

MGMTB8515: TOP MANAGEMENT PROCESS
SPRING 2023
(for bidding purpose only)

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Office hours by appointment

B8515-001 Tuesday 8:30-11:30 AM (Kravis 690)

CA: (Section 001) – @columbia.edu

B8515-002 Tuesday 2:00-5:00 PM (Kravis 620)

CA: (Section 002) – @columbia.edu

Attendance Expectations:

1. Attendance at the first class is mandatory for all enrolled students, as well as those on the waitlist who hope to add the class during add/drop.
2. You must attend class in your registered section and be part of all team projects with your team.
3. Take-home Final Exam Period: April 29th (9:00 AM) – May 1 (11:00 PM). Exam requires up to three hours to complete.
NOTE: Final exam period is non-changeable.
4. Class Attendance: Overall, this is a highly participatory course and therefore attending all classes is critical. If you see yourself missing two or more sessions, this will be significantly detrimental to your grade, and you may want to reconsider taking the course. **Missing three sessions will automatically result in a failing grade, unless there is excused illness.**
5. Participation Expectations: This course really benefits from class participation and if everyone contributes accordingly, the course will be better for all of us. If you are not inclined to participate in the ways outlined in the participation section of the syllabus (P.5), this is not the course for you!

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course has three goals:

- (1) **Experience.** To give you experiences (both directly through simulations and vicariously through cases) to increase your likelihood of success as a leader;
- (2) **Retention.** To enable you to retain those experiences until you can put them into action;
- (3) **Navigation.** To help you chart a course to get from where you are now to a top- leadership position.

Top Management Process (TMP) is about the job of the General Manager, the leader of an organization who is ultimately responsible for the organization (design & success), strategy (development & execution), operations (P&L responsibility) and results. This job is quite different from an individual producer's job, such as a trader, or the head of a function such as marketing or finance, or the head of a business unit. All the functions report directly or indirectly to the GM. It is the GM's job to ensure that these **interdependent** units are coordinated and integrated and executing a common strategy that is continually responsive to a continuously changing market place.

GMs succeed or fail based upon their ability to develop and articulate a beneficial strategy and on how well they are able to design organizations, lead people within the organization, influence parties outside of the organization and make effective business decisions to operationalize strategy. How are people selected, developed and appraised? How do GMs provide strategic leadership? How are good working relationships promoted? How is strategy actually decided? And then how is it executed? How are these decisions made in a world that is continuously changing, where multiple forces are at work and interacting with each other, where data is often woefully incomplete, or just plain wrong, and executives' prior experience with the issues their organization faces is often limited? The challenges are daunting. The course is one in which you will have a chance to study the challenges that confront GMs and to formulate approaches to those challenges so that you will not be as daunted when you face them.

TMP argues that good decisions are more likely if GMs have a systemic and process-oriented mindset. By system we mean how everything is connected to, and interacting with, everything else. By process, we mean the complex ways in which people, events, issues and situations evolve and interrelate over time. In TMP we study three kinds of processes: individual leadership, organization, and group. This diagram below illustrates how these three interact.



Individual leadership Process: We view leadership as a process because it is a series of choices, actions and decisions over time that shapes the organizational context in which people work. It is about how GMs bring people together to work on the company's people, strategy, and operations choices and build relationships among them to foster productive conversations so that GMs are better informed and more likely to lead good decision-making processes.

Organizational Processes: Much of a GM's decision-making involves organizational processes such as managing top management teams, the board of directors, leadership succession, and organizational transformation. These organizational processes are critical to governance and strategic leadership of organizations, and are always interacting with each other and with other on-going events.

Group Process: The GMs' top team needs to be involved in these organizational processes. Increasingly, as markets and organizations have become more complex and dynamic, successful GMs work with and through their top team. They have learned that no one person can possibly possess the experience and expertise needed to handle strategy, people and operations choices alone. When their team works well, GMs gain diversity of viewpoint and perspective. Realizing these benefits though is not easy. With diversity comes conflict. Leaders and members can regress into unproductive discussions. Group process is about the multitude of ways in which people interact with each other and the quality of their working relationships when they are working on company issues.

Getting these three processes right is in fact quite difficult. It's not just that markets are difficult to read and unpredictable. Organizations operate in markets but are also made up of people, making them doubly unpredictable. Organizations are organisms, not mechanisms. Anxiety is more commonplace in our organizations than we typically like to think. While anxiety can motivate people, it can lead to stress and impaired functioning. Work relationships break down. Inter and intra group conflict breaks out. Information does not get to the right people. Functional stove pipes, business silos and country fiefdoms develop and impede discussion and coordination. Decision making deteriorates. Thus, the objective of TMP is to improve our capabilities in designing and leading these three kinds of processes so that good decisions result. The course is organized into four modules.

Module I: Taking Up the General Management Job

Module II: Systemic Thinking and Process Mindset

Module III: Top Management Dynamics

Module IV: General Management in New Era

In Module I, we discuss the challenges in making the transition from an individual producer to a general manager. Almost one in two GMs fail, usually within the first 18 months. The major 'derailers' are lack of strategy adjustment, poor working relationships, inability to build and lead a team, and difficulty in adapting to the broad scope of the job.

In Module II, we will introduce systemic thinking and the process mindset and explore how they can help new GMs handle the challenges of their job. Systemic thinking helps GMs start with the total situation and learn all the many factors at work and how they might be influencing each other. It lessens the tendency to focus only in an individual or a single department to understand poor performance. Systemic thinking also helps GMs move from a managerial orientation to a leadership orientation.

In Module III, we study the organizational processes behind top management process. We study how CEO succession processes are conducted, how GMs handle conflicts in the top management team, and how they build a board and manage the relationship with it.

In Module IV, we discuss two contemporary responsibilities of GMs: (1) reinventing companies for continuous success, and (2) answering the call to be socially responsible and taking up activism.

CONNECTION TO THE CORE

The MBA core courses, Strategy Formulation and LEAD: People, Teams, Organizations, are most relevant to the current course. Formulating competitive strategy is one of the most important tasks of top managers, but to make strategy work, top managers need to have effective organizational, group, and leadership processes. Also, we will refer to the concepts that you learned in the LEAD class but elevate them to the top level of organizations, deploy them under the guidance of organizational strategic priorities, and take into account the complexity of organizations.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Class Participation	40%
Group Mini-Lecture of "Great CEO"	15%
Final Exam	30%
Optional Final Research Report	15%

A student who only participates actively in class discussion and does a good job on the group project and final exam can receive a maximum grade of HP. Students who wish to receive an H must also submit an individual final project as described below in addition to the other requirements. There is no reason to do a final project unless you are going to put forth a serious effort on all components of the grade.

Class Participation

An important course requirement is active involvement in class discussion. Your participation is essential for both your own learning and that of other students. Much of the learning will take place in our discussion of cases and role-play exercises. I expect that every student will arrive well prepared and able to answer the pre-assigned guiding questions. 40% of your overall course grade will be your participation grade, which is further decomposed of three components: 1) poll question completion (10%), 2) frequency and quality of YellowDig participation (10%), and 3) frequency and quality of class participation (20%).

Poll question: There is one poll question for each session (starting with session 2, and with the exception of session 6). Poll questions will be posted as assignments in your Canvas Calendar. They require you to read the relevant case or article and give a short response to 1-2 questions. You must submit your answer to the poll question through Canvas by 11:59 PM on the day before the session is scheduled for class.

Frequency and quality of your participation in class discussion: Both the frequency and quality of your class participation will be affected by non-attendance. Not coming to a class means that you will not have a chance to take

part in class discussion, which is a critical component of your overall grade. In terms of the quality of participation, the *best class comments*:

- Articulate a clear stance or argument
- Raise issues from past classes or current events or other anecdotes that are relevant to the discussion
- Show curiosity and a willingness to experiment
- Use data or your own professional experience to support arguments
- Are respectful when disagreeing by summarizing the contravening opinion before delivering your own

If you are comfortable with participating in class, I encourage you to help others feel safe about participating by inviting further discussion or referring to points that have already been made by your classmates. Students are also expected to be present, prepared, and participate per the Columbia Core Culture. Use of electronic devices in class is not allowed except in answering Poll Everywhere questions during class.

YellowDig Engagement: YellowDig access instructions are detailed at the end of the syllabus. In short, YellowDig is a blog-like platform that helps you engage more deeply with the course material and with one another. Our expectation is that **you consistently create posts or make comments** and interact virtually with your classmates. YellowDig posts count towards your participation grade but does NOT substitute your in- class participation.

Join YellowDig through canvas and do a FIRST POST-- an introduction of yourself and your background (and a photograph of yourself) by the first week (Jan. 30).

"Great CEO" Mini-Lecture to the Class

This is a group assignment. At the beginning of the semester, I will ask each group to nominate five great corporate CEOs in history. From this list and other sources, I will assign one CEO for each group to analyze and set a class time for each group to present their analysis and teach important lessons that we can learn from this great CEO to the rest of the class.

Great CEO nomination. While you may intend to nominate household names such as Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk, their successes and stories are well known. Instead, I would encourage you to follow three criteria when nominating CEOs, (1) there is a clear lesson(s) that we can learn from this person, (2) the takeaway(s) is not cliché so that there are novel things to learn from this CEO, and (3) there are some interesting aspects about this CEO that help your group to engage and interact with the rest of the class when presenting.

Group Teaching. The group is responsible for conducting an analysis of the designated CEO and then teaches the rest of the class what they learn from this CEO. Suggested lecture components include: (1) life experience and career trajectory, with particular attention to the formation of leadership style and critical career junctions, (2) the greatest achievements of the CEO and the leadership style (3) the limitations, challenges, missed opportunities, and pitfalls for the CEO, and what you would do differently; (4) the lessons that you learn from analyzing this CEO; (5) anecdotes or fun facts about this person. However, you do not have to cover each of these components, but can tailor your teaching form and highlight particular component(s). The whole teaching process should be about **25** minutes long including Q&A by the class. Also, novel forms of teaching that facilitates class interaction are welcome. However,

please remember that neglecting content in favor of form is not likely to score well. **Your group is encouraged, but not required, to meet with me to review your teaching plan before your teaching day.** I am available to provide feedback and help you improve your presentation.

Teaching Evaluation. When a group is teaching its “Great CEO” analysis, I expect everyone in the class will be able to ask questions. Right after the group mini-lecture, everyone in the class will be asked to evaluate the teaching based on (1) the insights learned from teaching, (2) the novel and interactive format of teaching, and (3) the overall quality of teaching. At the end of semester, I will ask you to rank all the group “Great CEO” mini-lectures.

Important note. You may divide the task among team members but I expect all of you make equal contributions to the group work. For example, some of you who are not presenting the visual materials should take on more work in answering questions or doing analysis. So contribution can take different formats, and not everyone has to participate in every part of the team work.

Peer evaluation of group contribution. Each of you will complete a peer evaluation of the members of your team with respect to the team final project. Scores for individual student contributions to the team final project are assigned by me, based on my assessment of the team’s project quality, the class rating of your team teaching, my observations of the team’s working dynamics and thoughtful consideration of the information provided through your peer evaluations.

Final Exam

Take-home, April 29th (9:00 AM) – May 1 (11:00 PM). Three hours uninterrupted time required. **NOTE: Final exam period is non-changeable.** The exam is open book; you are welcome to refer to all of the cases, course readings, and your notes during the exam.

Optional Final Research Report

The final project is for students hoping to receive an H in the course. However, doing a final project does not guarantee that a student will receive an H, and receiving an H also requires doing well in other parts of the evaluation. I ask that you analyze and evaluate a particular top management decision or (set of decisions) facing a company using the concepts from the course (essay form, 1,800 word limit, including all exhibits). While providing some details is necessary, you should emphasize analysis over description. Do not use cases covered in this course or other courses at Columbia Business School. You are welcome to make use of industry contacts. I am also happy to provide a real-world ‘case’ if you have trouble deciding on your own. Students who wish to do a final project must sign up by **Friday, March 24** to confirm the project’s topic. Not signing up with a proposal by March 24 means that you will not have an opportunity to submit a final project. Discussing your topic with me in advance is advised but not required. The optional final project is due on **Friday, April 28, at 11:59 PM.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session	Topic(s)	Case and Pre-Readings	Assignments Due
Module 1: Taking Up the General Management Job			
1 1/23/2022	Introduction to GM	Ron Johnson: A Career in Retail Strategic Leadership: A Road Map for the General Manager's Journey	Read syllabus Self-introduction on YellowDig
2 1/30/2022	Take up the GM role	Silvio Napoli at Schindler India (A)	Form groups
3 2/7/2022	Complex decision-making	Paul Levy Taking Charge	Each Group nominates five Great CEOs
Module II: Systemic Thinking and Process Mindset			
4 2/14/2022	Systemic thinking	Friendly Fire	
5 2/21/2022	High-stakes decision-making	Mount Everest – 1996	"Great CEO" Presentation
6 2/28/2022	Leadership simulation	Leadership and Team Simulation: Everest	"Great CEO" Presentation
7 3/21/2022	Organizational response to ambiguous threat	Columbia's Final Mission	"Great CEO" Presentation
Module III: Top Management Dynamics			
8 3/28/2022	Top management team	Blake Sports Apparel Role Play Express Truck	"Great CEO" Presentation
9 4/4/2022	CEO succession	CEO Succession at Cisco	"Great CEO" Presentation

10 4/11/2022	Managing the board	Pixability	"Great CEO" Presentation
Module IV: GM in the New Era			
11 4/18/2022	Corporate reinvention	The Reinvention of Kodak	"Great CEO" Presentation
12 4/25/2022	CEO Activism and course review	CEO Activism and Course Wrap	Peer evaluation