Course overview

This course is designed to introduce you to the field of management consulting from the prospective of both the individual consultant and the consulting firm. The goal of the course is to provide students with a practical understanding of the approaches used by management consultants. We will specifically focus on:

(1) An introduction to the practice of consulting – what business consultants do, who they work for and how they create value;

(2) Understanding the life cycle of a consulting project (how to identify and define consulting opportunities, develop proposals, perform business diagnostics, contract with the client, create an effective engagement team and present findings).

(3) Developing your critical thinking skills, by understanding appropriate frameworks to assess, diagnose, suggest and implement solutions to some of the challenges businesses face.

In this course you will be introduced to consulting frameworks and methods; we will also bring in a number of guest speakers from the industry to ground our discussion around the practice of consulting. The emphasis throughout the course is on the development and application of conceptual models which clarify the interactions between consultants, broader patterns of technological and market change, and the structure and development of the consulting firm’s capabilities.
Teaching Approach:
This course places particular emphasis on your ability to think critically and to communicate both verbally and in writing. The course also requires you to apply concepts to case examples and to make practical suggestions for the actions an organization should take in a case situation.

The class will be taught using a combination of discussion, cases, and guest lectures. I like to keep the class environment interactive and participative, and you are expected to engage actively in our class discussions while being respectful of each other’s ideas and insights.

Course evaluation:

Individual components:
15% Individual case consulting report (Telecam)
20% Final exam
30% Participation and individual contributions

Team components:
20% Consultant case report
15% Consulting business plan proposal

Individual components:

Individual case consulting report – Telecam case (15%)
Taking the role of a consultant to Telecam in Session 9 (May 28th) evaluate the soundness of the Internal Venture approach by answering the assigned questions on the syllabus. Hand in a hard copy of your analysis at the beginning of class. The report should be no longer than 4 pages, double spaced, normal margins, and 11 point or larger font. This individual analysis should represent your own independent work (no collaboration or discussion of the case with others).

Use only the information in the case. Place charts, tables, figures, etc. in the Appendix. They do not count as part of the page total.

Final exam (20%)
The final exam will consist of two or three short case scenarios with questions that will allow you to demonstrate your understanding and application of the materials covered in class to relevant, real-world situations.

The cases and case questions will be distributed via Canvas at noon on Friday June 5th. The final will be due at 9:00 pm on Thursday, June 11th. You are to take the exam at some point during this 6-day period within a three-hour block of time (three consecutive hours) beginning at the time you download the exam.
The exam is an individual effort (no collaboration) and your exam may not exceed four single-spaced pages, 11 point fonts and normal margins. Further details will be provided as we approach the date of the exam.

**Participation and individual contributions (30%)**
Come to every class well prepared, with strong opinions but with an open mind. I will call on individuals throughout the session to help broaden participation, to reward those who are prepared, to encourage listening, sharing and synthesizing, and to draw upon individuals who can potentially contribute to the discussion and to our collective understanding. Quality is more important than quantity (although it is impossible to judge quality for those who don’t or seldom participate).

I will alternate between asking for volunteers and calling on individuals. **If you are not prepared, please notify me before class, and we will both avoid embarrassment.**

The case studies we cover in class describe business and strategic issues at a specific point in time. Case analyses and discussions should be based solely on the information provided in the case.

**Your role in case discussions:**
You are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the readings and cases before coming to class. In order to facilitate this, most discussions of the cases will begin with two students randomly chosen to provide an overview of the case, the situation presented, and the key issues that need to be considered. To prepare the case you should have drafted a summary of these points beforehand so that you are adequately prepared to effectively contribute. Although I encourage you to form and work in study groups, you should be able to clearly articulate your summary positions individually (i.e., your summary should not be prepared by others).

Most of our discussions of cases will ask you to outline your recommendations and a plan of action for the company. Given that this is a consulting course, put yourself in the role of advisor or consultant to the company managers. Identify the key issues and problems facing the company and focus the majority of your attention on making specific recommendations with a supporting plan of action.

**Team component specifics:**

**Team consulting reports and top management role (20%)**

**Team consulting reports:**
Several case discussions will commence with formal presentations made by two teams taking the perspectives of consultants to the case company’s top management team. The presentation should cover the main points of the case, critical issues that must be dealt with, a plan of action, and why such a plan is appropriate. In doing so try to address what you think is the most important/pertinent question the firm needs to deal with. Presentations should be no more than 15 minutes (practice to lock this down – no
presentation may exceed 15 minutes). Presenting teams are encouraged to be create and professional. These presentations will help set the stage for further discussion.

Teams are required to submit a hard copy of a written report covering the points above at the beginning of class. Your team consulting report should be no longer than 5 pages, double spaced, normal margins, and 11 point or larger font. For all case reports use only the information in the case. Place charts, tables, figures, etc. in the Appendix. They do not count as part of the page total. In addition, teams are expected to distribute to the class a handout that contains their key slides (six slides/page, double sided – this should all fit on a single sheet of paper (12 slides max)).

**Top management role:**
I will randomly select another team to serve as the case company’s top managers or board of directors for each team presenting a consulting report. This team will be responsible for questioning and critiquing the consulting teams’ analyses and recommendations after their presentation. The question period will last about 10 minutes. This team is also asked to submit a one-page written report assessing the consultants’ performance to my TA, along with a decision about which of the two presenting teams you would hire and why.

Clearly, you will need to be totally familiar with the case company’s situation to do this job well. Following the top managers’ questioning, the discussion will be opened to the rest of the class. Great questions from the top management team will be reflected in individuals’ participation grades, the one page summary will be evaluated as acceptable, marginally acceptable or unacceptable and reflected in the team consulting project grade.

**Consulting business plan proposal (15%)**
This will be discussed in detail during session 2 (April 9th).

**Conduct in Class**

Adherence to the Foster Honor code is expected. By being a student in this class you acknowledge that you are a member of a learning community in the Foster School of Business that is committed to the highest academic standards. As a member of this community, you agree to uphold the fundamental standards of honesty, respect, and integrity, and accept the responsibility to encourage others to adhere to these standards.

**Device policy:**
Research shows that being online (surfing the Web, checking email, texting, etc.) inhibits your ability to learn and your ability to participate actively in the discussion, while being distracting to me and to your fellow students. Numerous studies have also demonstrated that over 90% of activities on devices during college classes are related to these non-course related activities. Interestingly, recent research has also shown that students learn more and take better notes when these notes are written rather than
typed. (“A Learning Secret: Don’t Take Notes with a Laptop,” Scientific American, 6-3-14)

Additionally, we will have a number of consultants and business professionals who are volunteering their valuable time to come to our class. I would like to ensure that you are fully focused on and engaged in their presentations.

As a result, laptops, tablets and other electronic devices will not be used in class except during the discussion of assigned cases (where you may need to refer to the case or your notes). If you need to take an important call or message, please do it during our break, or, in exceptional cases, leave class for the call/message.

Materials:

Course packet available through Harvard Business School Publishing, accessed through the following link:

https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/35821169
Class schedule:

**Session 1 (4-2):**

**Topics:**
- Introduction to consulting and the consulting industry
- Anatomy of a consulting firm
- Challenges for consultants and clients
- Knowledge management

**Readings:**


**Questions:**

1. Is the business relationship between the Statler Group and Kellogg-Champion Securities a lost cause?
2. How should the consultants—and the clients—handle the status meeting?

Innovation at the Boston Consulting Group

**Questions:**

1. The reading lists a number of ways in which the firm supports innovation. Which are the most important in your view, and why? Which seem, at least arguably, less effective? Why?
2. How do knowledge, innovations, and new ideas at BCG get codified? How are they disseminated?
3. What are the roles of the Practice Areas in innovation and knowledge management?

**Session 2 (4-9):**

**Topics:**
- A brief history and roadmap of the industry
- Economics of the industry
- Types of intervention strategies
- Disruptions in the consulting model

**Reading:**


**Questions:**
1. Which of the forces for disruption that are mentioned in the reading do you feel will be the most important or significant?
2. The reading discusses how consulting firms will look different in the future. Which observations do you think are the most correct? Which do you disagree with or question?

Case:
Deloitte and Touche Consulting Group

Questions:
1. What should Chen do and say at the steering committee presentation?
2. What was Deloitte’s strategy for improving this operation? Was it a good strategy?
3. Why is Chen having difficulties?
4. What would you say if a foreman came up to you and asked “Do you know what you’re talking about? How many times have you done this before?”
5. What lessons should the client (SKS) draw from this experience about how to manage consultants? What lessons should Deloitte draw from the experience?

Guest

Session 3 (4-16):
Topics:
- Value chain of a consulting firm
- Expectations and goals for engagement
- Proposal writing
- Mentoring and professional development

Case:
Developing professionals - The BCG Way (A)

Questions:
1. You have each been assigned two roles. Please come to class prepared to engage in meetings in which you assume these roles. As you prepare for these meetings, you may consider:
   - What do you want to achieve from the meeting?
   - What do you think will be your advisor’s/advisee’s perspective?
   - How would you like the meeting to proceed?
2. What should Josh Coopersmith, Erick Wong, Michael Nelson, or Madeleine Lagarde have done differently during their first 18 months at BCG? What should their mentors have done differently?
3. Evaluate BCG’s career development and mentorship processes. What are their strengths and weaknesses?
4. What are some of the ways to make mentorship effective? What are some of the challenges that make mentorship ineffective?

Readings

**Questions:**
1. How does this reading inform the case Developing professionals - The BCG Way?
2. What are the most important points Ibarra makes?

*Flawless Consulting*, Chapters 4-5

Guest

**Session 4 (4-23):**

**Topics:**
- Structured Problem Solving
- Analyzing and framing problems
- Strategic and critical thinking skills

**Readings:**
*Flawless Consulting*, Chapters 10 and 11


Guest

**Session 5 (4-30):**

**Topics:**
- Thinking like a consultant
- Knowledge management and innovation, part 2
- Consulting in the non-profit and social enterprise sectors

**Team Case:**
- Synthes
Team Assignment:
As a consultant to Synthes, outline the key considerations as you see them. Rather than discussing all of the four options offered at the end of the case, I would like you to focus on Option 2 (wait and see approach) and Option 3 (quickly develop and market the product). Discuss with your client (Synthes top management team):

1. What advantages does each option have?
2. What disadvantages does each option have?
3. Choose one of the options, describing the rationale for your choice.
4. Be prepared to actively defend your position.

Guest

Session 6 (5-7):

Topics:
- Growth stages of a consulting firm
- Characteristics of high-performing consulting firms
- Consulting to the board and CEOs – issues of corporate governance

Readings:
- Flawless Consulting, Chapter 13

Cases:
- MediSys Corporation

Team Assignment:
Your client, Art Beaumont (president of MediSys) is concerned about the progress of the IntensCare project and is also worried that his cross-functional “core team” approach is not working as he had hoped. He needs your team’s help.

1. Why is the core team having problems launching the IntensCare product?
2. How do you resolve the core team vs. functional allegiance issue? Specifically:
   - What should Merz do?
   - What should Fogel do?
   - What should Beaumont do?
3. Create an action plan. Prioritize your actions and specify in some detail which actions should be taken by whom, and when. Explain the expected outcome of your action plan.
4. Specifically address whether the “core team” approach should be maintained, scrapped, or modified (if modified, describe how).
Session 7 (5-14)

Topics:
  Implementation of consulting recommendations
  Strategy implementation in organizations

Case:
  SMA: Microelectronic Products Division (9-400-086)

Team Assignment:
You are acting as a consultant to the top management of SMA for this case, who needs help understanding the challenges that the Microelectronic Products Division faces and formulating an action plan to move forward. As part of your report to SMA top management please consider the following points:

1. What are the key issues or problems that Guido Spichy and the MEPD face?
2. Why do they have these problems?
3. What changes, if any, to the strategy of the Microelectronics business would you recommend?
4. What actions do you recommend to the top management of SMA? Why?
   - Prioritize your actions (priority) and specify when the actions should take place (timing).
   - To the extent possible, describe how your actions will fix the problems you identify in question 1, and be consistent with the strategy you suggest in question 3.

Reading:

Question:
Separate from the team assignment above, use the dimensions in the “Stress test your strategy” reading to evaluate the MEPD division of SMA

Guest

Session 8 (5-21)

Topics:
  Managing the outcome of the engagement
Overcoming resistance to change
Creating an action planning framework

Case:
Winston and Associates (2007)

Team Assignment:
There is a lot of grumbling within Winston about the cross-selling plan. Kirby (Winston’s president) has brought your team in to advise him on what he should do next. He wants answers to the following questions:

1. Why is there so much opposition to the cross-selling approach?
2. Assuming we can reboot the cross-selling approach, how should it be introduced and what should be done differently?
3. In order to make the cross-selling approach go smoothly, what sort of changes would you recommend be made to the structure of the firm, the tasks roles of individuals in the firm, and the systems of Winston?
4. How would you advise Kirby to introduce and implement these changes?

Readings:
Flawless Consulting- Chapter 15

Guest

Session 9 (5-28)

Topics:
Innovation consulting
How established firms be innovative
Consulting in technology-intensive firms

Case:
Telecam (A)

Individual Assignment:
The Board of Directors of Telecom has some reservations about the Internal Venture approach. They would like your evaluation of the Internal Venture concept.

1. Should Telecom maintain the Internal Venture concept?
2. What things might go wrong in the future that the Board of Directors should be aware of?
3. What changes to the Internal Venture approach, and to Telecom overall, would you propose? Prioritize the changes you propose, discuss timing, and identify who should be responsible for each action you propose.

Reading:
“The Ambidextrous Organization”
O’Reilly and Tushman, Harvard Business Review, April 2004

Guest

Session 10 (5-4): Team presentations