on their adherence to the approved topic, research methodology, adequacy of topic coverage, depth of content, quality of analysis of findings, effectiveness of summary and conclusions, appropriate documentation and identification of sources and the correctness of spelling and grammatical usage of the English language.

C. Basis for Grading

Mid-term examination	30%
Final examination	40%
Comprehensive Project	<u>30%</u>
	100%

C. Calculation of Course Grades

Each exam and the project have a total possible point value of 100. Course grades are calculated based on the sum of the points earned on each exam and the project times their respective weight. The weighted semester point count earned by each student establishes their course grade. Letter grades are based on the following scale: A, 90-100; B, 80-89; C, 65-79. Course grading is curved depending on the overall class performance which influences the inclusion of a – or + related to the letter grade.



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Course Outline and Assignments

<u>Date/Day/Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading & Case Assignments</u>
Part I Strategic Management Inputs		
Aug. 24, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	Strategic Management and Competitiveness	Text: Chapter 1 E-Bay (Case #10)
Aug. 31, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	The External Environment:	Text: Chapter 2 Motorola (Case #17)
Sept. 7, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	The Internal Organization Team Project Development	Text: Chapter 3
Part II Strategic Actions: Strategy Formulation		
Sept. 14, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	Business Level Strategy	Text: Chapter 4 Citibank (Case #7)
Sept. 21, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	Competitive Rivalry and Competitive Dynamics	Text: Chapter 5 Dell (Case #9)
Sept. 28, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	Corporate-Level Strategy	Text: Chapter 6 Alibaba.com (Case #1)
Oct. 5, Wed. 12:30-3:15pm	Merger & Acquisition Strategies	Text: Chapter 7 Cemex (Case #6)



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Oct. 12, Wed.
12:30-3-15pm

International Strategy

Text: Chapter 8
Tesco vs Sainsbury's
(Case #27)

**Oct. 19, Wed
12:30-3:15pm**

Mid-Term Exam (Chapters 1-8)

Oct. 26, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Cooperative Strategy

Text: Chapter 9
Apple (Case #14)

Part III Strategic Actions: Strategy Implementation

Nov. 2, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Corporate Governance

Text: Chapter 10
TNK-BP (Case #28)

Nov. 9, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Organizational Structure & Controls

Text: Chapter 11
Biovail (Case #4)

Nov. 16, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Strategic Leadership

Text: Chapter 12
Southwest Airlines
(Case #26)

Nov. 23, Wed.

No Class Meeting (Thanksgiving Break)

Nov 30, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm

Strategic Entrepreneurship

Text: Chapter 13
From Swords to
Plowshares
(Case #15)

**Dec. 7, Wed.
12:30-3:15pm**

Final Exam (Chapters 1-13)

Comprehensive Team Project Due in hardcopy or by E-Mail on Dec. 7th, 2011