



## **EMBA Entrepreneurial Strategy**

**Spring 2023  
Syllabus**

**Bidding only**

Prof. Jorge Guzman

TAs:  
TBD

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# ENTREPRENEURIAL STRATEGY

## Overview

*What is Entrepreneurial Strategy and who is this class for?*

Strategy Formulation taught you how to identify a competitive advantage. But how do you create a competitive advantage when you don't have one—such as when you're starting out a new company or you're entering a new market? How do you do it in the face of considerable uncertainty, with few resources, and cognizant that your initial choices matter would? Should one achieve it only through experimentation? Focus on execution and simple 'go for it'? Invest in early planning?

This course provides a strategy framework for growth entrepreneurship. It is particularly focused on helping students *create* a sustainable competitive advantage and understand how to do so in the early uncertain stages of a startup. The class is meant for all students, not just entrepreneurs: while entrepreneurs and startups are the main actors of the entrepreneurial story, the skill of developing entrepreneurial strategies is critical for anyone who will lead and succeed in the innovation-driven economy of today.

Students that might particularly benefit from this class include students that

- (a) Are or will be entrepreneurs.
- (b) Plan to work at a startup.
- (c) Plan to invest in, acquire, or sell startups.
- (d) Will be a consultant around innovation or entrepreneurship to larger firms.
- (e) Will develop new product lines or novel technologies at larger companies.

In short, if you know the skills to start and grow businesses will matter your career, this class is probably for you.

*What economic sectors does entrepreneurial strategy focus on?*

We study how to create long-lasting companies with a strong competitive advantage in any sector. In many cases, innovation and technological change plays a central role in creating this opportunity. The class cases and examples include traditional venture-backed startups in the software and hardware spaces, more recent startups using technology to solve problems that are not obviously 'tech' such as emergency response and health delivery, and new companies that take changes in the technological landscape to create great companies with traditional products.

## Class Structure

### Grade Overview

#### Class Grades and Participation

- *30% In class participation:* This is a case-based class that is no different than any other strategy class at Columbia. Students are expected to prepare cases by reading them thoroughly, and contribute to class by sharing your own perspective and experiences.
- *36% Homework Graded Activities:* The class includes a large number of in class activities done through teams around developing, finding, and executing on a strategy. All activities are graded within a week.
- *5% Team-based in class Breakout Activities:* Smaller activities developed in class that have a lower grade.
- *4%. 360 Feedback.* A simple feedback form to make sure all your team-members did the appropriate work.

#### Final Capstone and Optional Final

- *20% Capstone Project.* The Capstone project consists of an extended analysis of the concepts of class applied to a company of your choice. Students are encouraged to choose companies they are personally familiar with. The activity will require describing the company's advantages and two potential strategies, then proposing an experiment to choose a strategy. Teams can be changed or split for this final project according to the students preference.  
(Due April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Prof Guzman's Feedback by April 30<sup>th</sup>)
- *5% Capstone Peer Feedback.* All students provide feedback up to 5 strategies to their classmates. This is a great opportunity to receive feedback on your ideas.  
(Due April 26<sup>th</sup>)
- *Extra 10%. Optional take-home final.* The optional final will require implementing the experiment developed in the capstone.  
(Due May 7<sup>th</sup>)

### **Final additional details**

- *Team Formation.* Teams of 3 to 6 students are formed after first class. Teams are expected to be the same throughout all group homeworks. There is no difference in grading criteria if the team is smaller, and teams of less than 3 are not allowed. Teams can be different for both breakout activities and Capstone project.
- *Attendance.* Students are expected to attend all classes. If you will miss a class, please let me know. Students missing more than two classes will be automatically failed (except of these are allowed by OSA rules).
- *Slides.* Slides are uploaded by noon the day of class.
- *Auditing Policy.* The class is full, so there are unfortunately no auditors allowed in class. This also applies to alumni and students who are out of credits for classes. The only exception is for current employees of Columbia. Any other requests, please email me individually before the first class.
- *Asynchronous Policy.* Students are allowed to take the class asynchronously only if they are currently in a location where class falls between the hours of 11 PM and 6 AM in their local time-zone, or if they have express permission from OSA. If you will be taking the class asynchronously, please email me and your TA before the first class.

### **Hybrid Learning Notes**

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### **Coffee Chats**

In an effort to give another chance to chat and meet everyone, I have setup a series of coffee chats through the semester. These coffee chats are completely optional, and attending does not help your grade in any way. But I would still love an opportunity to meet you.

The link is the following.

<http://bit.ly/EStratCoffeeChatSP2021>

### ***Join the community!***

Entrepreneurial Strategy is a new class, booming at many business schools. The CBS class of Entrepreneurial Strategy is part of a broader community pushing education on this topic at many business schools, including MIT, Berkeley, Stanford, Duke, Wharton, HBS, and others.

Faculty in this community Entrepreneurial Strategy jointly share cases, ideas, and collaborate to improve the teaching expertise. There are also a large repository of readings, which are (right now) only available by enrolling in the class. If you want to have the materials at the forefront of thinking on strategy and entrepreneurship, this class would be for you.

## Class Schedule

Week 1			
Time	Module	Teaching Activity	Homework Due
Tuesday	Why do entrepreneurs make money?	Case Discussion: Kylie Cosmetics	
Thursday	Entrepreneurial Experimentation	Lecture: Experimentation	Form Teams (1 point)
Week 2			
Tuesday	Choose Your Customer	Case: Lytro (MIT) Lecture: Choose your Customer	Experimentation for Montecarlo Alimentos (6 points)
Thursday	Choose Your Technology	Lecture: Choose your Technology	Choosing Your Customer with Soylent (6 points)
Week 3			
Tuesday	Choose Your Identity	Lecture: Choose your Identity Case: BlazingDB	
Thursday	Choose Your Competition	Lecture: Choose Your Competition	Creating Identity Based Competitive Advantage. (6 points)
Week 4			
Tuesday	Choosing an Entrepreneurial Strategy for RapidSOS	Case: RapidSOS (MIT)	
Thursday	Architecture	Case: iHeartJane (MIT) Lecture	RapidSOS Strategic Proposal. (6 points)
Week 5			
Tuesday	Value Chain and Intellectual Property	Lecture	Platform Design Activity (6 points)
Thursday	Disruption & Acquisitions	Lecture	
Week 6			
Tuesday	Pivoting	Lecture: Pivoting Case: Laws of Motion (Columbia) Guest: Carly Bigi (Tentative)	Evaluating entrepreneurial Strategies for prior startups Using WayBackMachine (6 points)
Thursday	Capstone Overview and (some) team presentations		Capstone slides early presentation

## Entrepreneurial Strategy Learning Goals

*By the end of this class, the student should be able to.*

1. Have a clear understanding of the importance of choice and uncertainty in entrepreneurial strategy and how to manage it.
  - a. Why choice matters.
  - b. How to use experimentation to choose in the face of significant uncertainty.
  - c. What are the key characteristics of the four key choices that underlie entrepreneurial strategies: Customer, Identity, Technology and Competition.
  - d. How does Identity create a unique competitive advantage.
2. Understand the principles of four generic entrepreneurial strategies: Architecture, Intellectual Property, Value Chain, and Disruption.
  - a. What is the key value creation and value capture hypothesis that underlies them.
  - b. How do these map into a unique choice of customer, identity, technology, and competition.
3. Apply the understanding of Points (1) and (2) to choose an entrepreneurial strategy for a new idea or evaluate a strategy for an existing idea.
  - a. And understand how to shift and respond in the face of continuing market issues (i.e. Pivoting).
4. Understand the inherent trade-offs and complementarities between strategies that aim for acquisition or profitability, including location, technology, and strategic differentiation.

