



Management Consulting: Problem Solving and Critical Thinking Winter 2018

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Office hours: At a mutually convenient time, typically before class is best.

Teaching Assistant: Given this is a 2-credit course, I will have light use of a teaching assistant. Charles Connaughton (connach@uw.edu) will help me organize and run the class. Please feel free to reach out to Charles if he can assist you with your learning experience in the course.

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 you with a practical understanding of the practices and processes used by management consultants. We will focus on a number of topics, among them:

- (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, develop solutions, create an effective implementation plan 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.

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 to you 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: Because this is a 2-credit course, you will be evaluated on approximately half of the work for a 4-credit course.

- 25% Team case consulting report (SMA MEPD)
- 25% Individual case consulting report (Winston)
- 30% Final exam
- 20% Participation and individual contributions

Team consulting report (25%)

Each team will do a consulting report on the SMA MEPD case for Session 3. Your team should advise the top management of the firm on key challenges you believe the firm needs to deal with. Please follow the Consulting Engagement Model we will have developed in class. Hand in a hard copy of your analysis at the beginning of class. Your team consulting report should be no longer than 5 pages, double spaced. **In addition to the written report, please use two or more charts or figures to help illustrate your recommendations.** These do not count as part of the page total.

Individual case consulting report – Winston and Associates case (25%)

Taking the role of a consultant to Winston in Session 5, evaluate the soundness of the cross selling approach being introduced by answering the questions in the syllabus. Please submit the assignment on Canvas **and** hand in a hard copy of your analysis at the beginning of class. Use whatever framework or approach you believe is most effective.

The report should be no longer than 4 pages, double spaced. 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. **In addition to the written report, please use two or more charts or figures to help illustrate your recommendations.** These do not count as part of the page total.

Final exam (30%)

The final exam will consist of a short case or 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 case and case questions will be distributed via Canvas at noon on Thursday, February 8th. The final will be due at 5:00 on Tuesday, February 20th. You are to take the exam at some point during this period within a two hour block of time (two consecutive hours).

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 (20%)

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.**

Guests:

We will have a number of practicing consultants visiting our class. **I encourage you to take the initiative and actively ask questions of them, rather than being a passive audience member.** They enjoy it.

Cases:

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.

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. To the extent possible, use Consulting Engagement Model that we will introduce in class.

Conduct in Class

You are professionals; treat your classmates and me as respected, valued colleagues.

Device-free classroom:

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. 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 when I specifically ask you to. Do not stare at the phone in your lap. If you need to take an important call or text message, please do it during our break, or, in exceptional cases, leave class for the call/message.

I will post slides after class and have hard copies of my slide deck available for you to take notes on before class.

Attendance:

We meet 5 times and I expect you to attend all class sessions.

If a critical situation arises where you cannot attend class let me know beforehand along with the reason.

Arrive on time. Circumstances may make you late (once), but if you are chronically late it is your choice.

Honor code:

I expect you to adhere to the Foster Honor code. As 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.

Materials:

Block, P., **Flawless Consulting**, 2011, 3rd edition. San Francisco: Pfeiffer. This is a simple, readable book but pretty light.

Optional text: **The McKinsey Way**, 1999, Rasiel, McGraw-Hill. Students occasionally ask for recommendations on other books about consulting. There are very few that are very good but this has some interesting ideas and is a very light read.

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

<http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/72602339>

Assignment Grid

Session/ Date	Case	Readings	Assignments
1: 1-9	When consultants and clients clash	Flawless Consulting (FC): Chapter 2	Answer syllabus questions for “When consultants and clients clash” case.
2: 1-16	Deloitte and Touche Consulting Group	The rise of the supertemp FC: Chapter 5	Answer syllabus questions for Deloitte and Touche case
3: 1-23	SMA: MEPD	Innovation at the Boston Consulting Group FC: Chapter 11	Team case write-up of SMA questions (25%) Follow the instructions in the syllabus Answer syllabus questions for “Innovation at BCG” reading
4: 1-30	Telecam	The Ambidextrous Organization	Answer syllabus questions for Telecam case
5: 2-6	Winston and Associates	FC: Chapter 15	Individual case write-up of Winston and Associates questions (25%). Follow the instructions in the syllabus

Class schedule:

Session 1 (1-9):

Topics:

The engagement model:

Structure of the engagement, client goals, client involvement

Approach to the course

Expert vs. facilitator

Cases:

“When consultants and clients clash,” I. Kesner and S. Fowler, *Harvard Business Review*, Nov. 1997.

1. What’s the issue for which the consultants are being brought in – as presented by the client?
2. What happened? What do the consultants find when they start their investigation?
 - What is Royce Kellogg’s perspective on all of this?
 - How do the Champion people feel?
 - What are the assumptions of the Kellogg people?
3. What should happen during tomorrow’s status meeting?
4. What would you propose to the client?

Readings:

Flawless Consulting:

Chapter 2, ‘Techniques are not enough’ pp. 22-35

Session 2 (1-16):

Topics:

The engagement model:

Defining, diagnosing, and solving the problem

Findings and feedback

Trends in the consulting industry and consulting firm strategy

Four types of consulting practice

Cases:

Deloitte and Touche Consulting Group

Questions:

1. What are the problems at SKS?

2. Why is Chen having problems? What mistakes did she make?
3. What should Chen do and say at the steering committee meeting?
4. If you could reboot this entire engagement, what are the things that should have been done differently?

Readings

“The rise of the supertemp,” JG Miller and M. Miller, **Harvard Business Review**, May 2012.

Flawless Consulting:

Chapter 5, ‘*The Contracting Meeting*’ pp. 67-86.

Guest

Session 3 (1-23):

Topics:

Innovation in consulting firms
Implementation of consulting recommendations
Anatomy of a consulting firm:
 Structure of the firm
 Tasks in the hierarchy
 Leverage

Readings

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?

Flawless Consulting:

Chapter 11, ‘*Whole system discovery*’

Team Case:

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

Team Assignment [Follow the detailed instructions earlier in the syllabus]:

You are acting as a consultant to the top management of SMA for this case. They need help understanding the challenges that the Microelectronic Products Division faces and formulating an action plan to move forward.

Using the Consulting Engagement Model we discussed in class, make recommendations to the top management of SMA as to how the Microelectronic Products Division can be improved. 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 actions do you recommend to the top management of SMA? Why?
 - a. Prioritize your actions (priority) and specify when the actions should take place (timing).
 - b. Describe how your actions will fix the problems you have identified.

Guest

Session 4 (1-30)

Topics:

Innovation in established firms
Review

Case:

Telecam (A)

The Board of Directors of Telecam has some reservations about the Internal Venture approach. They would like your evaluation of the Internal Venture concept. Use the engagement model we discussed in class to lay out recommendations as to whether the Internal Venture approach should be maintained and how it might be improved. Consider some of the following points:

1. What things might go wrong in the future that the Board of Directors should be aware of?
2. What changes to the Internal Venture approach, and to Telecam overall, would you propose?

Reading:

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

Guest

Session 5 (2-6):

Topics:

Economics of consulting and staffing over time
Creating an action planning framework
Growth stages of a consulting firm

Individual Case:

Winston and Associates (2015)

Individual Assignment [Follow the detailed instructions earlier in the syllabus]:

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. If Kirby were to start over, how should the cross-selling approach 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. Prioritize the changes you propose, discussing timing and identifying who should be responsible for each action you propose.

Reading:

Flawless Consulting-

Chapter 15 – 'Managing the Meeting for Action'

Guest

Final Exam: Available February 8th and due Tuesday February 20th (2 hour exam).