TMP 241: Managing for Innovation

Winter 2015

Day: Mondays & Wednesdays, 3:00-4:50pm       Location: Phelps 1420

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Office Hours: 5-6pm and by appointment       Office: Phelps 1317

TA: Luan Vieira       Email: luan.vieira0@gmail.com

OVERVIEW

The focus of this class is research and practice related to managing for innovation (which involves novelty and uncertainty) and managing for improvement (which is incremental and more common)—as well as the managerial challenges associated with implementing both types of organizational change.

We examine how managers, through their interactions with others, facilitate both entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial potential for transforming organizations. Relatedly, this course explores established and emerging theories and practices for creating organizational cultures and structures that are conducive to fostering creativity and innovation.

Upon completing this foundation course, I expect that you will be able to see innovation leadership and organizational problems in ways you could not see them before. By the end of this course, you will:

- Acquire models of how effective leaders influence, motivate, and build teams.
- Understand the role of organizational structure and culture, and the importance of alignment.
- Learn how to analyze the social dynamics within organizations.
- Practice diagnosing complex problems and working effectively in teams.
- Recognize the choices available to you as a leader, and the potential impact of the choices you make.

To develop your skills to lead and manage innovation, the best way is through practice. Therefore, we use a mix of case discussions, group exercises and readings to understand how organizations work (or don’t work). The structure of the course provides opportunities to enhance your analytic and interpersonal skills, both of which are essential for managerial effectiveness and career success.

- The schedule of readings and assignments can be found starting on page 6.
- The coursepack is available at https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/43388539. (The rest of the readings will be on GauchoSpace.)
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Graduate Standing

This is a core course—one of several required—for the Graduate Program in Management Practice (GPMP) Certificate open to qualified graduate students across UCSB. Students who enroll in the course in order to complete the GPMP Certificate are required to be currently pursuing a graduate degree at UCSB and to be in good standing in that academic unit. They also are expected to have applied to the GPMP. Graduate students pursuing the GPMP certificate and enrolled in TMP 241 are assumed to be considering employment in the non-academic sectors of business, industry, foundations, or government following completion of their grad degree—especially in jobs related to the commercialization of new technologies and in the management of technology-based enterprises. Given the GPMP focus on technology commercialization and entrepreneurship, students are presumed to be curious about antecedents, processes, and effects of one or both of these emphases.

Readings

There is no textbook for this course. All readings and case materials are available in PDF format. You will need to purchase a portion of the readings from Harvard Business School Press at https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/43388539. The rest of the readings are on GauchoSpace.

The readings assigned each week illustrate important concepts and analytical frameworks. Readings are assigned to provide fodder for discussion and lenses through which to interpret the material presented in the case studies. Each week you will read several papers on a similar topic. When viewing the papers collectively you should ask yourself the following:

1. Do these readings provide complementary or conflicting evidence about the phenomenon in question?
2. Are there shortcomings in the approach taken in one reading that could be addressed by another reading?
3. Consider a project that you’ve worked on in your organization, if you were to do it over again how would you use the insights from these readings to do things differently?

We will discuss aspects of all the readings in class. After all, there’s no point in reading them if we don’t implement their ideas! I will assume you have read all the materials and I will call on class members to answer questions.

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>&gt;= 93.33 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>&gt;= 83.33 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>&gt;= 80.00 %</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>&gt;= 76.66 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>&gt;= 73.33 %</td>
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<td>Ds and Fs</td>
<td>Below 2.00, at discretion of instructor</td>
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Class Participation (30% of Final Grade)

In each class, I will provide a general overview of the concepts for the day and a broad synthesis of the readings. Our goal in class discussion is application. We will talk about the readings in more depth and apply them to the assigned cases or exercises. You should leave class each day with some ideas about how you could apply the concepts we discuss to real projects in your organization or other work group. (Note that this will also be vital to your journal assignment.)

Aim to apply as many of the concepts as you can to projects, events, or strategies that you’ve encountered throughout your career. When you share, it helps others to learn – and vice-versa. As a class, we will discuss different options to solving case problems and evaluate how well we think each of these options would work.

When we discuss cases in class, you should employ the following strategies:

- Keep in mind that there is usually more than one right answer. A case is a problem-solving situation, and managerial effectiveness often depends upon seeing different solutions.
- Offer your ideas, substantiating them with facts from the case and course material.
- Adopt an open-minded stance, entertain new ideas from others, and consider how your recommendations might change in light of these new insights.
- Listen to your classmates and build on what they have to say. Resist the impulse to focus so strongly on what you want to say next that you lose track of where the discussion has moved.

I expect you to attend each class, to arrive prepared, and to participate in the class discussions each week. So that you can participate in a meaningful way, you will need to carefully read and reflect upon the assigned material before we discuss them in class.

Grading of class participation. The emphasis here is on participation, not attendance per se. Of course, you can’t participate if you don’t attend. But just attending is insufficient—you need to speak up and demonstrate your knowledge through active participation. In evaluating your in-class contributions over the course of the semester, I am looking for quality over quantity. Your goal should be to contribute in a meaningful way to the class discussions. To do so, you should listen to, and build upon, the comments of your classmates. Meaningful comments are insightful, relevant, and help to move the discussion forward. Students who simply re-state what others have said, take more than their fair share of “air time,” or repeatedly offer comments from which other students cannot learn, or do not speak up at all (despite perfect attendance), will not receive a satisfactory class contribution grade.

If you have already commented during a session, please understand that I may not call on you again that day, so as to allow others a chance to participate. Conversely, I may cold call, to give each student an opportunity to participate. If there is a topic or session in which you have personal or professional knowledge, or for which you feel especially prepared, please let me know so that I may be sure to call on you.
Case Assignments (30% of Final Grade; the 1st case is worth 10%, the 2nd case worth 20%)  

The case method is an effective way to simulate the types of decisions you will face as managers in the ‘real world’. Your management skills are enhanced by putting you in the manager’s place as described in each case. You will learn the most when you take a position on the decision(s) highlighted in each case. Like the manager that actually had to make the decision(s) you will have to evaluate and make recommendations without all the data you would want. Remember there are no correct or incorrect answers but there are strong and weak case preps.

You are required to submit two cases. In the first one, you will submit an individual response to the case question will prepare answers to the case preparation question (800 words maximum, double spaced). Appendices, tables and/or figures do not count toward the word limit. An additional page can be used for a bibliography. Please use Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins on all sides.

Case analyses are due before the day the case is scheduled for class discussion. No late assignments will be accepted. Submit all work electronically via GauchoSpace. Your submission should be titled “Surname_Case X” (example: Lee_Case 1). For team submissions, use all names (example: AngBowerChan_Case 2).

My expectation is that you will apply the relevant theories/model/frameworks we cover in the course including those assigned for the session in which the case is discussed. In most but not all cases you should consider whether and how the organizational alignment model (aka the “Congruence Model Note” reading) can shed light on your analysis.

IMPORTANT: In preparing all of the case analyses, do not use any outside materials, nor discuss the case with anyone outside of your group for that assignment. Remember I am not looking for a particular right answer, rather I want to see your ability to apply the course concepts and present a logical argument. To ensure fairness, everyone is limited to the same information.

Grading of case preps. Strong case write-ups will draw on the frameworks and models we have discussed in class up to the date of the case. The best case write-ups will indicate which models/frameworks are being used and why, and will make assumptions explicit.

Strong case preps will:

• Answer the questions asked
• Leverage theories and frameworks
• Identify key assumptions
• Emphasize the evidence from case

Strong case preps will not:

• Focus too heavily on minor issues (however interesting those may be)
• Rehash case data (unless it’s used to support your argument)
• Include unfounded speculation and opinion

Some students are unfamiliar with the case method, while others have asked me for a more structured approach to preparing and participating in discussions. To assist everyone in preparing the cases for class discussion, you should consult the Case Preparation Questions for that session (see page 8 of syllabus). I provide some tips (see p. 11-13), but I have put together a more extensive reader on the case method that is available from Harvard Business Publications. This reader is entirely optional, but if you are interested, it is available for $12 at: https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/43482601. Another (lengthier) resource is the Case Study Handbook by Ellet (2007), available used at: http://www.amazon.com/The-Case-Study-Handbook-Persuasively/dp/1422101584/).
Learning Journal (40% of Final Grade)

This assignment consists of a weekly reflection (for a total of 9 memos), and a final end-of-semester statement of your learning experience in this course. This written assignment should be submitted by uploading a pdf or word document to the assignment folder on GauchoSpace. This will be due in 3 installments over the course. So, be sure to write a little as soon as possible after each class. This ensures your ideas will be fresh, which means they will be more interesting for me to read and will take far, far less time for you to come up with things to write.

Weekly reflection (9 memos in total for 30%). After each week’s session, write 2 pages (single-spaced) while reflecting on the following questions (these are offered as prompts to stimulate your thinking, thus you do not need to address all of these questions, or do so each time):

- Connections between course exercises/readings and own experiences
- What was surprising (from the readings/exercises/discussion)
- Personal take-aways
- Performance on class exercises/discussion

You should aim to write a total of 9 journal entries. Two entries should come from weeks 1-2 (5% of grade), three entries from weeks 3-6 (10%), and three entries from weeks 7-12 (15%).

End-of-semester summary (10%). At the end of the course, write 3-5 pages (single-spaced) that summarize your learning experiences while answering the following questions (number them, and do them in order):

1. What key ideas or information have you learned about innovation in organizations?
2. What have you learned about how to use or apply the content of the course?
3. What parts of your knowledge, thinking, or actions have you been able to integrate or connect within (or external to) this learning experience?
4. What you have you learned about the human dimension of innovation? That is, how have you changed in some important way, and have you changed in your ability to interact with others?
5. Have any of your interests, feelings, or values changed as a result of this learning experience?
6. What have you learned about how to learn?

Grading the learning journal. The purpose of this assignment is threefold: (1) to facilitate the retention of the core themes, ideas, research, and frameworks in the course; (2) to experience the value of these tools in making sense of complex situations and in generating well-reasoned conclusions about an organization’s likely future; and (3) to see how all the material works together to yield an integrated understanding of leading innovation in a variety of organizations and contexts.

In summary, the aim of the journal is on applying the content of the course to your own experiences and concerns. The journal should make it clear to the reader how your thinking has been altered by your engagement with the course readings, in-class discussions and exercises, and interactions with your classmates. A high grade for this assignment will be given to journals that provide thoughtful insights demonstrating the application of course content in your own thinking, as well as examining ways to integrate that content with your work experiences and other coursework.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Themes are assigned for each week or session. Your journal that week should focus on the theme(s).

Readings should be completed by the start of the session in which they are assigned, as we will be discussing that theme in class. You will be better able to contribute if you have done the theory readings. However, many students find the applied articles very helpful as they provide concrete examples of the theoretical ideas. You can read them in either order, but they are not substitutes: the theory articles are more informative/rigorous than the applied articles.

Assignments are to be uploaded to the class website (under Assignments). Assignments are due by 9pm on the date they are due, unless otherwise specified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Reading(s) Due @ start of class</th>
<th>Assignment(s) Due @ 9pm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan 4</td>
<td>Managing vs. Leading</td>
<td>Case:</td>
<td>DUE SUNDAY Jan 3: Pre-semester survey @ <a href="https://ucsbltsc.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_24YZh792tJUrSOF">https://ucsbltsc.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_24YZh792tJUrSOF</a></td>
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<td>• United 173 (no prep)</td>
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<td>Articles:</td>
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<td>□ Theory: What leaders really do</td>
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<td>□ Applied: Fire all the managers*</td>
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<td>Jan 6</td>
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<td>Case:</td>
<td>DUE WED Jan 6: other surveys (handed out in class)</td>
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<td>• Lululemon (no prep)</td>
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<td>Articles:</td>
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<td>□ Value of memo-ing*</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Jan 11</td>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>Articles:</td>
<td>DUE FRIDAY Jan 15: Memos 1-2</td>
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<td>□ Theory: Congruence Model Note</td>
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<td>Jan 13</td>
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<td>Case:</td>
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<td>□ Big Spaceship</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Jan 20</td>
<td>Organization Culture</td>
<td>Articles:</td>
<td>DUE TUES Jan 19: Artifacts, org chart worksheet</td>
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<td>(no</td>
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<td>□ Theory: Corporations, culture,</td>
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<td>class</td>
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<td>commitment*</td>
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<td>Jan 18</td>
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<td>□ Applied: Leading by leveraging culture*</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Exercise:</td>
<td>DUE TUES Jan 26: Individual case write-up on Harrah’s.</td>
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<td>□ Coordination (no prep)</td>
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<td>Jan 27</td>
<td>Incentives &amp; Motivation</td>
<td>Case:</td>
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<td>□ Harrah’s</td>
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<td>Articles:</td>
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<td>□ Theory: Employee motivation model</td>
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<td>□ Applied: Do financial incentives drive performance?</td>
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*Note: * denotes an optional assignment.
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Exercises</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feb 1</td>
<td>Feedback &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td><strong>Exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Feedback exercise&lt;br&gt;<strong>Articles:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Theory: Set-up-to-fail syndrome&lt;br&gt;☐ Feedback reading†&lt;br&gt;☐ Peers’ case</td>
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<td>☐ DUE by start of class: Feedback worksheet (bring but don’t turn in)  ☐ DUE by start of class: Impact evaluations</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Feb 3</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
<td><strong>Exercise</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Persuasion exercise (no prep)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Articles:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Theory: Harnessing the science of persuasion&lt;br&gt;☐ Applied: Necessary art of persuasion</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Feb 8</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td><strong>Articles:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Theory: Leading teams&lt;br&gt;☐ Applied: Team process</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Feb 10</td>
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<td><strong>Exercise:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Teaming (no prep)</td>
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<td>☐ DUE FRIDAY Feb 12: Memos 3-5</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Feb 17</td>
<td>Power &amp; Politics</td>
<td><strong>Case:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Kay Sunderland&lt;br&gt;<strong>Articles:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Theory: Power dynamics in organizations&lt;br&gt;☐ Optional: Influencing up*</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Feb 22</td>
<td>Team Effectiveness (integration of course thus far)</td>
<td><strong>Case:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Taran Swan&lt;br&gt;<strong>Articles:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Theory: Designing adaptive organizations*&lt;br&gt;☐ Applied: Do you have a well-designed org?</td>
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<td>☐ DUE SUNDAY Feb 21: Team case on Taran Swan  ☐ DUE by start of class: Impact evaluations</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Feb 24</td>
<td>Networks</td>
<td><strong>Articles:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Theory: People who make organizations go/stop&lt;br&gt;☐ Applied: Informal networks *</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Feb 29</td>
<td>Managing Change</td>
<td><strong>Articles:</strong>&lt;br&gt;☐ Theory: Leading change&lt;br&gt;☐ Applied: Dan Heath video*</td>
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<td>Mar 2</td>
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<td><strong>Exercise:</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Change (no prep)</td>
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<td>☐ DUE at start of class: Bring $1 to class</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mar 7</td>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Articles:</td>
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<td>□ Theory: Hidden traps in decision making</td>
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<td>□ Applied: Before you make that big decision</td>
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<th>Mar 9</th>
<th>Exercise:</th>
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<td>□ Decision making (reading will be handed out before class)</td>
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□ DUE FRIDAY Mar 11: Final journal (incl. prior entries)

**CASE PREPARATION**

Consider the following questions as you read each case. To get the most out of each session, consider the preparation questions even if you do not submit a written analysis.

**Week 2 – Alignment. Big Spaceship: Ready to Go Big?**

1. What is the value proposition of Big Spaceship, and how does that value proposition enable the firm to strategically differentiate itself within its industry?
2. How do the organizational design, corporate culture, and human resources practices of Big Spaceship support the firm’s value proposition? What are the strengths and weaknesses of company’s unique culture and team-based structure?
3. How would you describe Lebowitz’ leadership style? What is your assessment of his leadership?
4. If you were Lebowitz, what would you do to ensure that Big Spaceship can effectively grow?

**Week 4 – Incentives & Motivation. Harrah’s Entertainment, Inc.: Rewarding Our People**

1. How has Harrah’s aligned its HR practices, and culture, with its strategy?
2. What advice would you have for Winn about her recommendation to Loveman?
3. SUBMIT INDIVIDUAL ANSWER TO JUST THIS QUESTION: What are the strengths and weaknesses of Harrah’s gainsharing program? Should the company retain or eliminate it? If they retain it, are there changes you think should be made? Be sure to consider both the pros and cons of your recommendation as well as its impact on employee motivation.

**Week 7 – Power & Politics. Kay Sunderland: Making the Grade at Attain Learning**

1. Compare Sunderland and Morgan’s management and work styles. What are their sources of power?
3. What should Sunderland do? Should she set up a meeting with Morgan to address the incident? Should she speak to Chama? Be specific about the influence strategy and tactics she should use.

**Week 8 – Integration of course. Taran Swan at Nickelodeon Latin America**

1. How did Taran Swan design her team at Nickelodeon Latin America? Is the design likely to enable the team to deliver strong performance?
2. How would you characterize Swan’s leadership style? How has her style impacted team processes and outputs?
3. SUBMIT TEAM ANSWER TO JUST THIS QUESTION: What is the dilemma Swan faces at the end of the case? What action should she take? Why? Be sure to consider both the pros and cons of your recommendation as well as its impact on team effectiveness. [TIP: consider the first two questions (design and leadership style), before you prepare your answer so that it is not a radical departure from the facts of the case.]
POLICIES

**GPMP Classroom Professionalism Policy**

The highest professional standards are expected of all members of the GPMP community. The collective class reputation and the value of the GPMP experience hinges on this.

Faculty are expected to be professional and prepared to deliver value for each and every class session. Students are expected to be professional in all respects.

The GPMP classroom experience is enhanced when:

- **Students arrive on time.** On time arrival ensures that classes are able to start and finish at the scheduled time. On time arrival shows respect for both fellow students and faculty and it enhances learning by reducing avoidable distractions.
- **Students display their name cards.** This permits fellow students and faculty to learn names, enhancing opportunities for community building and evaluation of in-class contributions.
- **Students minimize unscheduled personal breaks.** The learning environment improves when disruptions are limited.
- **Students are fully prepared for each class.** Much of the learning in the GPMP program takes place during classroom discussions. When students are not prepared they cannot contribute to the overall learning process. This affects not only the individual, but their peers who count on them, as well.
- **Students respect the views and opinions of their colleagues.** Disagreement and debate are encouraged. Intolerance for the views of others is unacceptable.
- **Laptops are used for classroom purposes only.** When students are surfing the web, responding to e-mail, instant messaging each other, and otherwise not devoting their full attention to the topic at hand they are doing themselves and their peers a major disservice. Those around them face additional distraction. Fellow students cannot benefit from the insights of the students who are not engaged.
- **Phones and wireless devices are turned off.** We’ve all heard the annoying ringing in the middle of a meeting. Not only is it not professional, it cuts off the flow of discussion when the search for the offender begins. When a true need to communicate with someone outside of class exists (e.g., for some medical need) please inform the professor prior to class.
**Academic Dishonesty**

The GPMP program has no tolerance for acts of academic dishonesty. Such acts damage the reputation of the program and the degree and demean the honest efforts of the majority of students. The minimum penalty for an act of academic dishonesty will be a zero for that assignment or exam.

All members of the UCSB community share the responsibility of upholding academic integrity at the University. Academic dishonesty is a serious act that erodes the University’s mission, cheapens the learning experience, and the value of one’s degree. It is expected that all UCSB students will support the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be responsible for the integrity of their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student’s own efforts unless otherwise permitted by an instructor. It is also the responsibility of each student to know the campus rules regarding academic misconduct—ignorance is not an excuse. The responsibilities for both students and faculty with regard to the Honor System are described at:


**Students with Disabilities**

The GPMP group is happy to make appropriate arrangements for students who have documented and verified disabilities, in accordance with UCSB's Disabled Students Program (DSP). In order to ensure that we can accommodate you accordingly, however, it is your responsibility to ensure that your official status and eligibility information appears on the DSP website. Failure to do so may make it impossible to accommodate your needs. Please see the DSP website for further information: http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/.
TIPS ON THE CASE METHOD
(reprinted from an unknown original source)

Many students find case analysis to be difficult due to the relative lack of structure of most management problems. No correctly answered list of questions or mechanical process will lead to the “right” answer. In fact, there is no “right” solution to most managerial problems. When analyzing a case, remember that there are many possible approaches and solutions. The goal is not to figure out “the answer” but to sharpen your analytic, problem-solving, decision-making, and leadership skills. The following steps outline the basic approach that you should follow when analyzing a case, whether for class discussion or in preparation for a written analysis.

First, read the assigned reading material and review the relevant documents if any have been posted. The material in the reading and accompanying documents will likely play some role in your analysis of the case. Remember that case analysis in this course is cumulative. Thus material from earlier classes may be relevant and should be applied even if it means using concepts that were not discussed for several weeks.

Second, read the case and the assignment questions on the syllabus. Take notes about the important issues that the case raises and the text material that seems to apply. The questions provided should be considered a guide to issues that you must consider but you will need to go beyond merely answering the questions.

Third, analyze the case. You should be able to identify outcomes in the case and/or issues that the organization faces. These outcomes may be bad (e.g., shrinking market share, hostile employees, conflict among departments, inability to control operations), or they may be good. There may be numerous problems and issues.

The goal of analysis is to explain the underlying mechanisms that are producing the outcomes or problems that you see in the situation. This process will require you to distinguish between symptoms and causal mechanisms. Consider the following example: You go to the doctor with the “problem” of a cough or a fever. It may be easy for the physician to treat the cough or fever with a number of medicines much like we could treat worker dissatisfaction by paying higher wages. However, it is important for the physician to determine the causes of the problem. If the cause of the cough is tuberculosis then only treating the cough is apt to lead to serious long-run consequences because the underlying disease process will still be at work. Clearly the cough is just a symptom of a deeper underlying problem, the disease of tuberculosis.

Good analysis cleverly weaves symptoms into a causal map that gets to the underlying root of the situation. What I look for in the case analysis is the cogency of your explanation of the process leading to the symptoms. At the outset you are likely to struggle with this. It is a difficult and time-consuming process to develop clinical skills.

Remember that specific cases are assigned because they present good opportunities to practice using frameworks we will be developing in the course. Therefore, you know in every instance that some theory in the assigned chapter and possibly other theories from earlier chapters must be applicable to the case. You will likely find the frameworks and ideas we examine in the course to be helpful in supporting your analysis. You should view the theories as a way to explain the underlying causal mechanisms contributing to the outcomes in the case, and as a way to organize and justify your arguments. Avoid the tendency to throw in course terminology merely as “buzzwords.” If it does not advance your analysis, don’t use the ideas.
Recognize that some cases do not have problems as such. The organization may be doing quite well. Cases are situations, not necessarily examples of bad or even good management. Don’t make up problems when none exist. Take the situation for what it is rather than approaching it with a point of view. Be alert for the danger that some information in some cases is coming from biased participants and therefore must be taken with a grain of salt.

A characteristic of cases is that you never have all the information that you want and there is often considerable information that is irrelevant, trivial or even obfuscating. The absence of essential information may force you to make one or more assumptions. Assumptions should always be clearly labeled and explicitly state as such, they must be necessary and they must be realistic.

Assume that I have read the case and that I am aware of all the facts. If the assignment is a written analysis (as with the group analysis or final exam), do not describe events in your written analysis. This is merely a waste of space. Rather, you should use material in the case to support your analysis or to provide examples to back up your arguments. Remember, your objective is to explain, not describe or report.

At the conclusion of each case analysis, you may need to offer recommendations or an action plan, or a recommendation for how the situation could have been better handled. The action plan part of the analysis is often where students falter the most. My sense, over the years, is that students spend most of their time analyzing the situation, but then give limited space to their plan of action. Remember that analysis is meaningless if it cannot be translated into a plan of action. This view has two implications. First, you should give as much time to developing an action plan as you do to developing your analysis. Second, the action plan should flow directly from the analysis. In other words, every issue you discuss in terms of implementing an action plan should flow directly from your analysis of the problems the organization is facing. This last point is very important: it makes no sense to analyze and diagnose a problem and then make a set of recommendations that do not relate directly to that analysis. Also keep in mind that recommendations typically have both positive and negative consequences. For example, a solution may eventually work but be very costly, difficult to implement and take a long time to have a significant impact. You should develop the recommendation that has maximum positive impact and minimum negative consequences. Recommendations should logically follow from the analysis and they should be feasible. For example, firing the boss and replacing her/him with a better manager may be a good “theoretic” solution but it may not be feasible in a given set of circumstances. Recommendations must be effective and efficient. Killing a fly with a bomb is effective but not efficient.

Finally, if you are working on a written analysis, make sure that your paper is well-written, clearly organized, and has a logical flow. It usually helps to provide a brief summary statement and “roadmap” at the beginning of the analysis to orient and guide the reader. Also make sure that any recommendations you provide follow directly from your analysis of the problem, and that your overall conclusions are consistent with your analysis.
COMMON REASONS TO MISS POINTS ON CASE-PREP WRITE-UPS

Not answering the question.

Be sure to fully address all parts of the question. Tip: It can be hard to keep all the parts in your head as you write. Therefore, plan to re-read your draft and check if you addressed all of the question(s).

Going beyond the question.

Strictly speaking, this won’t lose you points; however, this takes up space that you could be using to elaborate your answer to the actual question. However, when there is a page limit (and there usually is), this can hurt your score. Tip: re-read your draft and trim parts that do not address the question(s).

Not providing support about an assertion or claim (aka: how do you know?).

When making a statement, provide details that support your claim. Be careful to not simply say ‘what’ the situation is, but rather to show “how” or “why” you see the situation that way. Tip: assume the reader is wondering how do you know that? Provide details that will help a reader see your logic.

Your logic is hard to follow.

This can be for several reasons. You made a leap between ideas—this can happen when you assume the reader knows some crucial fact that is non-obvious. You are contradicting yourself—this can happen when you are answering parts of the question in pieces, rather than as an integrated whole. Tip: re-read.

You veer off into opinion ← a major grade killer

Experience is a powerful teacher, but an idiosyncratic one. Unless the question asks for your opinion, do not offer one. Be careful about the assumptions you are introducing into your analysis (they may or may not apply in this situation—often there is no way to know given the limited detail in the case). Tip: when the question calls for it, feel free to make bold assertions if you can back it up with facts from the case. Rarely will you be able to do so, as most business situations are inherently ambiguous and fraught with tradeoffs. In that case, if asked for a choice, tell the reader what the tradeoffs are in both cases and provide the logic as to why your choice is the better option.

Including extraneous text.

Strictly speaking, this won’t actually lose you points; however, this again takes up space. Many times, the first intro paragraph you draft is not needed. It may help you to get started with writing, but it often just restates the background or situation of the firm. The fix: Delete the first paragraph and often the last one. Rarely will you lose any meaningful content that directly bears on the question(s).

Including unmodified graphics.

You do not need to re-create graphics or exhibits from the case materials or readings, unless you are adding to them. However, it can be a good idea to take a graphic and add your own text to elaborate on what you have written in the body of the case prep write-up, or show the connections among your ideas. Tip: use a graphic only to expand on what you have written. If you have already covered the content or connections in the body of the paper, delete the graphic.
BIO

**Renee Rottner** is an Assistant Professor of Technology Management at UC Santa Barbara. Prior to joining UCSB, Dr. Rottner was on the faculty at New York University’s Stern School of Business in the department of Management and Organizations, where she taught leadership and entrepreneurship courses.

Dr. Rottner’s research and teaching focuses on innovation, particularly how innovators can improve the development of new ideas and new firms. She has examined the dynamics of innovation in a range of settings, including Caltech spinouts, NASA projects, semiconductor startups, and Federal nanotechnology initiatives. She is currently studying these dynamics in non-US contexts, including entrepreneurship in Japan and China.

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Before entering academia, Dr. Rottner worked as an entrepreneur, helping engineers and scientists to commercialize their ideas in a variety of contexts including the military, R&D institutes, and universities. She received her B.S. from Eastern Michigan University, her M.S. in Management Science and Engineering from Stanford University, and her Ph.D. in Management from UC Irvine.