



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

Joseph M. Bryan School of Business and Economics
Master of Business Administration Program

MBA 741 – CREATING AND SUSTAINING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Spring 2014

Professor of Practice: J. Richard Browne, MBA

E-Mail: richardbrowne@uncg.edu

Office: 348 Bryan

Office Hours: By Appointment

Phone: 214-649-1774

Class: Monday 2:00 – 4:45 PM, Bryan 205

Required Texts: *None*

Optional Text:

Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used; Peter Block, 2011

Getting Naked; Patrick Lencioni, 2010

Million Dollar Consulting; Alan Weiss, 2009

Purpose: MBA 741 is the capstone experience in which student teams engage in a professional consulting project with local organizations. Students will gain the practical experience of working as a management consultant to solve a current business problem. You are expected to draw on all previous coursework completed in the Bryan program.

Course Requirements: Final grades are based on the final written report, an oral presentation to the client, interim submittals and faculty, peer and client evaluations. The relative weights given to each component and the resulting course grades are as follows:

Point Attribution (Grading Elements):

Interim Written Reports	100
Final Written Report	350
Oral Presentation	150
Client Evaluation	200
Peer/Faculty Evaluation	<u>200</u>
Possible Points	1,000

Note –team members' grades will be assigned individually. All team members may or may not earn the same grade on any element. Class participation is part of the Peer/Faculty Evaluation.

Grade cut offs

A \geq 900, A- \geq 870, B+ \geq 830, B \geq 800, B- \geq 770, C+ \geq 730, C \geq 700, F $<$ 700

The following criteria will apply to grading:

A: Work that demonstrates not only a clear understanding of the material under study, including material from all prior and concurrent courses, and also a superior ability to utilize that material. All criteria are met. The students' work goes beyond the task and contains additional, unexpected or outstanding insights or other features.

B: Work that demonstrates a good understanding of the material under study, including material from all prior and concurrent courses, and utilizes the material well. The students' work meets the expected criteria with few errors or omissions.

C: Work that demonstrates a minimal understanding of the theory, application and/or concepts, uses some relevant material. Work products may not address one or more of the expected criteria for Masters level work or does not accomplish what the client asked. Participation is below expectations.

F: Work that is incomplete, inappropriate and/or shows little or no comprehension of the material taught through out the MBA program. Failure to participate or limited participation in the analysis, preparation and/or presentation of the work product or other team and project activities.

All assignments should be submitted on Blackboard to the appropriate section in a Word or PowerPoint document format. A paper copy should also be submitted to my office prior to the deadline. All papers, unless otherwise noted, must include a cover page and reflect a collegiate level executive writing style and formatting, including the correct citation of information sources.

Students who pass this course will have demonstrated to the instructor and client that they have obtained the understanding of the skillset expected of a graduate of a ranked Master of Business program.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY: Personal standards of integrity are critical to success in both the business and personal phases of your career. I have zero tolerance for ethical violations and will fully pursue solutions as offered by the schools policies.

The Academic Integrity Policy, administered by the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, is described in detail in the Policies for Students handbook (Please refer to <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/>). Students are responsible for becoming familiar with the Policy in all its aspects and for indicating their knowledge and acceptance of the Policy by signing the honor pledge for all major work submitted. Students should recognize their responsibility to uphold the Policy and to report apparent violations to the appropriate persons.

All material that is not the students original work must be appropriately cited, enclosed in quotations marks and indented from the body of the paper. **Any non-original material that is not clearly identified in this manner will be assumed to be copied or plagiarized and will be dealt with accordingly** per the Honor Code and other avenues available to the Professor and school administration.

Class Expectations (thanks to Dr. Moses Acquah, MBA 712 Syllabus)

Class participation has many facets in the course including:

- Attendance
- Courtesy (cell phones/pagers off; absence of extensive side conversations)
- Attentiveness (focus directed to whoever has the floor, not distracting others)

- Asking questions of groups leading in the discussion
- Providing comments and critiquing materials
- Providing constructive comments and suggestions
- Use of Laptop computers in class solely for the purpose of class activities that day. Note that if you're found using your computer for any other purpose, you'll not be allowed to bring your computer to class for the rest of the semester and may be asked to leave the class.

Note that if you attend all classes and do not ask questions about the lectures and presentations, nor participate in class discussions, you will receive a maximum of 25% of the participation grade. Class participation points will be awarded during every class session.

For client meetings, you are to send the client an agenda and relevant materials a minimum of 48 hours prior to the meeting and minutes, which should summarize key knowledge, decision, actions and next meeting date, within a day following the meeting. I reserve the right to deduct points from teams that do not utilize these best practices.

Point Component Explanation

Written Report

The written report is the most important component of your grade as it represents the final recommendations of the group to the client. Each report should contain an executive summary describing the key recommendations. The main body of the report will describe the recommendations in detail and be data driven. It is expected the report be a professional work product, presented clearly and free of grammatical and spelling errors. **Please make your points with the fewest words possible**, as your client is a business executive with time constraints. The appendix of the report should contain the research completed in the first five weeks of the course that focuses on marketing, operations, finance and strategy and all other relevant supporting information. A copy of the written report should be handed to the client at the conclusion of the oral presentation.

Oral Presentation

Each consulting team will make a formal presentation to the client, ideally during the week of April 21st. It is recommended that the final presentation date be set well in advance. The student team is responsible for scheduling the presentation date. The instructor will be responsible for reserving the room. Presentations are made at the Bryan School and should be 30 minutes for the formal presentation and 30 minutes for questions and answers. Please let the instructor know as soon as possible the date and time for your presentation. Times will be reserved on a first come first served basis. The available time slots are posted on Blackboard.

Presentations are expected to be in PowerPoint and handouts should be provided to the client. Teams that have not completed the final report and made their presentation to the client by 5:00PM on April 25th, 2014 will receive an Incomplete unless the Professor has approved an exception. While students may be able to participate in graduation ceremonies, degrees will not be awarded until a quality product is delivered to and accepted by the client. Note that points will be deducted from projects and assignments that are not submitted on schedule.

Expectations of business writing standards are posted on Blackboard (Case And Business Report Writing Guidelines).

Client Evaluation

Both the instructor and the key manager at the client will make a formal evaluation of the final reports and oral presentations. Important points of the evaluation will be how well the core issues were addressed, the quality of your recommendations, and on the professionalism and clarity of your presentation and recommendations.

Peer and Faculty Evaluations (including class participation)

The successful completion of a high quality-consulting project requires a great deal of work and cooperation across team members. For this reason, your team members, as well as the instructor, will determine a portion of your grade based on their assessment of your contribution to the project's success. A preliminary, non-graded peer assessment will occur mid-semester. The peer and faculty evaluations will both cover the same basic elements. Class participation is important to the learning experience and a grade for participation will be included in this section.

Grading elements and final grades will be awarded to the team and/or individuals. **It is entirely possible that some group members receive an A for MBA 741 while others a C or F.**

I will not address dysfunctional team issues after March 31. It is incumbent for you to establish team expectations and execute as a team, or identify issues, early in your project. The most effective teams, in a work or educational setting, identify and discuss issues when they are identified.

Statement of Work:

A key component of the practice of consulting is the creation of the statement of work (SOW). It is a written agreement between the consulting firm and the client that clearly states the project, timelines, costs and deliverables. The instructor will provide a template for the statement of work. Each student team will finalize the SOW by inserting key deliverables, dates and by making other key modifications after consultation with the client firm. The first deliverable of this course is a final signed SOW. A meeting with the client and the consulting team, followed by a sign off on the statement of work, will be completed by the date in the timeline below. Sign off should occur by the client and the project team.

Class Sessions, Assignments and Due Dates

Unless otherwise communicated, all class meetings will be from 2:00 to 4:45 PM in Bryan 205.

All assignments should be submitted by 8:00 PM on the due date unless otherwise noted. If an assignment is not turned in by the deadline, I reserve the right to reduce the grade, or not grade and give the assignment a 0 at my sole discretion. If you are going to miss a deadline you have the obligation to be proactive and discuss the situation with me.

1. October 21, 11:00 AM, Bryan Room 301N, Project Overview Meeting
 - a. The instructor will provide an overview of the course and describe the projects.
 - b. You may bring your lunch if you wish.
2. October 24, 11:30 PM: Submission of Project Preferences:
 - a. Students will email their top three project choices to richardbrowne@uncg.edu.
 - b. Students not submitting by the deadline will be assigned to a team at the Professor's discretion and will impact their participation grade.
3. November 5: Project Assignments and First Client Meeting

- a. The Professor, the MBA Program Director, and the Bryan Career Services team will determine the best fit of project requirements, student skills, and career objectives. Team assignments will be made and communicated to students by email.
 - b. Upon being notified of their team and project assignments, students should
 - i. Select your team lead and communicate to instructor.
 - ii. Contact their client contact **immediately** and schedule a meeting with them prior to Dec. 15th. Students should ask for any relevant background information or data sources that they could review prior to the first class. Objectives are to gain an understanding of the company; sources of pain, support needed (request info, get systems access, etc), project deliverables and be fully ready to begin the project at the start of January classes.
 - c. Schedule a follow-up meeting for the first week of classes to occur following our first class.
4. January 13th: Statement of Work (SOW); Marketing and Operations
- a. Class Purpose: Discuss the SOW and prep for Marketing and Operations
 - b. Assignments:
 - i. Review project overview and do preliminary on-line research to gain insights into the company. Bring any questions to class.
 - ii. Prior to class set up your group on Blackboard. Use your company name as the team name. You are expected to post all assignments to the appropriate folder on Blackboard for grading.
 - iii. Prior to class sign and post a copy of the confidentiality document on Blackboard.
 - iv. SOW Assignment
 1. Meet with company to introduce yourselves and discuss and finalize the SOW. A template of the SOW is posted on Blackboard. Highlighted portions of the SOW will need to be completed by the student project team.
 2. SOW Assignment due date: **8:00 AM January 22th**.
 - v. Marketing and Operations assignment.
 1. Describe the marketing strategy of the firm.
 - a. Product, Price, Place, Promotion
 2. How powerful is the brand?
 3. What is the process for creating new products?
 4. Describe the key operational processes in the firm. If more than one please describe.
 - a. Inputs, outputs, performance measures
 5. How is quality defined and measured?
 6. How is demand for products forecasted?
 7. Discuss how operations and marketing strategies are linked to meet corporate objectives.
 8. Marketing and Ops Assignment Due Date: **8:00 PM Jan. 21st**
5. January 20st: Birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. No Class
6. January 27st: Marketing and Operations
- a. Class Purpose: Review completed SOW's and discuss learning from the Marketing and Operations assignment. Prepare for Finance Org Design and Strategy work.
 - b. Finance and Org Design Assignment

- i. Analyze and comment of the performance of the firm over the last three years.
 - ii. Review the liquidity and capital structure of the firm.
 - iii. What is the cost of capital?
 - iv. Would you invest in this company?
 - v. How risky is this investment?
 - vi. How are capital budgeting decisions made?
 - vii. Describe any current financial challenges.
 - viii. Describe how the firm is structured and the rationale for this structure? Do you feel this structure is optimal? Why?
 - c. Finance and Org Assignment Due Date: **8:00 PM January 30th**
 - d. Executed Statement of Work Due Date: **8:00 PM January 30th**
 - e.
2. February 3th: Finance and Org Design
- a. Class Purpose: Discuss learning from the Finance assignment.
 - b. Assignment: Prepare a written strategy analysis that addresses the following questions:
 - i. What are the mission and goals of the firm?
 - ii. Perform a SWOT analysis. What opportunities or threats does this highlight?
 - iii. What is the strategy of the firm?
 - iv. How does the current economic environment affect the firm?
 - v. What is the company culture?
 - vi. How are the employees motivated?
 - vii. What linkages exist between the firms' strategy and marketing, finance and operations strategies and tactics? Did you discover any gaps?
 - c. Strategy Assignment Due Date: 8:00 PM February 6th
3. February 10th: Strategy
- a. Class Purpose: Discuss learning from the Strategy assignment
4. February 10th:
- a. Interim peer feedback due
5. Weekly – February 17th – April 7th: Project Discussions
- a. Class Purpose
 - i. Review project status
 - ii. Gain class input on roadblocks and challenges
 - b. Prior to March 20th, 8 PM, submit summary of preliminary options and rationale
6. Week of April 14th: Peer review.
- a. At least one week before the final client presentations each team will give their presentation to a minimum of two other teams and the Professor.. The observing teams will score and critique the presentation. Both the presentation and the feedback from the observing teams will be graded., Students observing should approach this as a manager would with insightful, critical questions.
 - b. Discuss with your client if they want a small group review prior to the final presentation.
 - c. We will have 3 review sessions. Dates have been assigned and are posted on Blackboard. Each session will be 3 hours and you are expected to attend the full session and attend the same session with your group. Each session will have 3 presentations and feedback sessions. If you can not attend the assigned session it **is your teams responsibility** to trade sessions with another team.
 - d. A copy of your slides and a draft copy of your presentation are due at 2PM April 13.

7. April 15th – 25th: Final Client Presentations (Preferred April 21-25 based on client availability)
 - a. As scheduled by teams
 - b. Your draft slides are due to me 7 days (168 hours) before your presentation
 - c. 2 hard copies of your report and final slides are due to me (give to Glenda in Room 366) by 5 PM 3 days before your presentation. Some clients will prefer an electronic PDF version of your report. If clients prefer a printed copy, Bryan School will reimburse you for up to 2 client copies printed at the University print shop. Please submit your paper electronically (pdf or publisher format) to Sam Bardarik (sebardar@uncg.edu), MBA Program Manager, at-least 7 working days before you need it.
8. Final Peer Feedback Due 4 PM, April 25th

Client Companies and Project Overviews.

Project overviews have been emailed to all students.

Note: This information should be treated as company confidential, and is designed for your use in selecting a project only. Once you have been assigned to a project team, please delete all information related to the other projects and do not discuss any of the projects outside of your class and faculty.

Suggestions for final presentations:

The following guidance is based upon best practices and prior years projects:

1. Invest the time in framing up the issues using data.

Providing numbers (our service level is 54%, market is \$10B, etc) gives both a framework for your recommendations and gets alignment on the problems. Saying we have poor service level or a big market, both, shortchanges the research you've done and doesn't capture the magnitude of the opportunity or problem.

At the end of this part of the discussion, **it should be obvious what the core problems to be addressed are**, and how they fit into the firms overall objectives.

Summarize the research you conducted focused on the key learning's, i.e. talked to 100 customers - quality stinks and they buy 2X more of competitors' products than yours. Verbatim are powerful here.

2. Once the issues are framed up, **state the objectives of your recommendations** – for example -improve fill rate from 91 to 98% by Jan 2015, grow sales 10% to \$10M by May 2015 - specific, measurable, time based (realistic and attainable are good as well). Pause here in your presentation and make sure the audience is in agreement. **Be clear on how these objectives tie to the firms' strategy.**

3. Frame up the strategies you are recommending, for example if fill rate is your objective, then your strategies might be better information flow, which could include improved input from field sales and increased communication with vendors as tactics; improved quality of inventory which could have reduce e&o inventory to allow investment in A parts and visual management of out of stocks as tactics. If appropriate, discuss options that you didn't think would fit the firm. For example, a new SAP forecasting module may be too expensive or complex for the firms needs. **In most cases you should have 2-4 strategies.** If you have 10, **you are dealing in tactics and/or haven't distilled to the essence of the issue.**

4. Walk through the implementation of each strategy and supporting tactics. **What are you trying to achieve by the strategy, how will you achieve it and how will you measure it.** Tie back to the desired

benefits. Include the costs of your recommendation, both \$\$ and manpower. Is there a phased implementation due to manpower or capital issues, or to manage risk?

5. Summarize.

Some questions to be prepared for:

- what other options did you consider? Why did you reject them?
- are there other areas you think we should be looking at?
- what would you have done differently knowing what you know now?
- how could we (the company) have been a better partner?

Other suggestions:

- **Visuals communicate more than words.** Consider using the strategic canvas, mekko and other tools discussed in this and other classes to make your points. Any of these tools can do a great job of accomplishing point 1 in 1-2 slides.
- Be clear on the problems you're trying to solve and how your solutions tie to them. Avoid a laundry list of activity for activities sake.
- Each slide should have a clear 'so what' - why are you telling the audience this information?
- A repository of previous years Capstone projects are available in the MBA office for review and may be signed out from the office. **It is highly recommended that you review some of these projects early in the semester.**

The Course Experience

For Client Companies

The Bryan School and the students appreciate very much the project companies' interest in working on MBA 741. By agreeing to work on the project, the company has agreed to designate a point person to work with the students in a timely manner, provide access to the information required to complete the project and guidance throughout the project. The company also agreed that its project may be discussed in an academic environment within the members of the MBA class and the instructor. In return, the students will provide a written analysis of the companies' overall strategy, financial position, marketing strategy and operations strategy along with a recommendation to solve the specific problem outlined in the Statement of Work.

For Students

The keys to success are early engagement in the project, planning, teamwork and a commitment to excellence. This course is the capstone experience in the program and the quality of your work may get you a job with the client, or serve as evidence of a successful completion of an assignment to a prospective employer. A few thoughts:

- The instructor will not have posted office hours, but will be available by request when needed. The best contact method is through email and I will respond to set up a meeting. I will commit to respond to any inquiries within 24 hours. **If you are requesting a meeting, please include the subjects and desired outcome in your email.**
- Teams should plan on meeting at least weekly to review progress from the prior week, and to set the agenda for the coming week. Attendance at these meetings is mandatory. The professor will review your work plans with you, and you should maintain a log throughout the project. The log should include date and duration of each meeting, attendance, on time participation (arrival) and

on time completion of tasks. This information should be in an electronic format that can be quickly submitted on Blackboard upon request.

- As you come across technical issues in your projects, I suggest that you reach out to the faculty members in the disciplines in which you need assistance.
- Once you get into the details of the project, there may be some minor changes in either its nature or scope. It is not unusual for this to occur. However, get in touch with your instructor quickly if serious issues arise with the client about the scope of the project.
- A rule of thumb is that graduate students should spend 3 hours a week for every credit hour. MBA 741 is a three credit-hour course; therefore, plan on devoting at least 9 hours a week on the project. It is expected that each student spend a minimum of 180 hours total on this project. As class-meeting times are minimal, it is expected that this time will also be devoted to the project.
- Please note that all work product and research should be treated as proprietary and confidential. If you are asked to sign a confidentiality agreement by your client, please advise your professor.

There is a need to recognize that successful projects contribute to building the value of the Bryan MBA *brand*. This enhances both your and your classmates short and long term career earning potential. MBA 741 gives you the opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned, enhance the brand and possibly find a full time position.

Blackboard and Electronic Communications

A number of course documents, including course lecture slides and readings, will be posted in Blackboard. Typically an electronic communication will be sent to the class indicating that a new posting has been made. Having access to and frequently checking Blackboard will be important to your success in this course.

Email Communications

For purposes of this course I will assume that you check your UNCG email daily. Thus I assume you will be aware of any communications or requests sent at least 24 hours prior to our class meetings.

Expense Reimbursement

As discussed above, students are expected to meet on-site with their clients through out the project. The Bryan School will reimburse students for mileage expenses for teams whose clients' principle location for the project is greater than 15 miles one way from the school. TRV-1 Form must be submitted 1 week before travel and reimbursement will be for one vehicle per team per visit. Please submit claims to Sam Bardarik, MBA Program Manager. TRV-1 form can be found here - http://fsv.uncg.edu/accounting/accounting_acctforms.html. Fill out the top 'Travel Authorization' portion of the form and sign in the two places indicated for 'Traveler's signature'

Inclement Weather

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro will remain open during adverse weather conditions unless the Chancellor makes the administrative decision to make a schedule change. Students can obtain details on those decisions from the Adverse Weather Line at (336) 334- 4400 or the university web site.

Expectations of Students

Students in the Bryan School are also expected to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct. Bryan School has additional expectations and guidelines for students to follow, which can be found at http://www.uncg.edu/bae/faculty_student_guidelines.pdf.

Expectations of Faculty

The Bryan School expects its faculty to conform to all existing UNCG codes and policies. These are found at http://provost.uncg.edu/faculty/h_section4.asp. In addition, the Bryan School has expectations and guidelines for faculty to follow which can be found at http://www.uncg.edu/bae/faculty_student_guidelines.pdf.

MBA 741 Syllabus
Updated Dec. 17, 2013